

# [***5 key issues at stake in the upcoming 2024 Mexican elections***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BG7-J5D1-DYMD-61TJ-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

MEXICO CITY — [*Mexico*](https://apnews.com/hub/mexico) is almost certainly about to get its first woman president.

Ruling-party candidate [*Claudia Sheinbaum*](https://apnews.com/article/mexico-elections-president-claudia-sheinbaum-0c9e55ea616f7af7535967f4b99b6ea6) leads in polls on [*the race leading to the June 2 vote*](https://apnews.com/article/mexico-elections-2024-what-to-know-d104184b02bf5bcf9e08f570a5ba37e2). The second-place candidate is also a woman. A man running for a small third party essentially has no chance of winning.

Popular [*President Andrés Manuel López Obrador*](https://apnews.com/hub/andres-manuel-lopez-obrador) is barred by law from running for another six-year term, and Sheinbaum is running for his Morena party. Businesswoman, senator and Indigenous Affairs official [*Xóchitl Gálvez*](https://apnews.com/article/mexico-politics-xochitl-galvez-andres-manuel-lopez-obrador-present-politics-30ed04316ff56de326754d13b8cef1dd) has an uphill battle, backed by a coalition of all the main opposition parties.

Sheinbaum, Mexico City’s former mayor, has a doctorate in energy engineering and a long career in leftist ***politics***. Gálvez helped her family by selling tamales in the street as a girl. She went on to earn a degree in computer engineering and start her own tech companies.

Whoever wins, here are the issues and stakes.

**HOW COULD MEXICO'S ELECTION AFFECT MIGRATION?**

Most migrants to the United States come over the border with Mexico to Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. [*Mexico has agreed to some things*](https://apnews.com/article/mexico-president-us-accusations-drug-campaign-donations-41a026b2de9ab45f6f10b449de091ecf) that it isn't legally obligated to do, such as deploying its National Guard to arrest migrants, and accepting the return of non-Mexicans who pass through on their way to the U.S.

Migration isn't much of an issue in Mexico, outside of calls for the fair treatment of Mexicans in the U.S. Mexico's next president will almost certainly have latitude in deciding either to stop cooperating with the United States, or crack down harder on migrants heading north. Either would be a big change and migration is already certain to be a key issue for whoever wins the White House in November.

**COULD MEXICO'S VOTE AFFECT THE FLOW OF DRUGS?**

Instead of confronting the drug cartels, López Obrador has adopted what is for him the pragmatic policy of increasing government hand-outs to drain the pool of recruits for cartels seeking gunmen. But many poor, addicted or neglected youths can still be convinced to pick up a gun.

Under López Obrador, anti-drug cooperation has been limited by nationalism; he [*doesn't like the DEA in his country*](https://apnews.com/article/mexico-lopez-obrador-drug-money-campaign-7c16954987a391bd77e4c0f41dd5e579) and denies that Mexico produces fentanyl, the opioid that kills over 70,000 Americans each year.

The next president could take that view to an even greater extreme or decide to cooperate more as evidence mounts that [*drug cartels are incompatible with domestic peace*](https://apnews.com/article/mexico-election-violence-candidates-cartels-91f01634fe32781f708f16064bc87179).

**HOW WILL MEXICO'S VOTE AFFECT ITS ECONOMY?**

In the 1980s, the United States could threaten to close the border any time the Mexican government displeased Washington. Those days are over. U.S. appliance, auto-parts and automotive factories have moved to Mexico, and they need daily shipments of parts.

As López Obrador put it, “they couldn't last, maybe a day, but not a week” with a closed border. Mexico — not China — [*is now the United States' biggest trading partner,*](https://apnews.com/article/china-goods-imports-trade-mexico-tariffs-trump-eaee6cec8bb3cadc1103ba60f986b76e) and U.S. markets rely on Mexico for fresh produce and many other things. The economic relationship may now simply be “too big to fail.”

Mexico also depends on the money sent home by citizens living abroad — mostly in the United States. Last year, [*Mexican migrants sent home a record $63.3 billion*](https://apnews.com/article/mexico-remittances-record-money-migrants-275a49302e840fdaa8060d5cab9c7a24). Income from remittances surpasses what Mexico earns from tourism and exports of oil and most manufactured goods.

**WILL MEXICO'S VOTE SHOW A NEW LATIN POPULISM?**

Latin America has seen periodic swings from left to right for decades. Free-spending presidents friendly to Iran or Russia have been quickly replaced by neoconservatives, and vice versa.

A populist wave appears to have interrupted the region’s normal pendulum swings with two key events in recent months — the overwhelming reelection of El Salvador's hardline president Nayib Bukele, and the victory for libertarian firebrand Javier Milei in Argentina.

A victory for Morena on June 2 could entrench populism for 12 years in Mexico, essentially reviving the old idea of a charismatic, nationalist, hand-out regime as the perennial party in power.

Hungary has kept its populist president in power for nearly 15 years, but the world record is held by Mexico's old ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, which held the presidency for — wait for it — 71 uninterrupted years.

**WILL MEXICAN DEMOCRACY SURVIVE?**

López Obrador has tried mightily to eliminate checks and balances, regulatory oversight and the role of non-governmental organizations. He has accumulated more centralized power than any president since the heyday of the PRI in the 1970s, an era for which he expresses open nostalgia.

His main tool of governance has been the army, which has built a portfolio of railways, an airline, airports and hotels. Mexico's army, unlike many other Latin American nations', has not become involved in ***politics*** through coups or candidacies since the 1940s. But many worry that the Morena party's continued dominance [*might endanger that old arrangement*](https://apnews.com/article/democracy-mexico-andres-manuel-lopez-obrador-opposition-48f454552fab8d52c2b17aac82d44016).

Whoever wins, the outgoing president is leaving a pile of ambitious, unfinished projects, obligations and debt. López Obrador has pledged to retire entirely from ***politics*** after he leaves office, but few people believe that a man who has basically spent every waking minute for the last 30 years driving toward his political goals will give that up so easily.

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