Mexico's 2024 Elections

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On June 2, 2024, Mexico, a top U.S. trade and strategic partner, convened elections for federal, state, and local offices, including the presidency, both chambers of congress, and nine governorships. Preliminary results indicate a decisive victory for the ruling National Regeneration Movement (MORENA), created by outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and its coalition. MORENA's candidate, Claudia Sheinbaum, won the presidential race by more than 30 percentage points. Sheinbaum, who is to be North America's first female head of government, is scheduled to take office on October 1 for a single, six-year term.

According to preliminary quick-count results, the MORENA-led coalition also received the most votes in legislative elections and won seven of nine gubernatorial contests, including the race for Mexico City's head of government. MORENA's coalition appears to have secured a two-thirds majority in the Mexican congress's lower house, the Chamber of Deputies; the size of the coalition's majority in the Senate remains unclear. A two-thirds majority in both houses of congress would enable the government to amend the constitution without cross-party support.

The 118th Congress has undertaken legislative and oversight initiatives on issues involving cross-border cooperation with Mexico, including fentanyl trafficking, migration, and continued implementation of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Members may assess the election's results and their implications for ongoing cooperation on these and other issues in U.S.-Mexico relations.

Preliminary Results and Outlook

The MORENA party, which has been the dominant force in Mexican politics since 2018, consolidated political power in the 2024 elections. Sheinbaum, the presidential candidate for the MORENA-led coalition, received 59% of the vote, a larger share than her mentor and outgoing President López Obrador garnered in 2018 (53.2%). Sheinbaum consistently led in preelection polls, but her margin of victory over Xóchitl Gálvez, the candidate of an ideologically diverse opposition coalition comprising the centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), conservative National Action Party (PAN), and center-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), surprised some analysts (see **Figure 1**).

President-elect Sheinbaum is a former head of government of Mexico City (2018-2023) and longtime ally of President López Obrador. As a candidate, Sheinbaum pledged to build on López Obrador's policies, such as minimum wage increases, cash transfer programs, and infrastructure development programs. Some analysts assess that her reported pragmatism as mayor and scientific background could nevertheless
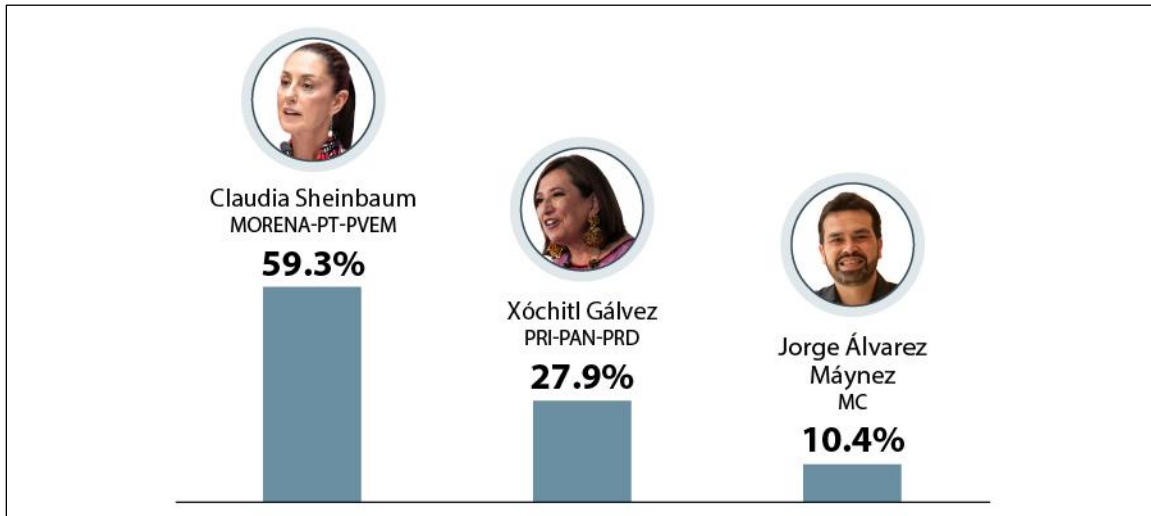
lead her to diverge from López Obrador on some issues. For example, Sheinbaum may seek private investment in renewable energy rather than using public funding to support Mexico's indebted state oil company. Others assert that Sheinbaum's candidacy derived much of its popularity from López Obrador's political base and he could continue to influence her administration.

Figure 1. Mexico 2024 Presidential Election Preliminary Results

Claudia Sheinbaum
MORENA-PT-PVEM
59.3%

Xóchitl Gálvez
PRI-PAN-PRD
27.9%

Jorge Álvarez
Máynez
MC
10.4%

Source: CRS, using data from Instituto Nacional Electoral, https://prep2024.ine.mx/publicacion/nacional/presidencia/nacional/candidatura, accessed on June 4, 2024.

Notes: Percentage totals do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

In the legislative elections, MORENA's coalition, which includes the Labor Party (PT) and the Green Ecological Party (PVEM), obtained between 346 and 380 of 500 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and between 76 and 88 of 128 seats in Mexico's Senate. The new congress is to be seated on September 1.

Although the 2024 elections reportedly occurred without major disruptive incidents, the election cycle was marked by political violence, an issue Mexico has grappled with for successive election cycles. One media outlet has identified 34 candidates, mostly at the local level, who were slain since June 2023. Some observers assert that Mexico's drug cartels engage in political violence, especially at the local level, to intimidate politicians, discourage voter turnout, and install candidates they can influence.

Analysts portrayed MORENA's dominance in the 2024 elections as a sign of the Mexican electorate's support for López Obrador's political agenda and governing style. López Obrador has maintained approval ratings above 60%. His popularity appears to stem from his policies to improve living standards for poor and working-class Mexicans and his ability to communicate directly with the Mexican people. Critics have accused López Obrador of attempting to concentrate executive power by weakening independent government institutions and the judiciary.

Some analysts have argued that a MORENA-controlled administration with congressional majorities large enough to pass constitutional amendments raises the possibility of democratic backsliding in Mexico; some investors have expressed concern that these dynamics could hinder Mexico's investment climate. In February 2024, President López Obrador proposed constitutional reforms he characterized as reducing wasteful government spending and increasing citizen participation in government. If enacted, the reforms could eliminate autonomous agencies and government regulators, increase executive control over the independent electoral agency, and enable the popular election of Supreme Court and other federal judges. Sheinbaum campaigned in favor of many of López Obrador's proposed reforms. López Obrador has

stated that he will consult with Sheinbaum about enacting some of these reforms in September, when the new congress is seated.

Implications for U.S. Policy and Congress

In her first speech as president-elect, Sheinbaum announced her government's relationship with the United States will be one of "friendship, mutual respect, and equality." President Biden extended his congratulations to the president-elect shortly after the election. Sheinbaum has expressed willingness to work with the next U.S. Administration on efforts to manage irregular migration while advocating for greater economic investment in countries of origin. After years of tensions on counterdrug efforts under the outgoing administration, it is unclear how Sheinbaum, who has suggested fentanyl is primarily a public health issue, would approach U.S.-Mexico counternarcotics cooperation. She has endorsed bilateral working groups on security issues. During the campaign, Sheinbaum expressed support for the outgoing administration's state-led approach to energy development.

Congress may monitor President-elect Sheinbaum's positions and her level of support in the Mexican congress, which could shape the U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship. Congress also may monitor developments concerning the resilience of Mexico's democratic institutions and system of checks and balances. In addition, Congress may consider strengthening ties with the new Mexican congress through bilateral fora, such as the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group, created through H.J.Res 283 in 1960.

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