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Why Mexicans chose López Obrador as their new leader, in four charts

by [Rick Noack](#) July 2 at 10:40 AM

In a landslide victory, leftist presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador triumphed over his rivals Sunday night in Mexico, securing an estimated 53.6 percent of the vote after a campaign focused on some of the country's most pressing concerns. Some of the factors that accompanied his success, such as the rapid rise of his new party and its populist rhetoric, bear similarities with other seismic political disruptions in recent years.

But while López Obrador may be yet another political star who won against the establishment, his rise was facilitated by distinctively Mexican circumstances — which the 64-year-old was able to capitalize on more effectively than his contenders.

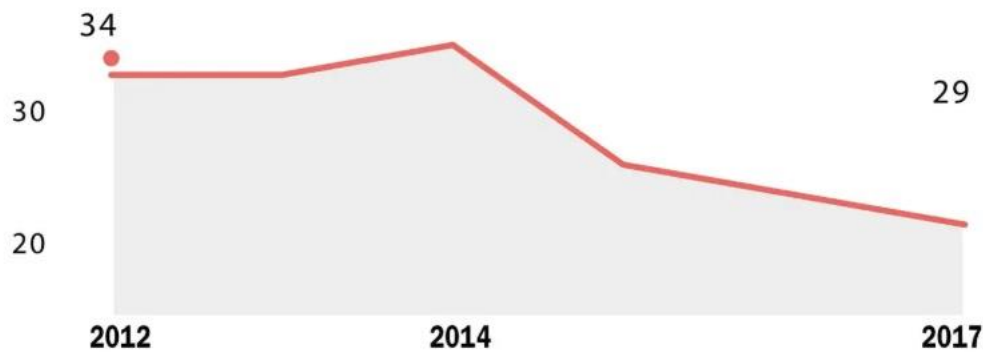
“The corrupt regime is coming to its end.” (López Obrador, June 27)

Throughout his campaign, the future Mexican president repeatedly promised to eradicate the nation's corruption problem and struck a chord with voters.

“Voting is the only tool we have to ensure that this corrupt system changes,” López Obrador voter Luis Valdepeña Bastida, 51, [told my colleague Joshua Partlow](#).

Corruption in Mexico

Mexico's corruption perception index score has deteriorated



Source: Transparency International

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Mexico's corruption index has further deteriorated in recent years, and the country now ranks 130th out of 180 nations. While 2014 marked a hopeful year on many fronts — with corruption, crime rates and drug deaths at record-low levels — the situation has worsened over the past three years. López Obrador turned the reversal of odds into a rallying cry, focused on disadvantaged voters.

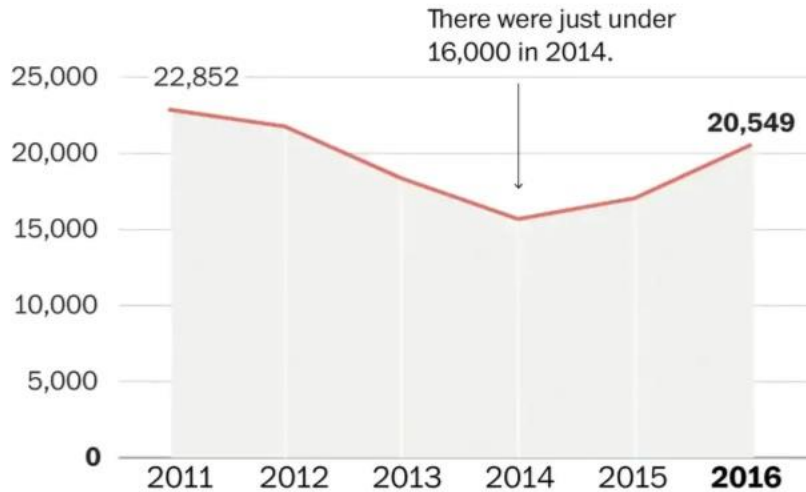
“Hugs, not gunfire.” (López Obrador campaign slogan)

Whereas there were under 16,000 homicides in 2014, the number had increased to more than 20,000 by 2016 and nearly 30,000 homicides last year.

Violence increases in Mexico

The number of homicides in Mexico began declining five years ago, but has seen a steady increase since 2014.

After a drop, homicides rise

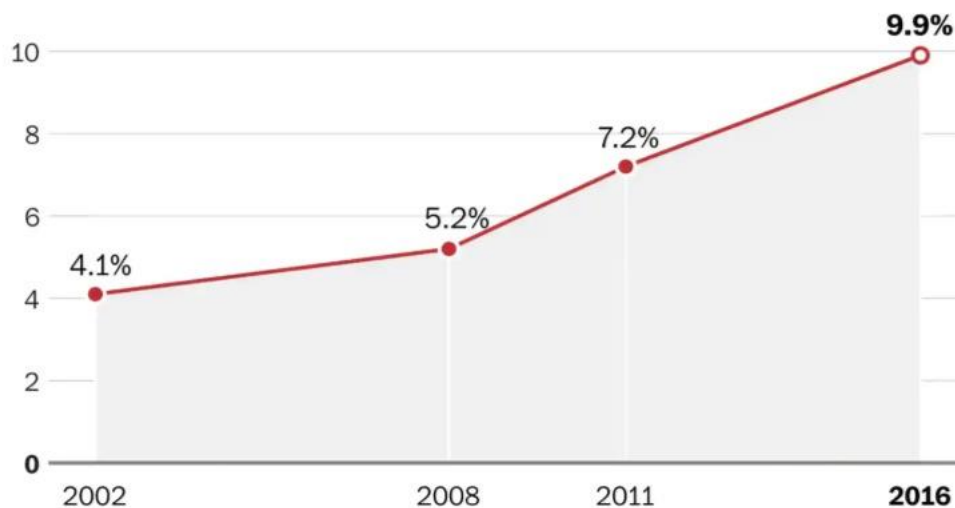


Fighting drug violence was one of López Obrador's most frequently repeated campaign promises, even though the then-candidate came up with an unusual solution: an amnesty for some individuals involved in the drug business, primarily farmers found guilty of planting marijuana and opium poppy.

The use of illegal drugs has been on a steady rise since the early 2000s, and López Obrador has appeared open to the legalization of certain drugs.

Drug use in Mexico

The share of Mexicans between 12 and 65 who have used illegal drugs has increased in every survey by the Health Ministry since 2002.



Source: Mexican Health Ministry

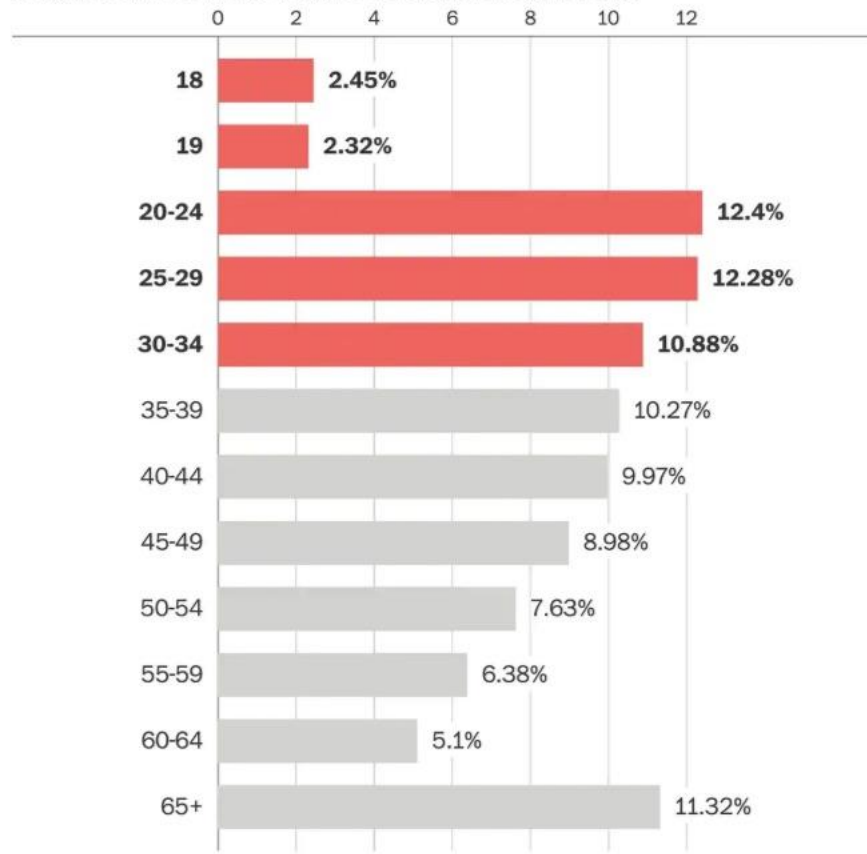
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After years of declining economic performance and worsening corruption, young voters in particular — who make up almost 40 percent of the country's voting-age population — have grown weary of the more-established parties and politicians. They have turned instead to López Obrador, who addressed some of their core issues.

“The state will cease to be a committee at the service of a minority and will represent all Mexicans, rich and poor.”
(López Obrador, July 1)

Demographics in Mexico

Young Mexicans (18-34) make up almost 40 percent of all eligible voters.



As of Feb. 16, 2018

Source: National Institute of Statistics and Geography

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According to data by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), younger Mexicans have higher levels of education than their parents but are still “disadvantaged in terms of income, wealth, jobs and earnings.” Tapping into younger voters’ dissatisfaction with that discrepancy, López Obrador specifically targeted these voters during his campaign, promising them jobs and other educational schemes to confront the cartels’ recruitment drive.

As Mexico’s first leftist leader since the country started its transition to multiparty democracy more than three decades ago, López Obrador will now be judged on whether he can deliver on those far-reaching promises.