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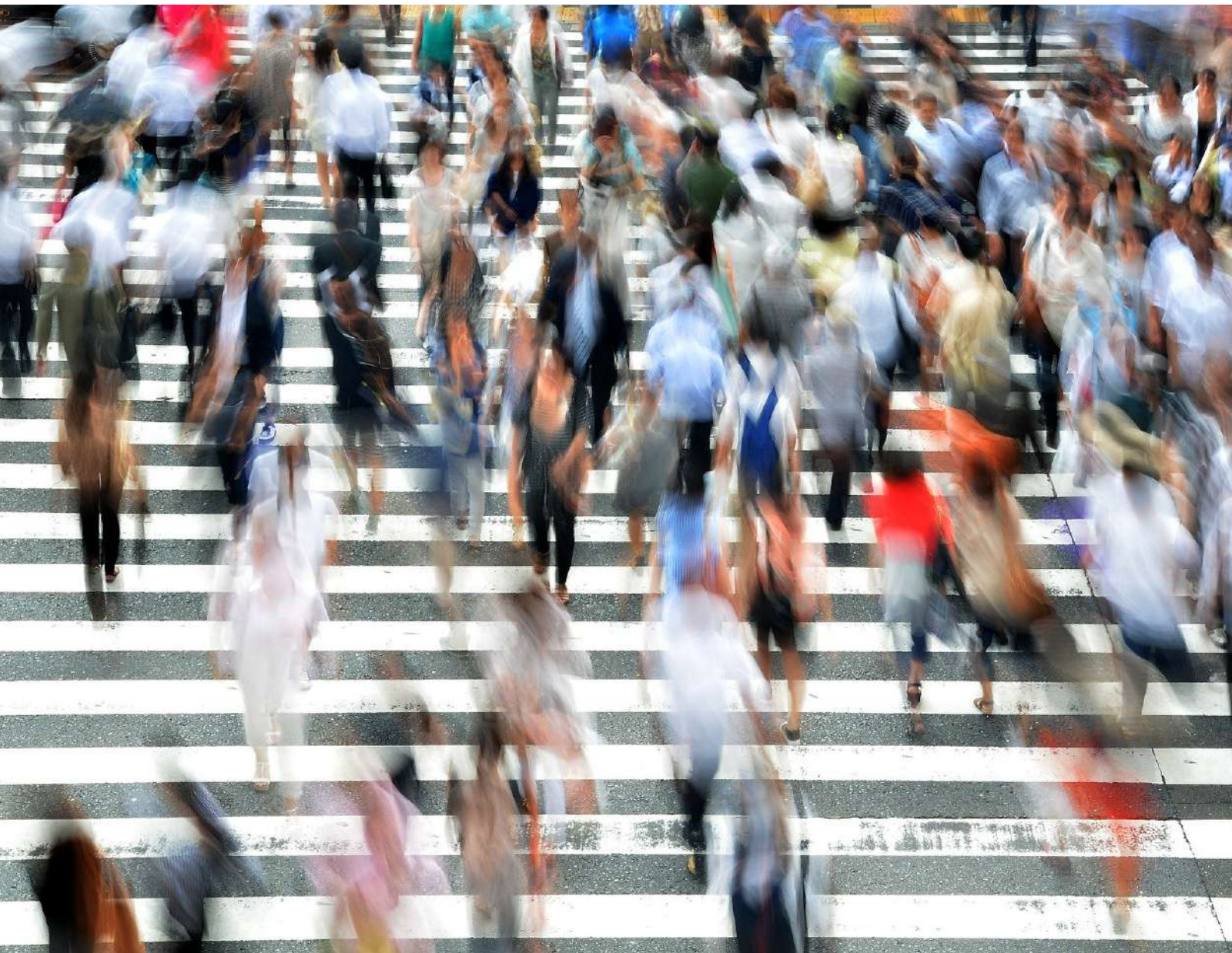
FORTALECEMOS
LAS DEMOCRACIAS
DE AMÉRICA LATINA

STRENGTHENING
DEMOCRACIES
IN LATIN AMERICA

SEPTEMBER 2020

Image of power Power of an image

REPORT ON PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL RATINGS IN LATIN AMERICA
JULY-AUGUST 2020



Summary

So far in 2020, the levels of citizen support for governments have shown fluctuations throughout the region. Until April, the data suggested a strengthening of the image of presidents with wide margins of approval of their management in the face of COVID-19. However, from then on, the trend changed in most of the countries along with successive extensions of social isolation measures, a collapse of economic activity, an increase in unemployment and a deterioration in the expectations of the population in the medium and long term. Of 13 countries, 6 returned or remained at pre-pandemic support levels, 3 are below and only 4 exceed them.

At this point, two countries stand out for the singularity of the evolution of public opinion: Brazil and Mexico. While most of the region's presidents gained support in the first months of the pandemic, Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Jair Bolsonaro lost points. The opposite is happening now, despite criticism for their lax policy against COVID-19.

This monitoring of the presidential image compiles public opinion polls developed between July and August in 14 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and compares them with the first six months of the year. It also includes approval data of Legislative Branches in 5 countries and, towards the end, a brief analysis of 3 cases.

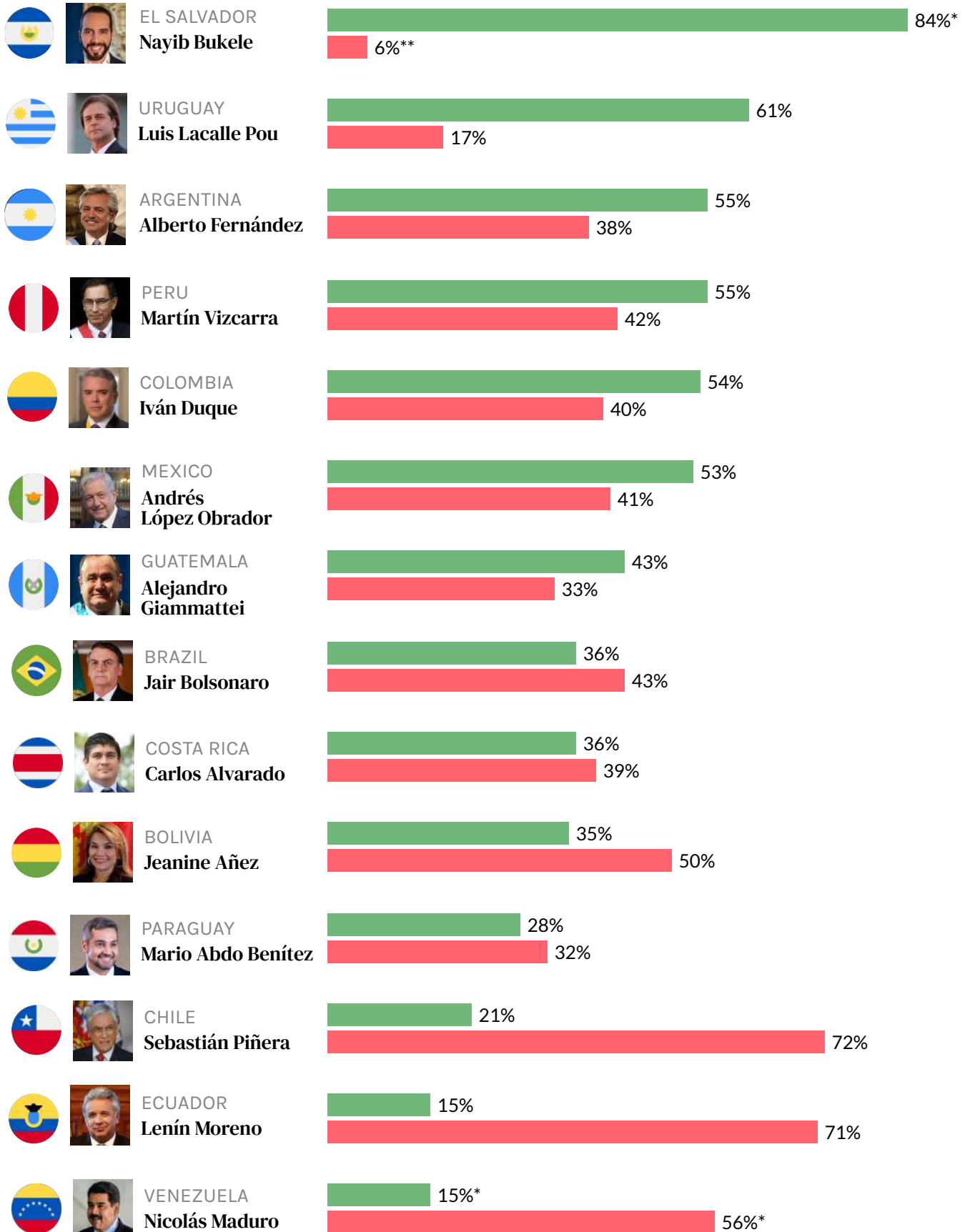
Contents

- Ranking of presidential image
- Between July and August, 6 governments registered levels of support above 50%
- Bolsonaro and López Obrador achieved an image rebound
- Assessment of COVID-19 management: below presidential approval rating in Brazil and Mexico
- Approval of Congresses: in Brazil and Chile, it barely reaches 15%
- Brazil: Bolsonaro recovers in polls, despite criticism of the management against COVID-19
- Mexico: AMLO regains support but remains far from pre-pandemic levels
- Argentina: Fernández, 10 points below the May-June level
- Methodological notes

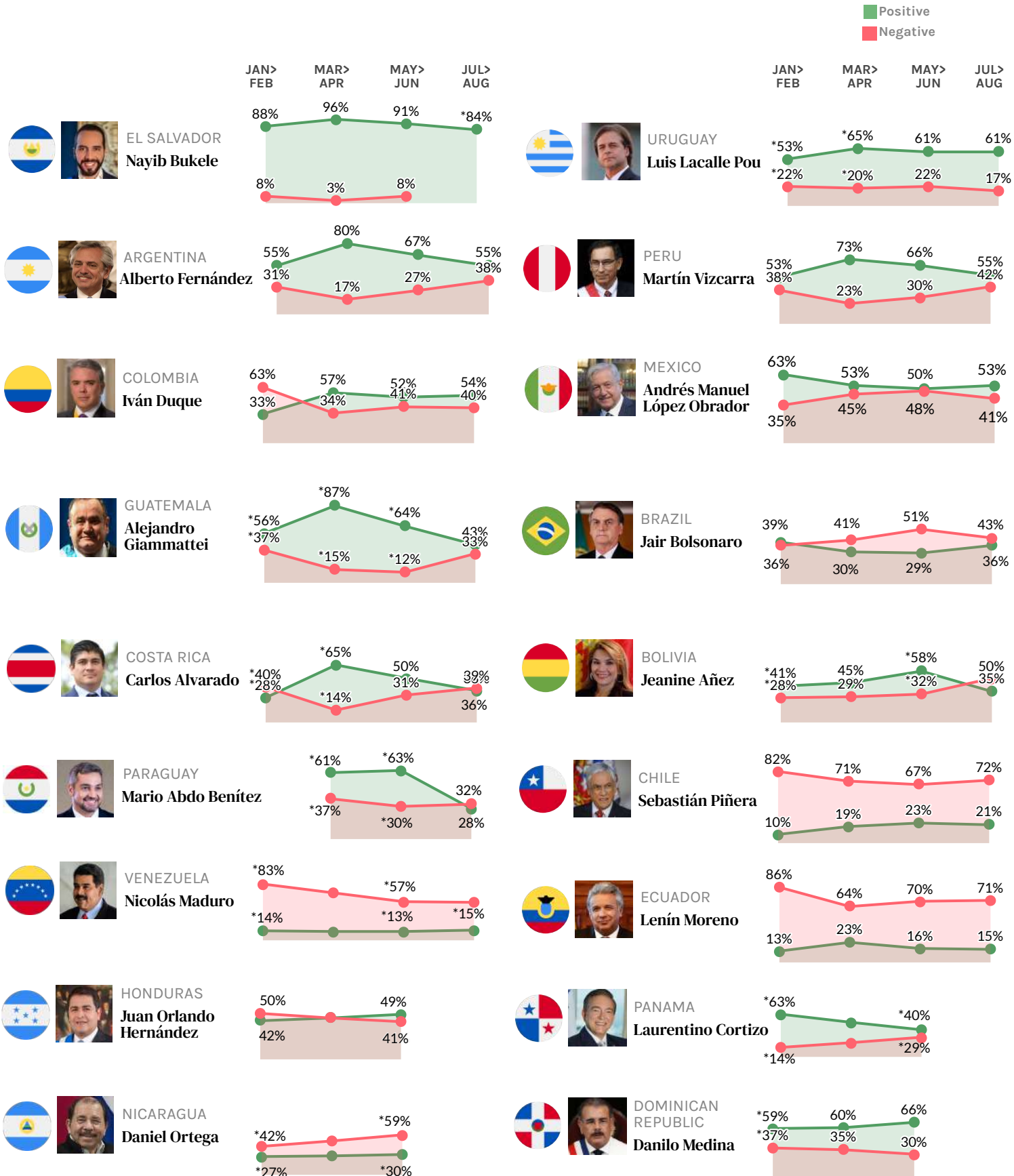
Ranking of presidential image

July - August 2020

Positive
Negative



Between July and August, 6 governments registered levels of support above 50%



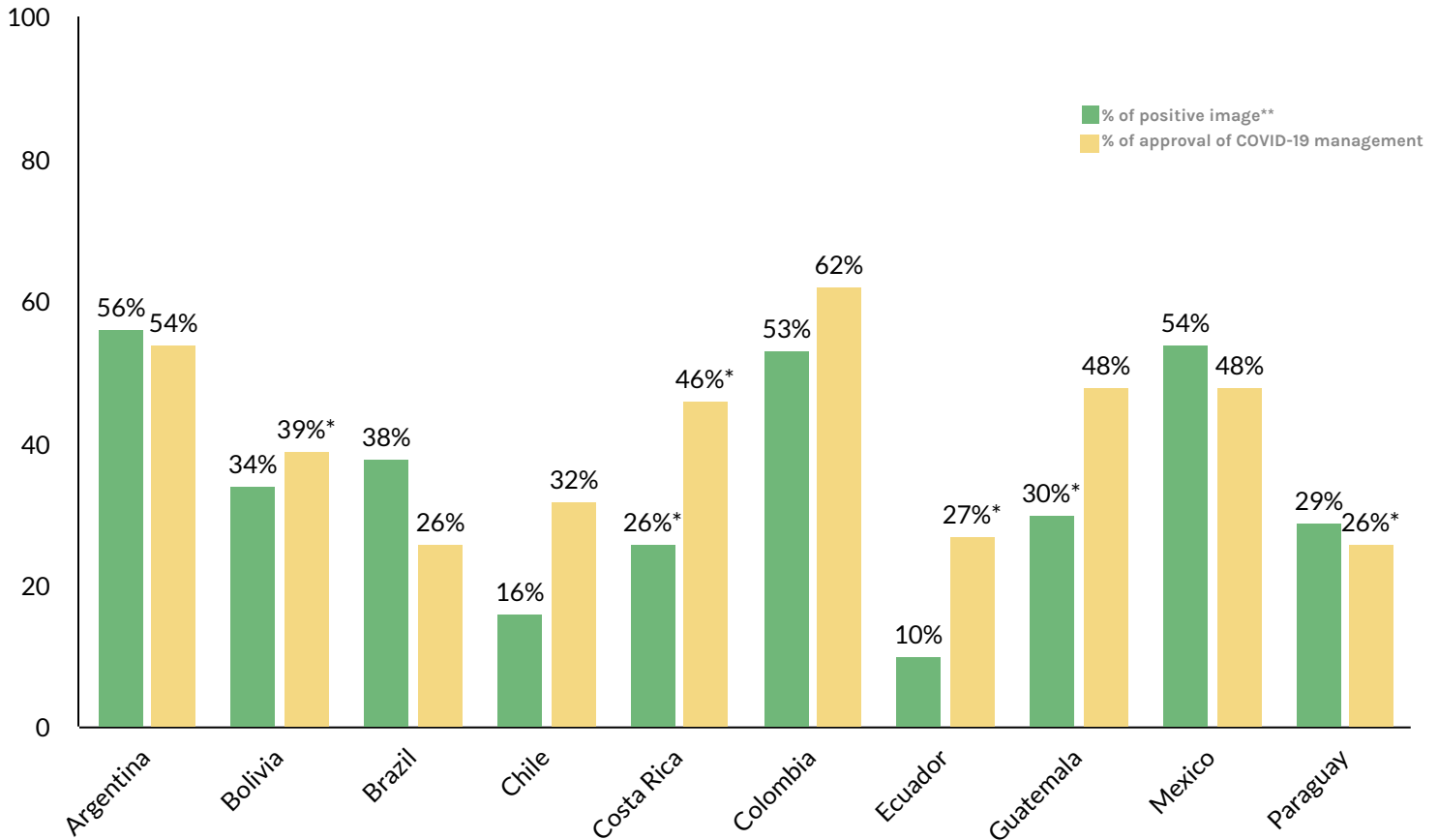
Source: Author's own elaboration based on a compilation of public opinion surveys carried out between July and August. The empty points correspond to periods when no data is available. *Based on a single data source. To see the sources: [click here](#)

Bolsonaro and López Obrador achieved an image rebound

July - August 2020

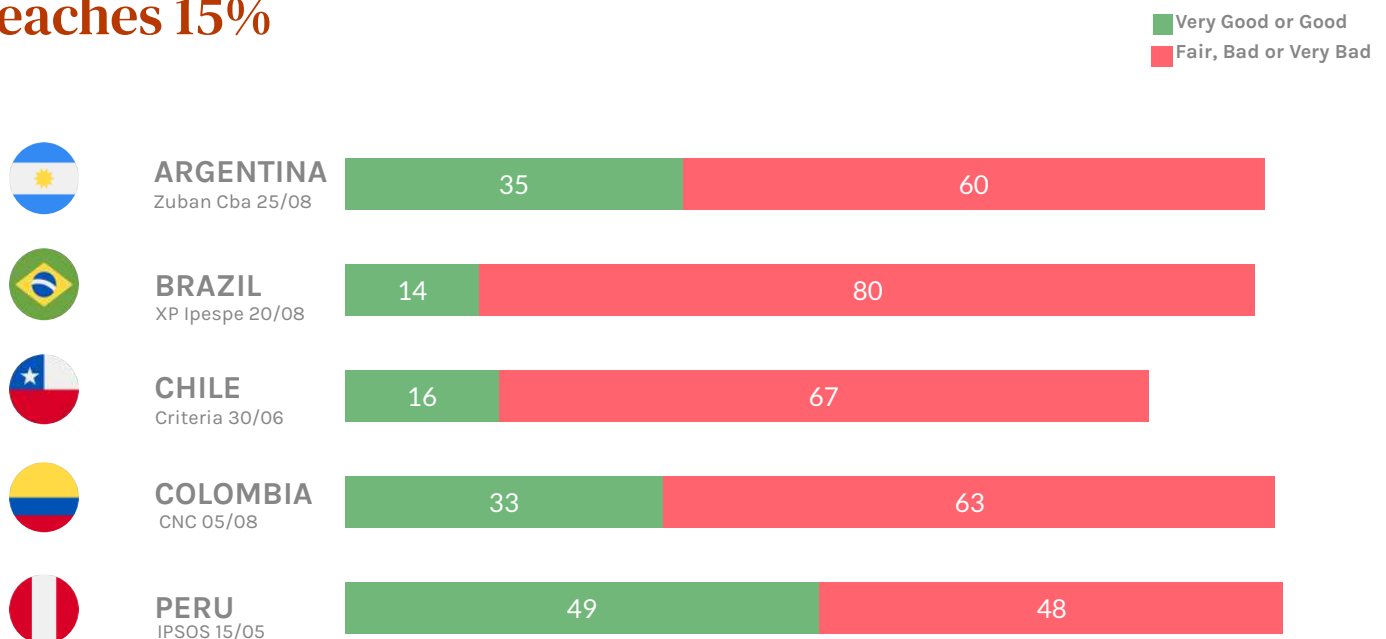


Assessment of COVID-19 management: below presidential approval rating in Brazil and Mexico



Source: Author's own elaboration based on a compilation of public opinion surveys carried out between July and August. (*) Based on a single data source. (**) It includes surveys on image level, personal approval and management approval (not COVID-19 management). To see the sources, [click here](#).

Approval of Congresses: in Brazil and Chile, it barely reaches 15%



Bolsonaro recovers in polls, despite criticism of the management against COVID-19



President Jair Bolsonaro has

36% APPROVAL according to an average of sources surveyed by Directorio Legislativo* between July and August 2020

Contrary to the largest of the region's presidents, Bolsonaro's image is at its highest since the beginning of the year, with strong approval among the beneficiaries of the assistance programs. The improvement also coincided with certain moderation in his relationship with the press, although the truce ended abruptly in August. In a scenario of high political fragmentation, the president is emerging as the candidate with the most possibilities for 2022.

Managemet against COVID-19

Unlike other presidents, the level of support for his management against COVID-19 is far below his personal image. According to XP / Ipspe data from July, 72% of those surveyed considered that his performance in the face of the pandemic has been fair, bad or very bad. This perception could be counteracted by the management of the governors valued positively by 38% of those surveyed.

Emergency Program

One of the points that the polls associate with Bolsonaro's image upswing is the implementation of an emergency assistance program of 600 reais. According to Datafolha data, 44% of those surveyed declared that this is their only source of income. Approval also rose among the unemployed. According to official data, the unemployment rate stands at 13%, the highest in recent years.

Attacks on the press

After a few weeks in which the president showed signs of moderation in his relationship with the press, Bolsonaro verbally attacked a journalist for asking about a scandal involving his son's former adviser Fabián Queiroz. Then he declared that the media "only do bad things." Between January and June, the National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ) counted 245 attacks on journalism, including expressions of discredit and personal attacks.

Relationship with the Supreme Court

The relationship between the Executive Branch and the highest federal court has not ceased to strain in recent months after versions of an alleged attempt to remove the 11 magistrates that comprise it, who were also victims of threats. In July, one of its members warned the president that he could be prosecuted before the International Criminal Court for his policy against COVID-19.



AMLO regains support but remains far from pre-pandemic levels



Presidente Andrés López Obrador has

53% APPROVAL
according to an average of sources surveyed by Directorio Legislativo* between July and August 2020

While the image of the region's leaders strengthened in the first months of the pandemic, AMLO was unable to stop the loss of the support base that led him to the presidency. The opposite is happening now, despite criticism of his management of the COVID-19 and the deep contraction of the Mexican economy that in the second quarter exceeded 18%. For the president, "the worst is over."

Management against COVID-19 and its effects

In mid-August, AMLO declared that "the worst" of the health and economic crisis was over, and ratified the strategy defined by the government. However, he also acknowledged that since March a million people have lost their jobs. According to official data, in the second quarter GDP fell 18.7%, the largest drop in the last 100 years. In the surveys, unemployment emerges as the greatest concern for Mexicans.

Fight against corruption

The judicial cases against Emilio Loyoza, former PEMEX director accused in relation to the Odebrecht case, and Genaro García Luna, former Secretary of Security detained in the United States, were described by AMLO as an "opportunity to banish corruption." However, he asked that there be no political lynchings. Loyoza's complaints involve three former presidents and legislators. His own brother was recently involved in allegations of embezzlement.

Meeting with Donald Trump

At the beginning of July, AMLO traveled to the United States, on the occasion of the entry into force of the T-MEC on July 1. There he met with Donald Trump with whom he exchanged praise and thanks. His attitude was questioned by the opposition, which affirms that the bilateral relationship was improved by the concessions made by Mexico. However, surveys show that two-thirds of Mexicans view the T-MEC with optimism.

Legislative agenda

The legislative bloc of the ruling party, Morena, presented its agenda for the next period of ordinary sessions that began on September 1: elimination of presidential privileges, trial of former presidents, reform of the Retirement Savings System and regulation of digital platforms. For its part, the opposition announced that it will promote legislation for economic reactivation and social emergency.



ARGENTINA

Fernández, 10 points below the May-June level



Presidente Alberto Fernández has

55%

APPROVAL

according to an average of sources surveyed by Directorio Legislativo* between July and August 2020

Fernández's image continues to decline after exponential growth in the first two months of the pandemic. While relations with the opposition are increasingly tense, the government has to face the criticism raised by its judicial reform bill and its inability to reactivate the legislative agenda. Unemployment, insecurity and inflation, are among the main concerns of Argentines.

Management against COVID-19

Social fatigue due to the prolonged measures to restrict mobility, marked the beginning of a stage of gradual flexibility, even before the government announced it. Since then, the epidemiological situation has worsened alarmingly, outside the Buenos Aires metropolitan area. Despite this, public opinion polls indicate that the main concern of Argentines today is unemployment.

A divided Congress

The differences between the ruling party and the opposition are increasingly visible in Congress, with an agenda virtually blocked by the lack of consensus on the modality of the session. In the Chamber of Deputies. The main opposition bloc Juntos por el Cambio demands that tax, criminal and social security legislation be dealt with in person and not in a virtual or mixed manner, as has been the case up to now.

Reform of the criminal justice system

The government could face another major political setback if the Chamber of Deputies rejects its ambitious reform of the federal criminal justice system. The bill has already been approved by the majority-ruling Senate, but the questions of the opposition and of the actors of the judicial system themselves anticipate a much tougher negotiation in the lower House.

Renegotiation of the external debt

After 6 months of arduous negotiations, in early August the government reached an agreement for the restructuring of the external debt with the three main groups of foreign private creditors. The amount negotiated exceeds 65,000 million dollars. Ahead, comes the renegotiation of a debt of 44,000 million with the IMF. According to reports, the future agreement will be sent to Congress for its approval.

*To see the sources: [click here](#)

Methodological notes

July - August 2020

This monitoring of presidential image is based on simple average calculations of approval rating surveys developed in each country between July and August 2020. The different data sources are not weighted according to the methodology used, the sample size or the surveyor. It includes measurements of the level of approval of the president, level of approval of the government's handling of COVID-19, presidential image and level of approval of the administration. The averages for the July - August period have been compared with those of the previous two quarters, using the same methodology.

While the goal is to average multiple data sources, compliance is conditioned by the availability of information. For this reason, all cases where figures are based on a single data source per period have been clearly identified.

In some cases, a considerable level of dispersion has been detected between one measurement and another.

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JULY 2020

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