



Mexico country briefing

Mexico's June 2024 Elections: Context and key facts

Some 100 million voters are expected to cast their ballot on 2 June, 2024, in Mexico's largest election to date. The voters, including a record number of first-timers, will elect a new president, more than 600 members of parliament, 9 governors and over 20,000 local officials.¹ Presidential candidates are vying to unseat the country's incumbent, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, known also as AMLO,² and whoever wins will govern Mexico for the next six years.³

The three main presidential candidates include former Mexico City Mayor Claudia Scheinbaum from Obrador's governing Morena coalition. Scheinbaum is a frontrunner and is facing former senator and tech entrepreneur, Xóchitl Gálvez of the main opposition alliance, Strength and Heart for Mexico.⁴ And finally, polling in single digits, is Jorge Álvarez Máynez from the Citizen's Movement.⁵ This is a historic first for Mexico, which will see two women fighting for the presidency.⁶

But the ballot is also making history for being Mexico's most violent elections yet, with 30 candidates murdered, over 70 threatened and 11 kidnapped.⁷ The violence has affected politicians from across the spectrum, and one study has found that over 200 civil servants, politicians and candidates had been killed in the leadup to the June vote.⁸

Some commentators have raised concerns about the increasingly blurred lines between the state and organised crime, calling into question the governability of certain regions.⁹

¹ https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2024/114.asp

² <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/mexicos-2024-elections-what-know>

³ <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/mexicos-2024-elections-what-know>

⁴ <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/mexicos-2024-elections-what-know>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c299p249nx5o>

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/06/world/americas/mexico-women-president-candidates.html>

⁷ <https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-04-27/mexico-is-heading-towards-its-most-violent-election-ever-with-30-candidates-murdered-77-threatened-and-11-kidnapped.html#>

⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c299p249nx5o>

⁹ <https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-04-27/mexico-is-heading-towards-its-most-violent-election-ever-with-30-candidates-murdered-77-threatened-and-11-kidnapped.html#>

Social media landscape

As of April 2024, Facebook was the most often used social media platform in Mexico, followed by WhatsApp and Instagram – all owned by Meta.¹⁰ In May 2023, when WhatsApp was the most popular social media app in Mexico, 90% of internet users proclaimed having an active account on the messaging platform.¹¹ But video sharing apps YouTube and TikTok are attracting ever more internet users.

Over 60% of Mexicans get their news and information from social media, Reuters Digital News Report has found,¹² with YouTube and TikTok as the fastest growing platforms for news in the country.¹³

Despite the rapid expansion of social media platforms, Mexico has been marred by a digital divide which means that not everyone can access social media. And while electoral disinformation has been a huge concern ahead of the 2 June vote, only 63 million of Mexico's 126 million inhabitants have internet access.¹⁴

Social media trends

Electoral disinformation

With polarisation and tensions rising ahead of the June elections, online disinformation has surged.¹⁵ One post making the rounds on social media – since debunked by fact-checkers – claimed that the ruling Morena party wanted voters to use new identity cards linked to what it called “a Venezuelan fraud company.”¹⁶ The London-based firm reportedly has no contracts in Mexico for the June election, and there are no plans to use a new ID card during the ballot.¹⁷

In another instance, a photograph allegedly showed a tortilla shop in northern Mexico, being closed down after refusing to use wrappers with the logo of the ruling party candidate for

¹⁰ <https://www.similarweb.com/top-websites/mexico/computers-electronics-and-technology/social-networks-and-online-communities/>

¹¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/449869/mexico-social-network-penetration/>

¹² https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital_News_Report_2023.pdf

¹³ https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital_News_Report_2023.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210524-fake-news-on-the-rise-ahead-of-mexico-elections>

¹⁵ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210524-fake-news-on-the-rise-ahead-of-mexico-elections>

¹⁶ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210524-fake-news-on-the-rise-ahead-of-mexico-elections>

¹⁷ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210524-fake-news-on-the-rise-ahead-of-mexico-elections>

governor.¹⁸ But the picture in fact featured an entirely different business, from another part of the country, and dated back to 2020.¹⁹

"We see a deliberate strategy by all political actors, of all political campaigns, to exacerbate polarisation," Abraham Trejo, coordinator of the Hate and Harmony project at the College of Mexico, told France 24.²⁰

Only days before the ballot, some voters confused by misinformation remained confused about how to mark their ballot or about whether the ink from the pens at voting stations could be erased post-ballot – a situation that could affect the election results.²¹

"It can be very serious in places where people don't have full internet access, only to WhatsApp and Facebook," and cannot verify what they receive, tech harms expert Martha Tudon of Article 19 told Radio France International.²²

Experts have sounded the alarm about disinformation hitting the June elections hard already one year prior to the vote.²³ In June 2023, when candidate selection at Mexico's ruling Morena party and the main opposition kicked off, The Associated Press press said its Spanish-language fact-checkers "found about 40 fake publications across social media platforms, favouring or discrediting members of both sides of the political spectrum."²⁴

At the time, experts had raised concerns that some of the falsehoods targeting the opposition were coming directly from President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.²⁵

Facebook groups have become the gateways to WhatsApp and Telegram chat groups, where experts say falsehoods are widely disseminated with little to oversight.²⁶ The entire ecosystem consists of publishers, bots and trolls which help amplify the falsehoods and ordinary – organic – users who take the bait without fact-checking the information they're sharing.²⁷

Disinformation targeting presidential candidates

Fact-checkers have had their hands full, with Associate Press teams debunking numerous falsehoods about presidential candidates Claudia Scheinbaum of the governing coalition Morena

¹⁸ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210524-fake-news-on-the-rise-ahead-of-mexico-elections>

¹⁹ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210524-fake-news-on-the-rise-ahead-of-mexico-elections>

²⁰ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210524-fake-news-on-the-rise-ahead-of-mexico-elections>

²¹ <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international-news/20240526-disinformation-war-engulfs-mexican-presidential-race>

²² <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international-news/20240526-disinformation-war-engulfs-mexican-presidential-race>

²³ <https://apnews.com/article/mexico-fake-news-social-media-elections-2024-487943383b8f57f5eb0cc9ae1324fcc1>

²⁴ <https://apnews.com/article/mexico-fake-news-social-media-elections-2024-487943383b8f57f5eb0cc9ae1324fcc1>

²⁵ <https://apnews.com/article/mexico-fake-news-social-media-elections-2024-487943383b8f57f5eb0cc9ae1324fcc1>

²⁶ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210524-fake-news-on-the-rise-ahead-of-mexico-elections>

²⁷ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210524-fake-news-on-the-rise-ahead-of-mexico-elections>

and her opponent from the opposition Xóchitl Gálvez.

Some rumours included old videos or footage edited out of context and accusing Galvez of planning to scrap the social programmes rolled out by the outgoing president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.²⁸ Social media posts targeting Scheinbaum, who has Jewish roots, alleged she was planning to make circumcision compulsory and turn the revered Basilica of Guadalupe into a museum.²⁹

Both women have also been accused by internet users of having lied about their university degrees.³⁰

Anti-immigrant rhetoric

Immigrants have also been dragged into the disinformation war, with some alleging that Scheinbaum bought them with promises of social assistance from the government, should she win.³¹ This claim too was debunked by the National Election Institute – only a small fraction of naturalised citizens are able to cast a ballot.³²

Content take-downs and censorship

Rights watchdogs, including Article 19, Access Now and R3D, have warned that politicians and other powerful individuals have been weaponizing local laws and regulations to take down social media content, which exposes alleged wrongdoing or questionable behaviour.³³ This form of censorship often occurs when journalists seek to shine a light on matters they believe are of public interest, including politicians making lewd comments.

In February 2024, presidential candidate Jorge Álvarez Mayens of the Citizen Movement shared

²⁸ https://sg.news.yahoo.com/disinformation-war-engulfs-mexican-presidential-015316414.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAAANQpOnBlqJlAdkYbZ93BKvcdn_ptl0RHmJaPMfgHZ1Rlt0MYXM_eDKuz3yxtqFbWqf781_J8fQ4jJNfD0WY_XIHTXUQvhXgO_xALYlIKhU4xsbbaj-ObcrT8iA1QGFv-KFhr-uDZvOY2-3fj8JfFBP8jsbM6EuZ9m0KEfYKKcaC

²⁹ https://sg.news.yahoo.com/disinformation-war-engulfs-mexican-presidential-015316414.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAAANQpOnBlqJlAdkYbZ93BKvcdn_ptl0RHmJaPMfgHZ1Rlt0MYXM_eDKuz3yxtqFbWqf781_J8fQ4jJNfD0WY_XIHTXUQvhXgO_xALYlIKhU4xsbbaj-ObcrT8iA1QGFv-KFhr-uDZvOY2-3fj8JfFBP8jsbM6EuZ9m0KEfYKKcaC

³⁰ https://sg.news.yahoo.com/disinformation-war-engulfs-mexican-presidential-015316414.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAAANQpOnBlqJlAdkYbZ93BKvcdn_ptl0RHmJaPMfgHZ1Rlt0MYXM_eDKuz3yxtqFbWqf781_J8fQ4jJNfD0WY_XIHTXUQvhXgO_xALYlIKhU4xsbbaj-ObcrT8iA1QGFv-KFhr-uDZvOY2-3fj8JfFBP8jsbM6EuZ9m0KEfYKKcaC

³¹ https://sg.news.yahoo.com/disinformation-war-engulfs-mexican-presidential-015316414.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAAANQpOnBlqJlAdkYbZ93BKvcdn_ptl0RHmJaPMfgHZ1Rlt0MYXM_eDKuz3yxtqFbWqf781_J8fQ4jJNfD0WY_XIHTXUQvhXgO_xALYlIKhU4xsbbaj-ObcrT8iA1QGFv-KFhr-uDZvOY2-3fj8JfFBP8jsbM6EuZ9m0KEfYKKcaC

³² https://sg.news.yahoo.com/disinformation-war-engulfs-mexican-presidential-015316414.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAAANQpOnBlqJlAdkYbZ93BKvcdn_ptl0RHmJaPMfgHZ1Rlt0MYXM_eDKuz3yxtqFbWqf781_J8fQ4jJNfD0WY_XIHTXUQvhXgO_xALYlIKhU4xsbbaj-ObcrT8iA1QGFv-KFhr-uDZvOY2-3fj8JfFBP8jsbM6EuZ9m0KEfYKKcaC

³³ <https://www.techpolicy.press/on-eve-of-mexicos-elections-threats-to-freedom-of-expression-online-grow/>

a video on his instagram account, in which he made derogatory comments about other politicians.³⁴ After criticism online, Álvarez took down the video, but not before others had downloaded it and shared it across social media. Journalists who reported on the video and used the footage received content take-down requests from YouTube and Instagram alleging copyright infringement.³⁵³⁶

The digital content production company Badabun enabled Álvarez to request the content take-down.³⁷³⁸ Right groups allege that the company has helped a number of politicians delete unfavourable content from social media, invoking copyright infringement laws created to protect commercial interests – but instead being deployed as a censorship tool.³⁹

Article 19, Access Now and R3D have also raised concerns about the use of provisions meant to tackle “political gender-based violence” to silence voices criticising politicians, who as public figures should be subject to greater scrutiny and criticism than regular citizens.⁴⁰⁴¹

One of the most notable cases involved Delfina Gomez, a candidate for governor of Mexico state, who in 2022 launched complaints with electoral authorities against a number of X (formerly Twitter) users, alleging their posts amounted to political gender-based violence.⁴² The social media posts in question referred to Gomez as an “electoral criminal” and a “thief”.⁴³ The electoral tribunal ordered X and other platforms to remove the posts about Gomez, citing threats to her political rights.⁴⁴

“When applying electoral regulation, it is necessary to adapt the principles and rules regarding freedom of expression, so that they are consistent with digital environments,” said Martha Tudón of Article 19. *“The following kinds of speech are especially protected by the human right to freedom of expression: Political speech and on matters of public interest; the speech about public officials in the exercise of their functions and about people candidates for public office; and speech that forms an element of the personal identity or dignity of the person expressing it.*

³⁴ <https://r3d.mx/2024/02/15/precandidato-a-la-presidencia-censura-videos-noticiosos-mediante-el-mecanismo-de-notificacion-y-retirada/>

³⁵ <https://r3d.mx/2024/02/15/precandidato-a-la-presidencia-censura-videos-noticiosos-mediante-el-mecanismo-de-notificacion-y-retirada/>

³⁶ <https://r3d.mx/2024/02/15/precandidato-a-la-presidencia-censura-videos-noticiosos-mediante-el-mecanismo-de-notificacion-y-retirada/>

³⁷ <https://r3d.mx/2024/02/15/precandidato-a-la-presidencia-censura-videos-noticiosos-mediante-el-mecanismo-de-notificacion-y-retirada/>

³⁸ <https://r3d.mx/2024/02/15/precandidato-a-la-presidencia-censura-videos-noticiosos-mediante-el-mecanismo-de-notificacion-y-retirada/>

³⁹ <https://r3d.mx/2024/02/15/precandidato-a-la-presidencia-censura-videos-noticiosos-mediante-el-mecanismo-de-notificacion-y-retirada/>

⁴⁰ <https://censuraelectoral.mx/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Informe-Censura-Electoral.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://www.techpolicy.press/on-eve-of-mexicos-elections-threats-to-freedom-of-expression-online-grow/>

⁴² <https://www.techpolicy.press/on-eve-of-mexicos-elections-threats-to-freedom-of-expression-online-grow/>

⁴³ <https://www.techpolicy.press/on-eve-of-mexicos-elections-threats-to-freedom-of-expression-online-grow/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.techpolicy.press/on-eve-of-mexicos-elections-threats-to-freedom-of-expression-online-grow/>

In these types of speech, the weight of freedom of expression increases and its limitations become even more exceptional, so any limitation on them must be subject to a level of strict scrutiny.”

Big Tech policies and plans for keeping Mexico’s elections safe

Ahead of the 2 June 2024 vote, Meta, TikTok and YouTube published blog posts about the election, which for the most part mirror their previous election plans. But for a few additions, they highlight existing policies and emphasise information literacy and fact-checking initiatives.⁴⁵⁴⁶⁴⁷

Meta has agreed to collaborate with the National Electoral Institute (INE) – one of the bodies tasked with ensuring free and fair elections. As part of this agreement Meta launched a chatbot on WhatsApp, allowing voters to report possibly false or inaccurate information about the election.⁴⁸ Tik Tok has also partnered with INE and launched an Electoral Guide, which is meant to help voters access election-related information.⁴⁹

TikTok also signed an agreement in October 2024 with the Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary,⁵⁰ which stipulates that the video sharing app will “contribute to the communication of relevant and truthful public electoral information...and discourage disinformation.”⁵¹

“However, it is important to note that these agreements are not reflected in any changes to the platforms’ policies. On the contrary, companies interpret their policies extensively to implement these collaborations without acknowledging any legal accountability or obligation between the platform and the authority, no binding responsibilities to users” said Agneris Sampieri, Latin America policy analyst at Access Now.

But such agreements and cooperation between electoral authorities and social media platforms, coupled with lack of transparency around the rules for such cooperation means that right groups *“remain in the dark about their impact on electoral contexts,”* Sampieri added.

Cooperation agreements between tech companies and electoral authorities as well as tech platforms’ paltry policy updates remain a constant trend when it comes to Global Majority Countries. Like elsewhere in the world, in Mexico, Big Tech has also failed to prioritise platform guardrails and this inaction has resulted in more amplification of electoral disinformation and other types of harmful content.

⁴⁵ <https://blog.youtube/intl/es-419/news-and-events/apoyando-las-elecciones-de-2024-en-mexico/>

⁴⁶ <https://about.fb.com/ltam/news/2024/04/nuestro-trabajo-para-las-elecciones-de-mexico-en-2024/>

⁴⁷ <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/es-latam/elecciones-mexico-2024>

⁴⁸ <https://about.fb.com/ltam/news/2024/04/nuestro-trabajo-para-las-elecciones-de-mexico-en-2024/>

⁴⁹ <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/es-latam/elecciones-mexico-2024>

⁵⁰ <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/es-latam/elecciones-mexico-2024>

⁵¹ <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/es-latam/elecciones-mexico-2024>

Social media companies should be more proactive in terms of identifying and debunking electoral disinformation directed at candidates and about elections, as well as AI generated content, and also roll out 'break the glass' measures in case of violence escalation, as done in countries like Brazil and India.

"Mexico's ballot is yet another example of how much we lack proactive and meaningful engagement emerging from the companies themselves. Brazil has seen a similar movement with companies announcing policy changes - or reaffirming old ones - only after being provoked by the Superior Electoral Court. We need to move beyond the empty commitments to big tech companies actually helping safeguard voters and electoral processes," said Bruna Martins dos Santos, Global Campaigns Manager at Digital Action, Global Coalition for Tech Justice Convener.