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# Mexico 2024 General Election

Political Uncertainty, Political violence and Security Risks



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## Executive Summary

- On June 2, 2024, Mexico will hold general elections amid high risks of political violence, surge in crime, and high level of corruption. Besides the presidential race, voters will also vote to renew the 628 seats of the bicameral federal Congress, eight state governors and the Mexico City mayor, over 20 000 public service positions, at state and local levels.
  - The presidential candidates are Claudia Sheinbaum from the ruling National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) and its coalition Keep Making History, Xóchitl Gálvez from the opposition coalition Strength and Heart for Mexico (FCM), and Jorge Álvarez Máynez from the Citizens' Movement (MC). The new president will take office on October 1, 2024.
  - The current campaign season has been one of the most violent in Mexico's history, with 63 people having been killed in campaign-related violence, including 30 candidates. Criminal groups are likely to continue targeting local officials, mayoral candidates, and polling officers, particularly in small municipalities, to consolidate their influence and protect illicit activities.
  - Although economic growth is expected to continue due to nearshoring, the incoming president will face significant challenges, including addressing a large fiscal gap which is nearing 6% of GDP. Moreover, general debt as a percentage of GDP will end up in 2024 slightly above 50%, almost seven percentage points higher than in 2018 which is concerning for a country that collects 17% of its GDP in taxes.
  - Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are particularly vulnerable to the disruptions caused by political violence and gang-related conflicts. These disruptions can include forced business closures, supply chain interruptions, and increased security costs. The ongoing violence imposes economic strain on SMEs due to damage to property, theft, and the need for increased security measures. This environment can deter investment and hinder business growth.
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## Introduction

On June 2, Mexico will hold its largest-ever election, with over 96 million voters choosing presidential candidates, Congressional representatives, and local officials. This historic fifth election since Mexico's 2000 transition to democracy will see the country elect its first female president, as the leading contenders, Claudia Sheinbaum and Xóchitl Gálvez, are both women. It serves as a critical test for Morena and Mexico's democracy, amid concerns over President AMLO's increasing military involvement in civilian affairs and significant funding cuts to the electoral agency, raising fears of democratic backsliding. The election, overseen by the National Electoral Institute (INE), has been marred by violence, with 63 fatalities, including 30 candidates, highlighting severe security issues. This election also marks a cultural shift, with significant emphasis on gender equality as both candidates have committed to addressing gender-based violence.

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# President Candidate Profile



CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM

- **Political Party** : National Regeneration Movement party, MORENA.
- **Coalition Party** : Sigamos Haciendo Historia.
- **Ideology** : Left-wing ideology, nationalistic-leaning narrative but pragmatism vis-à-vis the private sector.
- **Voter Base** : MORENAS base, social progressives, low-income classes.
- **Reason for Potential Victory**: Association with MORENA party and AMLO'S Popularity.
- **Chances of Victory** : 50-53%



XOCHITL GALVEZ

- **Political Party**: National Action Party
- **Coalition Party** : Fuerza y Corazón por México
- **Ideology** : Centrist ideology that supports the development of the private sector
- **Voter Base** : Anti-AMLO base, middle class environmental voters, small businesses.
- **Reason for Potential Victory** :Increasing Anti-Morena sentiments.
- **Chances of Victory** : 34 -36 %



JORGE ALVAREZ MAYNEZ

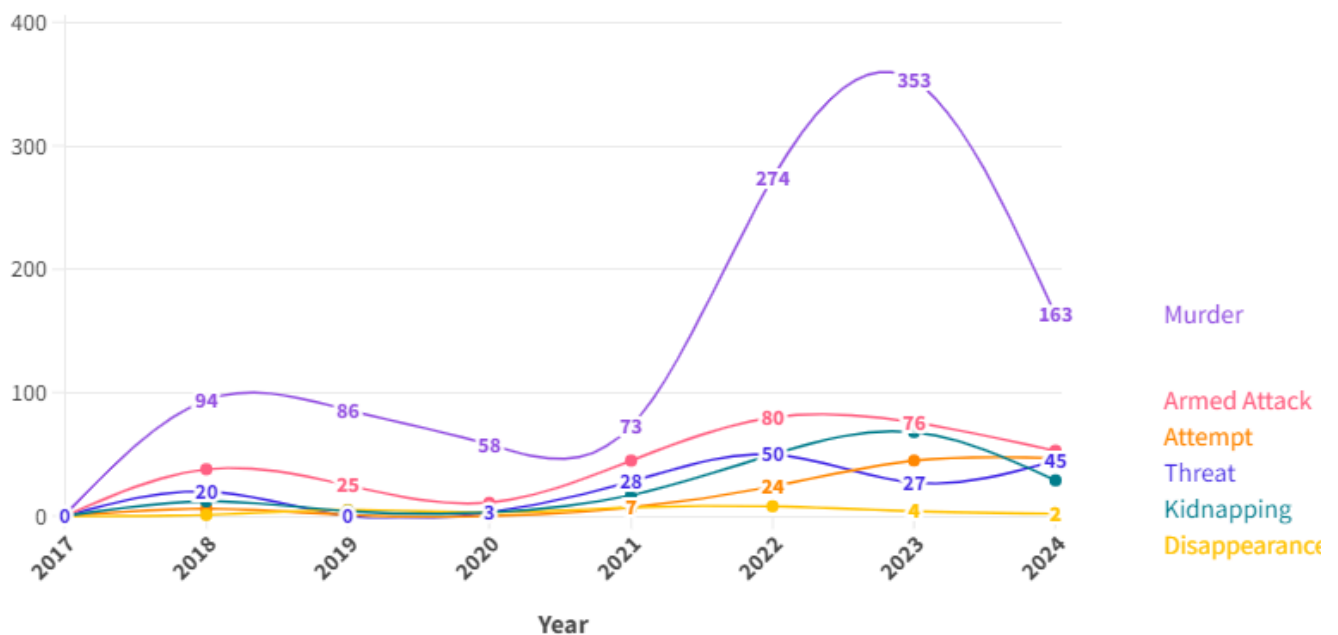
- **Political Party**: Movimiento Ciudadano
- **Ideology** : Pragmatic Centre-left ideology towards the private sector
- **Voter Base** : Young voters and Social progressive
- **Reason for Potential Victory**: Attracts anti-establishment voters.
- **Chances of Victory** : 9-11%

## Issues Impacting Voter Sentiments

- **Economic /Fiscal deficit:** The incoming administration may face the challenge of managing a fiscal deficit exceeding 5% of GDP. This deficit is partly due to large-scale public spending on projects like the new Mexico City airport and the Tren Maya railway. Balancing fiscal responsibility with the need to support economic growth and public services will be a critical task for the new government. For Instance Pemex, Mexico's state-owned oil company, is struggling with a debt burden of nearly \$102 billion. The next president will need to implement reforms to make Pemex more financially sustainable while addressing broader issues in the energy sector, such as frequent power outages due to the fragile electricity infrastructure. Failure to address these issues could hamper economic growth and lead to public dissatisfaction.
- **Security Concerns:** Security concerns in Mexico are significant, mainly due to the influence of drug cartels and organized crime. Violence has increased, with turf wars between rival groups rising by 12% in 2023 compared to 2022. For example, in Michoacán, conflicts between the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) and the Knights Templar cartel have caused many civilian deaths and widespread instability. These cartels are involved in various illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, extortion, and fuel theft, which undermine public safety. The severity of this issue was highlighted by the discovery of human remains near polling stations during previous elections, used as a tactic to intimidate and influence outcomes. This persistent violence presents major challenges for law enforcement and public safety across Mexico

- Political Violence:** Political violence in Mexico has reached unprecedented levels, with over 60 politically motivated homicides reported since the commencement of the electoral process. This violence is primarily perpetrated by criminal organizations aiming to influence political outcomes to safeguard their illicit activities. For instance, in May 2021, Alma Rosa Barragan, a mayoral candidate in Guanajuato, was brutally assassinated during a campaign event, underscoring the grave dangers faced by local candidates. Similarly, Alessandra Rojo, a mayoral candidate in Mexico City, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt when her vehicle was attacked in May 2024.s. Furthermore, on election day, criminal groups are anticipated to disrupt the voting process through attacks on polling stations and officials. During the 2021 elections, armed groups were reported to have fired upon ballots and subsequently stolen them in multiple municipalities. Such acts of violence can significantly reduce voter turnout and result in high resignation rates among polling officials, particularly in municipalities like Guerrero , Chiapas , Villacorzo, ichoacán, and Juárez where cartels wield considerable influence.

Number of Victims



- **Cyber Risk:** Mexico, grappling with the highest cybercrime rate in Latin America, faces annual losses between \$3 billion and \$5 billion due to cyberattacks. Despite efforts, only 57% of cyberattacks are blocked, leaving significant remediation needs. This pervasive threat poses risks of financial losses, reputational damage, and operational disruptions, hindering business growth and digital transformation.
- **Freedom of Expression:** Mexico remains one of the most perilous countries for journalists, with 22 murders in 2020 and seven in 2021. In 2022, assaults on journalists occurred every 13 hours, predominantly by authorities (42.5%), leading to substantial self-censorship and information gaps. With 63% of Mexicans obtaining news from social media platforms like YouTube and TikTok, and given the scrutiny by authorities such as the National Electoral Institute and Electoral Tribunal over social media's election role, there are rising concerns about censorship. Ensuring citizens' access to accurate information and free online discourse is vital during election periods, impacting both public trust and business operations.
- **Misinformation:** In Mexico's 2024 election, the convergence of digital innovation and persistent violence presents a multifaceted challenge. Past elections have witnessed the use of computational propaganda, with political parties accused of employing bots to sway public opinion. Misinformation casts a shadow over the democratic process, undermining trust and distorting political discourse. As candidates vie for visibility in an increasingly complex media landscape, the spread of falsehoods on social platforms threatens to erode the integrity of the electoral process. Overcoming these challenges requires concerted efforts to combat misinformation and ensure transparency, safeguarding the foundations of democracy in Mexico.

## Conclusion

- The MORENA Party candidate Claudia Sheinbaum is widely expected to emerge victorious in the upcoming elections.
  - In most likely scenario If elected, Claudia Sheinbaum is expected to continue AMLO's policies, including a strong state presence in the energy sector, austerity measures, and significant social spending. She has pledged to maintain his social programs, invest in state-led infrastructure projects, avoid tax increases by reducing government operational costs, and support state-owned energy firms. Her plans for judicial and electoral reforms and the transfer of the National Guard to the military depend on the congressional election results, as these require constitutional amendments.
  - In the most unlikely scenario, if Xóchitl Gálvez comes into power , she would likely bring major policy shifts, particularly in energy and US relations. Gálvez aims to confront criminal groups more directly, increase economic freedom, and limit the state's role to ensuring the rule of law while promoting private sector growth. She plans to re-enforce the 2013 constitutional changes that opened the energy sector to private participation. In foreign policy, Gálvez suggests a stronger alignment with the US and a tougher stance against Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Russia, and China.
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# Risk Assessment

Probability

HIGH

HIGH

Impact

## Political Violence and Criminal Activity

- High levels of political violence can be anticipated before and after the elections. These risks are likely to include sporadic acts of violence such as looting, rioting, and vandalism, with an increased risk of fatalities.
- Businesses and supply chains are expected to be affected by road blockades, hijackings, and organized crime activities.
- Criminal groups are likely to continue targeting local officials, mayoral candidates, and polling officers, especially in municipalities like Guerrero , Chiapas , Villacorzo, Ichoacán, and Juárez. to consolidate their influence and protect illicit activities.
- Mayors, mayoral candidates, and other local officials who oppose organized crime or specific cartels like the Guadalajara Cartel, Sinoloa Cartel , Tijuana Cartel etc are at the highest risk of being attacked by gang members.
- Political violence is expected to remain high in states where criminal groups are fighting for territory, such as Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán, and Juárez.
- Heightened security measures will remain in place in Colima, Chiapas, Guerrero, Jalisco, Morelos, and Michoacán—states where drug trafficking organisations (DTOs) compete for influence and have experienced pronounced election-related violence.
- Due to heightened Security and high risk of political violence pre and post election , Travellers are advised to exercise high degree of caution while travelling to Mexico during this time.

Probability

HIGH

HIGH

Impact

### Civil Unrest

- Anti-AMLO and anti-Morena protests, taxi drivers' protests, cargo transport workers' strikes, and similar activities are anticipated on and around election days.
- Road closures near polling stations on June 2 are expected to disrupt travel and business activities, with potential civil unrest due to ongoing protests and election-related violence. During protests, it is common for protesters to burn tires and other debris on main roads connecting metropolitan areas.
- Protesters may disrupt ports by blocking entrances to shipping yards, preventing workers and goods from entering the premises.
- Civil unrest is likely to lead to clashes between demonstrators and the police, with a high probability of looting and road barricades being erected on major metropolitan highways. Demonstrators may target vehicles by throwing rocks at them, and there is a possibility of the military being deployed to control the situation.

Probability

MEDIUM

HIGH

Impact

### Operations and Infrastructure

- Water and power outages pose ongoing challenges, impacting operations and essential services across Mexico.
- Recent power outages affected multiple states, Mexico City, San Luis Potosi, Hidalgo, Zacatecas, Veracruz, Puebla, State of Mexico, Chiapas, Queretaro, Guanajuato, Michoacan, Tamaulipas, Campeche, Aguascalientes, and Colima state potentially disrupting business operations, municipal services, and fuel distribution.
- Mexico faces an energy crisis due to declining hydroelectric power generation resulting from droughts, exceptionally high temperatures
- Mismanagement of water resources, coupled with increased demand and infrastructure deterioration, may lead to a water shortage crisis in the metropolitan region by June, known as "Day Zero."



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