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FORTALECEMOS
LAS DEMOCRACIAS
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STRENGTHENING
DEMOCRACIES
IN LATIN AMERICA

MARCH 2021

Image of power Power of an image

REPORT ON PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL RATINGS IN LATIN AMERICA
JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2021



Executive summary

2021 began with a general dip in presidential approval ratings, especially notable in the case of Iván Duque (Colombia). Between January and February the Presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay, Costa Rica and El Salvador also saw their popularity shrink. The only heads of state to buck the trend were Sebastián Piñera of Chile and Luis Arce in Bolivia, while perceptions of Andrés López Obrador (Mexico) and Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua) remained unchanged.

At the regional level, the first two months of the year coincided with the start of vaccination programs in all but few Latin American countries. On top of growing concern over the rise in Covid-19 cases and the possible impact of new viral strains, Latin American governments are also being judged on the fairness of their vaccine rollout – and against a backdrop of the region as a whole lagging behind global inoculation efforts.

In recent weeks, accusations of mismanagement and special privileges in vaccination programs have surfaced in at least five governments, leading to the resignation of health ministers in Argentina, Ecuador, Peru and the Dominican Republic. In particular, a shortage of medical supplies and an all but collapsed health system have put Paraguay's administration under immense strain, with the President sacking several of his cabinet ministers just some days ago following protests.

To complicate matters, eight countries in the region will have elections this year. This busy schedule kicked off in February with the disputed ballot in Ecuador – now set for a runoff in April to decide on the next President. In El Salvador, the ruling party won a resounding victory in the mid-term legislative elections and secured a comfortable majority in Congress.

Next up in March are the primaries in Honduras and a month later, presidential elections in Peru where 130 seats Congress are up for grabs. Last but not least, Chile will hold general elections in November and before that a separate vote to determine the members of the body that is to be tasked with rewriting the country's constitution.

About this publication. This is a bimonthly review of presidential approval ratings using composite data drawn from opinion polls in 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The ranking of presidents by approval rating is produced solely on the basis of the data available for each bimonthly period.

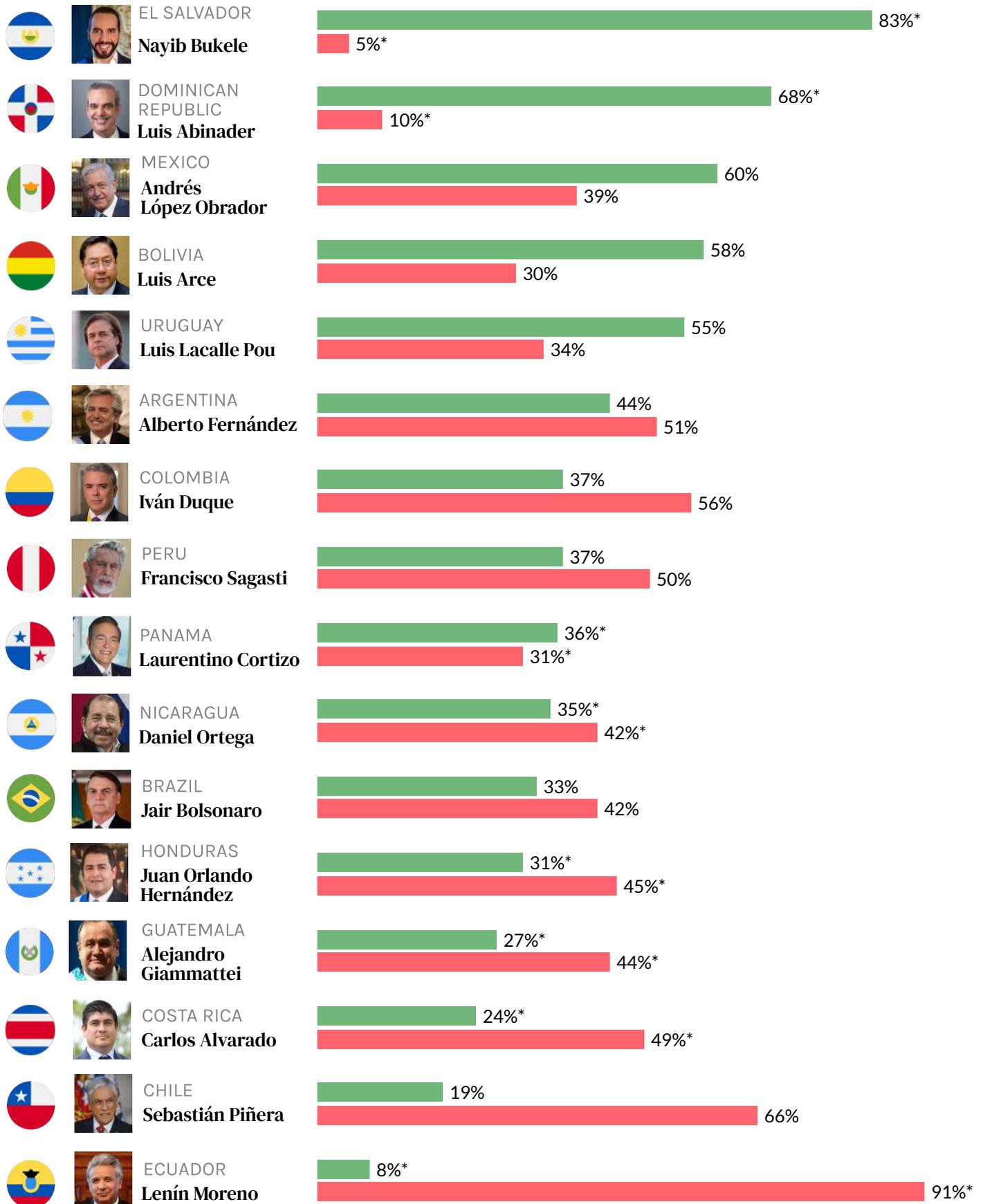
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Presidential Image Ranking

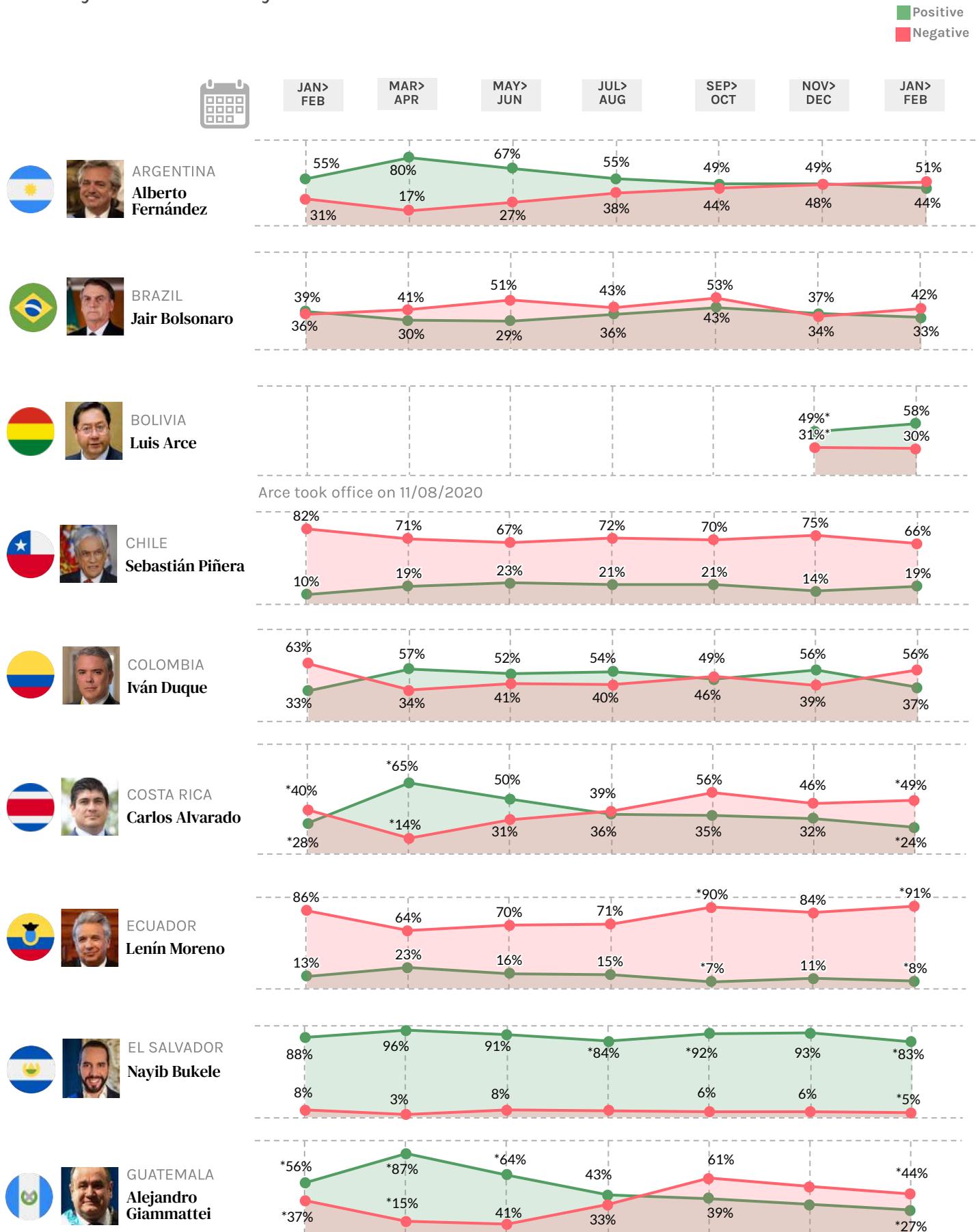
January - February 2021

Positive
Negative



How did the image of presidents evolve?

January 2020 - February 2021



Source: Author's own elaboration based on a compilation of public opinion surveys carried out between Jan 2020 and Feb 2021. The empty points correspond to periods when no data is available. *Based on a single data source. To see the sources [click here](#).

How did the image of presidents evolve?

January 2020 - February 2021

Positive
Negative



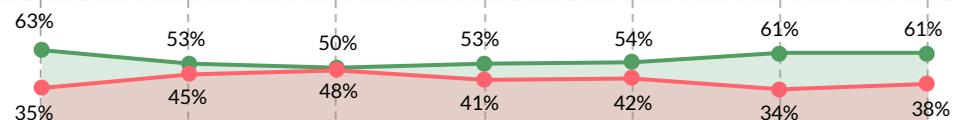
JAN> FEB MAR> APR MAY> JUN JUL> AUG SEP> OCT NOV> DEC JAN> FEB



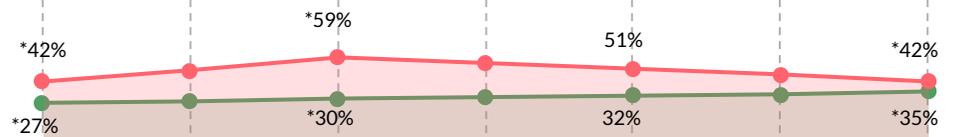
HONDURAS
Juan Orlando Hernández



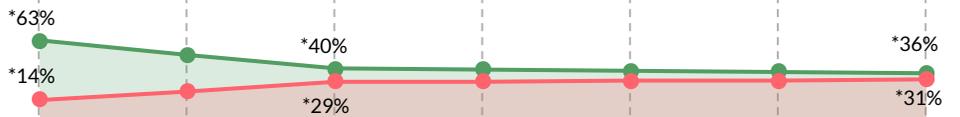
MEXICO
Andrés Manuel López Obrador



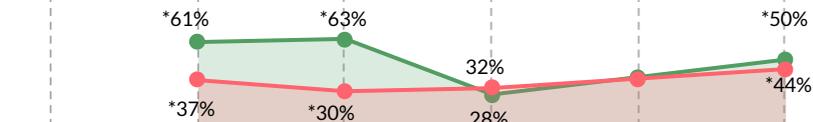
NICARAGUA
Daniel Ortega



PANAMA
Laurentino Cortizo



PARAGUAY
Mario Abdo Benítez



PERU
Francisco Sagasti

Sagasti took office on 11/17/2020

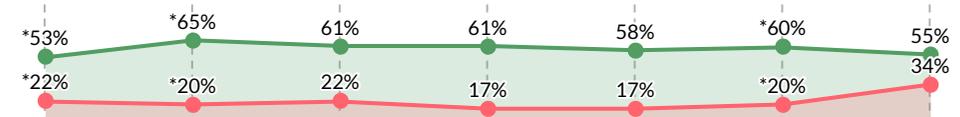


DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
Luis Abinader

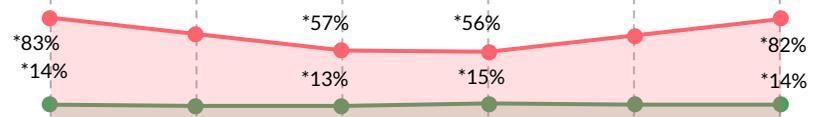
Abinader took office on 08/16/2020



URUGUAY
Luis Lacalle Pou



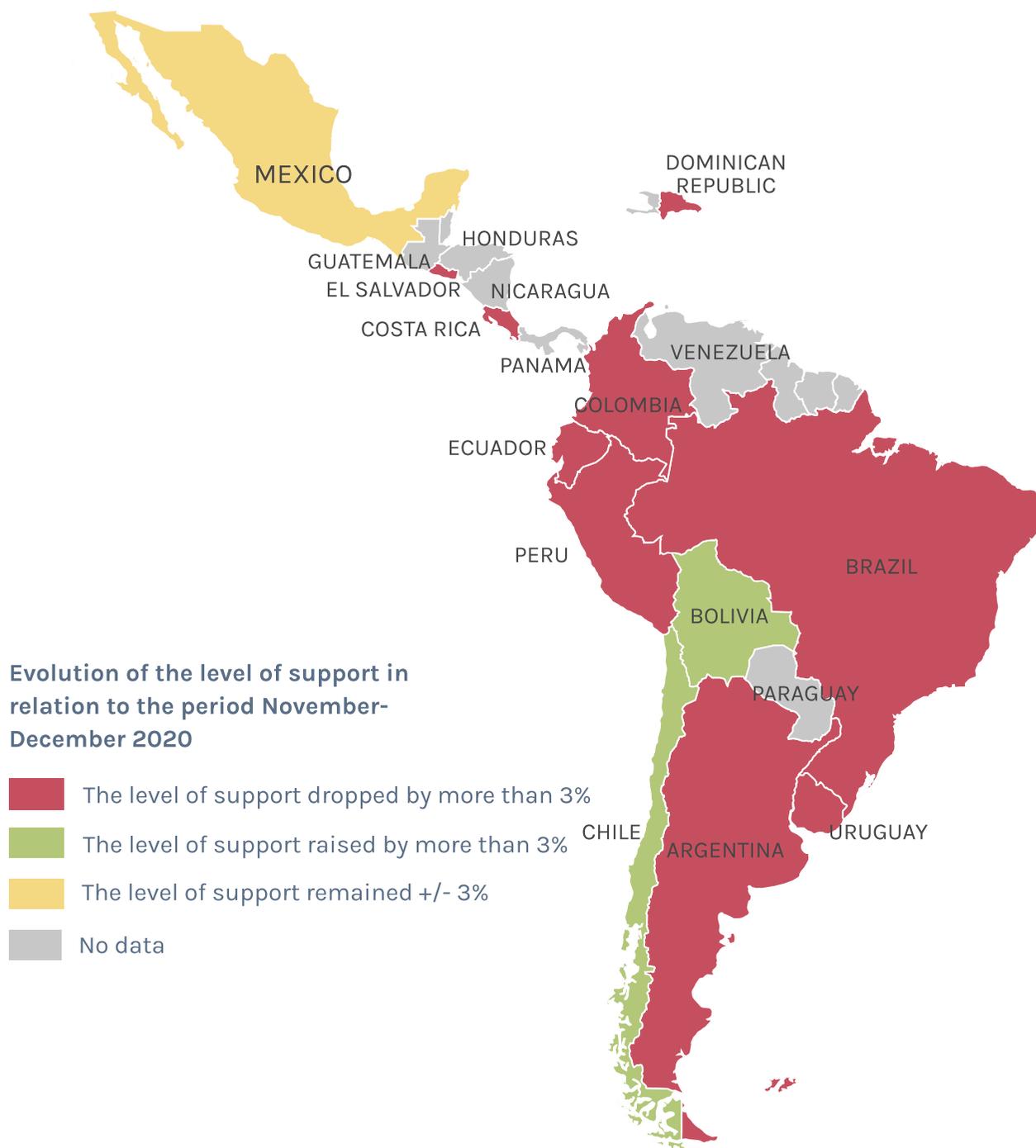
VENEZUELA
Nicolás Maduro



Presidents Piñera and Arce the only ones to buck the trend

November 2020 - February 2021

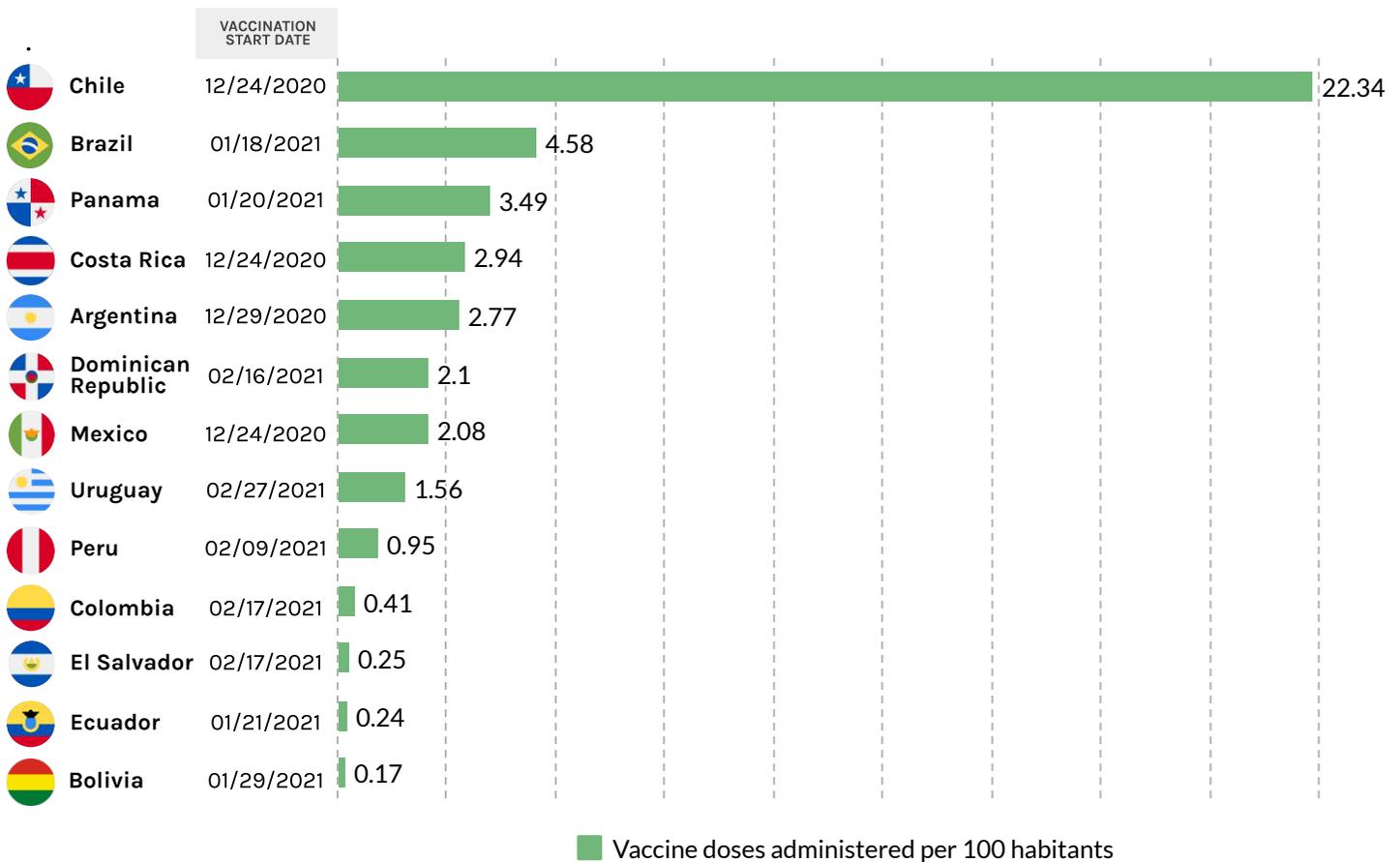
While the rest of Latin America witnessed a **decline in favorable perceptions of their Presidents between January and February**, two heads of state achieved the opposite: Sebastián Piñera (Chile), whose popularity has languished for some time, and Luis Arce (Bolivia), who still only recently came to power.



Covid-19 vaccines: how have they impacted presidential approval?

Between the end of December and February, vaccination programs began in 16 countries of the region. Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico were the first to start, but to date only Chile has registered significant achievements in terms of meaningful progress.

The difficulty of striking deals with suppliers and the trickling arrival of the first batches largely dampened any praise for the governments, several of which – **Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Brazil** – have seen scandals erupt over special favors and queue-jumping in vaccinations, prompting the resignation of health ministers in Argentina, Ecuador and Peru as well as the Peruvian chancellor. Nicaragua, meanwhile, has been criticized for lacking any prioritization methodology or indeed any viable vaccination plan whatsoever. Paraguay’s health minister resigned after recent protests over an acute shortage of medical supplies and stretched health system, while that of the Dominican Republic was dismissed for allegedly altering the price of syringes in a bidding process.

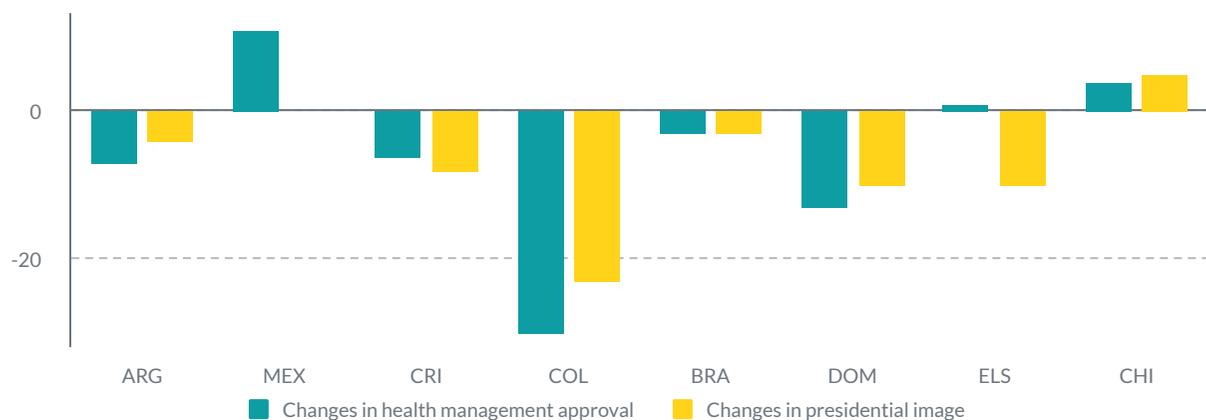


In **Chile**, measurements show vaccination efforts go hand in hand with an **increased approval rating of the country’s health management**, which rose from 39% to 53 % between January and February.

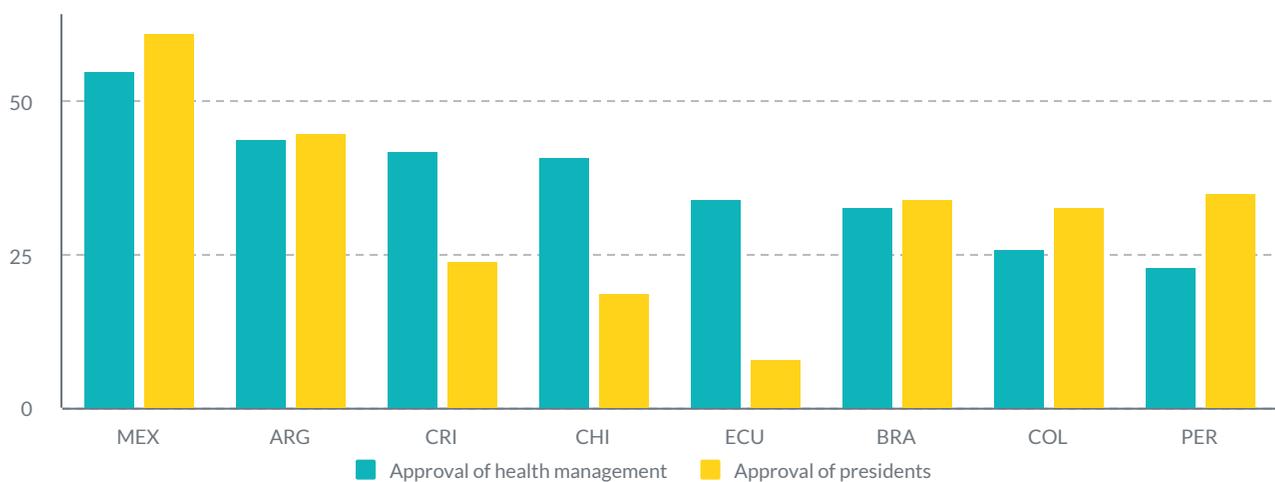
Covid-19 vaccines: how have they impacted presidential approval?

Although measures of presidential image and evaluation of health management do not only reflect the availability of vaccines, it is possible to observe some association in this regard.

1) Despite the start of vaccination campaigns, **health management approval and presidential perceptions only rose together in Chile**, the country that has achieved the most on inoculation.



2) In **countries where vaccines are more widely available, evaluation of health management tends to rise** and also tends to be better or equal to the presidential approval, with the exception of Mexico.



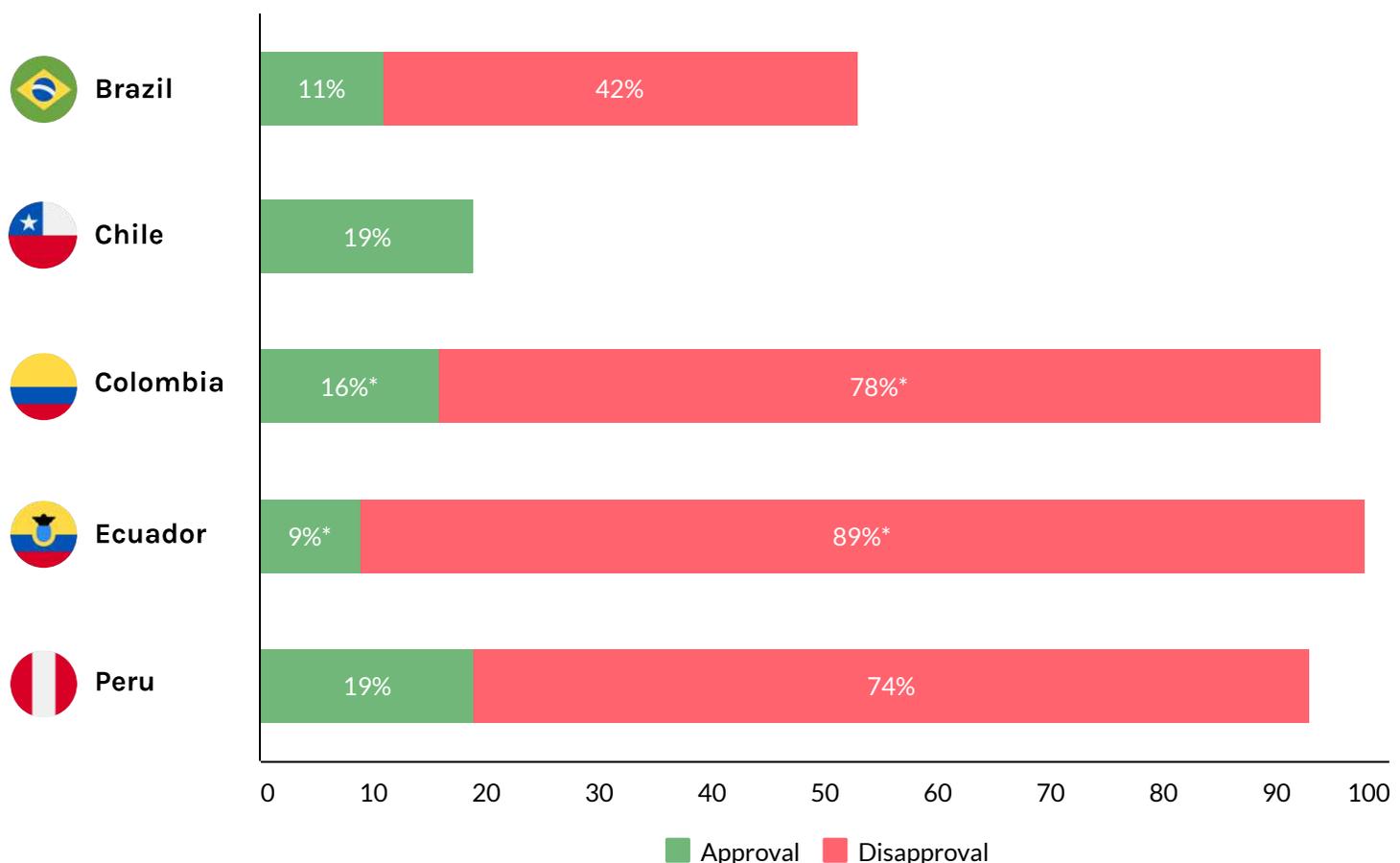
3) The **drop in presidential approval tends to be greater in countries where vaccination campaigns started later or which report fewer results** in terms of immunizing its people. The smoothness of the process also matters: although Costa Rica - whose president's approval rating dropped by 8% - was one of the first countries to initiate inoculation, the vaccine program was held up for a month.

What do citizens think of the work of their parliaments?

January- February 2021

Positive perceptions of the work of the region's congresses started from a low base and **have dropped** further compared to the end of 2020, from an average of 17.57% to 14.75%.

Over the course of the past year, the legislative branches have had to adjust their operations to the new conditions. Most opted to transition to virtual working models whilst others continued working in-person but with social distancing. These changes were unprecedented for the region, but at the same time highlighted the difficulties that the Legislative branches already experienced in terms of ensuring transparency and access to public information. For an in-depth analysis of this, we invite you to read our report (in Spanish) "[Parliamentary activity during the health crisis: challenges and opportunities](#)".



The highlights of this issue



COLOMBIA



Economic crisis, unemployment and internal conflict hit Duque's image hard

The Colombian president's image **plunged by 23% in just two months**, squandering the credit he had built up over the handling of the pandemic. Among the causes of this abrupt fall are persistent unemployment, slow vaccine roll-out and violent crime

In 2020, GDP contracted by 6.8% (the most since 1975), while poverty rose from 19.1% in 2019 to 38.7%, according to ECLAC data. Added to this has been a rise in unemployment, which in January reached 17.3%. A survey conducted by Invamer, a Colombian pollster, shows that economic aid is only covering 16% of the population. The government has also faced criticism from the opposition and public over delays in its vaccination campaign, which only started on February 17 after the country received its first batch of just 50,000 doses.

In addition to this, the country is **experiencing its worst wave of violence since the disarmament of the FARC in 2016**. The army continues to confront guerrilla dissidence, with deaths recorded this year of members of the party founded by FARC following the peace process. This was made even worse by a report just made public by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP, in Spanish) that reveals that civilians killed during the armed conflict with the FARC are likely to have numbered three times more than that claimed by the Colombian army over the years.

The highlights of this issue



BRAZIL



“For the media, the virus is me”

Bolsonaro's popularity drops 11% points in last four months

Bolsonaro's declining approval coincides with an **alarming deterioration in the country's health situation**: the average number of deaths has barely dropped from a thousand cases a day and the number of serious cases have increased among the young. The contagion curve has already led 19 of the 27 states of the country to the limit of their care capacity, which has even required internally transferring critically ill patients.

Despite the call made by the National Council of Health Secretaries for the adoption of immediate measures at the national level, the **President continues to resist imposing a lockdown fearing the impact this will have on the economy**, and instead is putting his trust in vaccination, which to date has only reached 3.37% of the population (with one dose only).

The inaction of the central government has prompted some governors to take their own measures, among them São Paulo, where the approval rate of state's health management has risen to 10 percentage points above that of the President.

Among the government's priorities for 2021 is an **ambitious privatization plan** with which it expects to raise some 70 billion USD and which involves the Eletrobras company and the state-run postage company. Bolsonaro also announced changes at Petrobras, including the replacement of its president, which caused its shares to plummet last February.

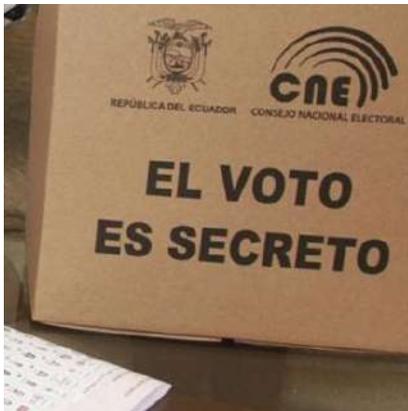
2021: a year marked by elections

Between January and February, political forces in Ecuador and El Salvador underwent their first electoral test.



ECUADOR

Ecuador will have to wait until April 11 to know who will be its next President



On February 7, presidential and legislative elections were held in the Andean country. None of the 16 presidential candidates obtained the necessary majority to win in the first round, so citizens will have to go to the polls again, in April, to determine the next head of state until 2025.

The **Correa-backed candidate Andrés Aráuz Galarza** of the UNES alliance **won the most votes (32.72%)**. He is thus set to challenge for the presidency in a second round runoff election with businessman Guillermo Lasso, who obtained 19.74%, only 32,000 votes more than the indigenous leader Yaku Perez. The latter was, in fact, the great surprise of the day, upsetting forecasts with a far stronger performance than indicated by the polls. **The next president will take office on May 24.**

At the legislative level, the Assembly will be formed by representatives of 8 political spaces, none of them with a

majority of their own, so the incoming government will necessarily have to negotiate in order to promote its agenda and achieve the approval of its most important bills. The task is expected to be arduous given that the next president will have to deal not only with a fragile and over-indebted economy, but also with the fiscal and tax reforms committed to with international creditors.

For an analysis of this you may wish to read our [post-election report](#), which was released prior to the confirmation of Guillermo Lasso as being the runner up.

2021: a year marked by elections



EL SALVADOR



El Salvador: ruling party obtained a comfortable majority in the legislative elections of February 28

As anticipated by the polls, Nuevas Ideas, the party founded by President Nayib Bukele, won with more than 70% of votes. These results will allow the ruling party to command its own majority in the Legislative Assembly as of May 1 and advance its agenda without needing agreement from other political forces.

Currently, the legislative branch is dominated by the two main opposition parties - ARENA and the FMLN - which, in total, hold 58 of the 84 available seats. It is thanks to this large majority that they have been able to advance in the approval of numerous bills, not strictly aligned with the government's interests, which in last year led to significant tensions between the two powers.

Preliminary data made official by the National Electoral Tribunal indicate that Nuevas Ideas will have a

legislative representation of 56 seats which, added to the 5 seats of its ally GANA, **would be enough to secure a qualified majority. These numbers will allow the ruling party to approve a wide variety of laws, key appointments in the Judicial branch and the Attorney General's Office, and even reforms to the Constitution,** which are already being analyzed in an ad hoc committee led by President Félix Ulloa.

For coverage of this, we invite you to read our [post-electoral report](#) (in spanish).

2021: a year marked by elections



Peru approaches presidential elections with a highly fragmented electorate

On April 11, Peru will elect its next president, 2 vice presidents and all 130 members of Congress. In the event of a run-off election, which in light of the polls seems highly probable, the definition will be delayed until June 6. The new mandates will begin at the end of July 2021.

The year 2020 was certainly a special year for Peru, and not only because of the economic crisis generated by COVID-19: it also saw **three presidents holding office in the span of just 10 days**. Martin Vizcarra, who completed the term of office of Pedro Kuczynski, had started in 2016, and was impeached in early November for alleged acts of corruption. His immediate successor, then president of Congress Manuel Merino, held office for just five days before submitting his resignation. Finally, the reins passed to former legislator of Partido Morado Francisco Sagasti.

Among the names emerging for the presidential race are Yhony Lescano (Acción Popular), Keiko Fujimori (Fuerza Popular) and Verónica Mendoza (Juntos por el Perú). On the other hand, the candidacy of George Forsyth (Victoria Nacional), one of the best ranked in the polls, was ruled ineligible by the Electoral Jury for omitting information in his resume.

All in all, the most striking fact is electoral fragmentation: **not one of the candidates is above 11% in the polls**, while at least one third of the citizenry is still undecided.

2021: a year marked by elections



The election of constituent convention members: first appointment to the polls in 2021

On April 11, Chilean men and women will have to elect the 155 people who will make up the convention in charge of drafting a new Political Constitution of the Republic.

The elections are the direct consequence of the national plebiscite of October 25, 2020, in which 78% of the population voted in favor of moving forward with the modification of the Charter. The revision of the constitutional text is in turn part of the Peace Agreement signed in Congress in 2019, in the midst of social upheaval.

Several relevant figures of recent Chilean politics will run for this election, such as Felipe Harboe (senator for Partido por la Democracia), Gonzalo Blumel (former Minister Secretary General of the Presidency between 2018 and 2019, and Minister of the Interior and

Public Security between 2019 and 2020), Beatriz Sánchez (former presidential candidate in 2017), Cristián Monckeberg (also former Minister Secretary General of the Presidency of Piñera until a few weeks ago) and José Antonio Walker Prieto (Minister of Agriculture until the beginning of the year).

The constituent convention members will have a term of 9 to 12 months to present the new text, which must then be approved through a new plebiscite with mandatory participation. **The drafting will thus coincide with the electoral campaign for the presidential and legislative elections** to be held on November 21 of this year.

2021: a year marked by elections



HONDURAS



President Hernandez, implicated in drug trafficking in the middle of campaign

On March 14, 2021, primary elections will be held in Honduras, a mandatory mechanism for political parties to define the candidates that will compete in the presidential and legislative elections on November 28.

Voting, however, is not compulsory in this stage where 3 of the 14 registered parties will participate - among them, Partido Nacional, which currently governs the country.

President **Juan Orlando Hernández**, who is already in his second consecutive term, **confirmed that he will not seek reelection**. Although this option is prohibited by the National Constitution, a highly questioned ruling of the Supreme Court of Justice in 2015 opened the door to the possibility of reelection.

The events of the last weeks suggest it may be a tense electoral campaign.

After it became known that the **U.S. is pursuing a legal case linking the president to a drug trafficker prosecuted for smuggling cocaine into the United States**, a group of Democratic senators announced that they will push for a **Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Bill in Honduras**. His own brother, Tony Hernandez, was put on trial for drug trafficking in the northern country, and found guilty in 2019.

In February, the case of the dubious death of a young nurse while in police custody also made the headlines internationally.

Elections calendar

June - December 2021



October 24: legislative elections

To be elected: 127 deputies
(half of the seats) and 24
senators (one third)



November 7: presidential and legislative elections

To be elected: President,
Vice President and all
members of the National
Assembly



June 6: legislative elections

To be elected: all
members of the Chamber
of Deputies.



November 28: presidential and legislative elections

To be elected: President,
Vice-Presidents and all
members of Congress



November 21: presidential and legislative elections

To be elected: President,
Vice President, all
members of the Chamber
of Deputies and 27
Senators

Methodological notes

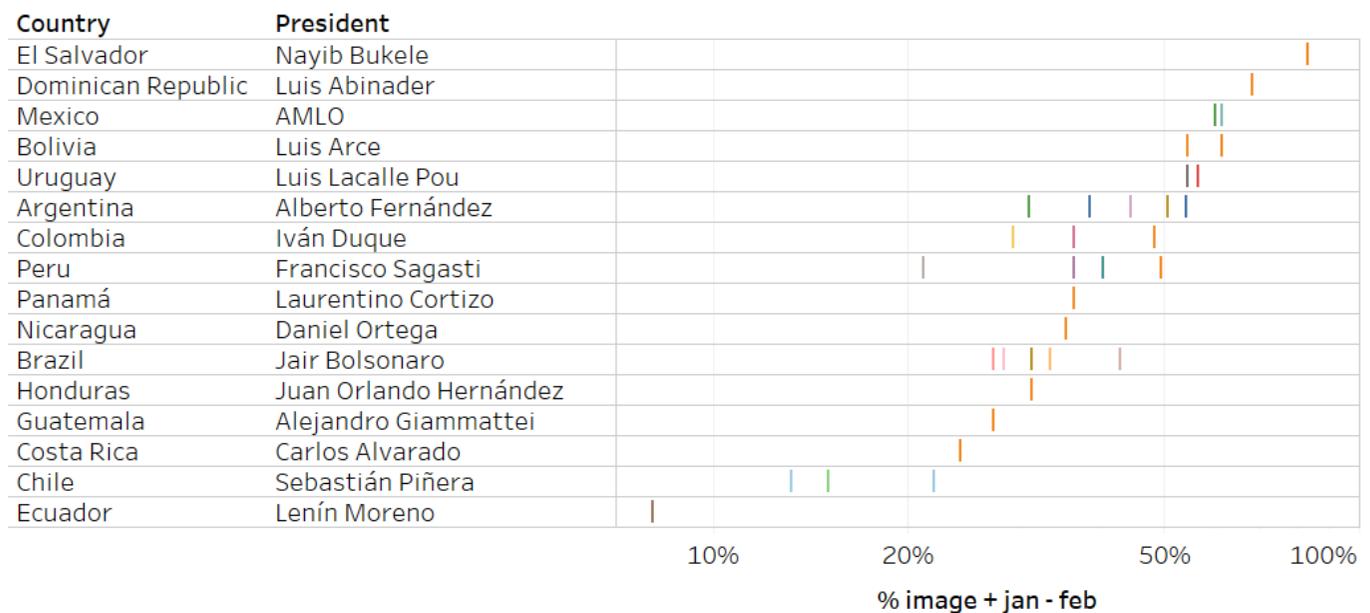
January - February 2021

This monitoring of presidential image is based on simple average calculations of approval rating surveys developed in each country. 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 January-February period have been compared with those of the previous 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 have been clearly identified. In some cases, a considerable level of dispersion has been detected between one measurement and another.

For more information, Tables 1 and 2 - also available in an interactive version - gather the data sources collected in the period from January to February.

Chart 1. Variation in the measurement of Presidents' positive images - January-February 2021



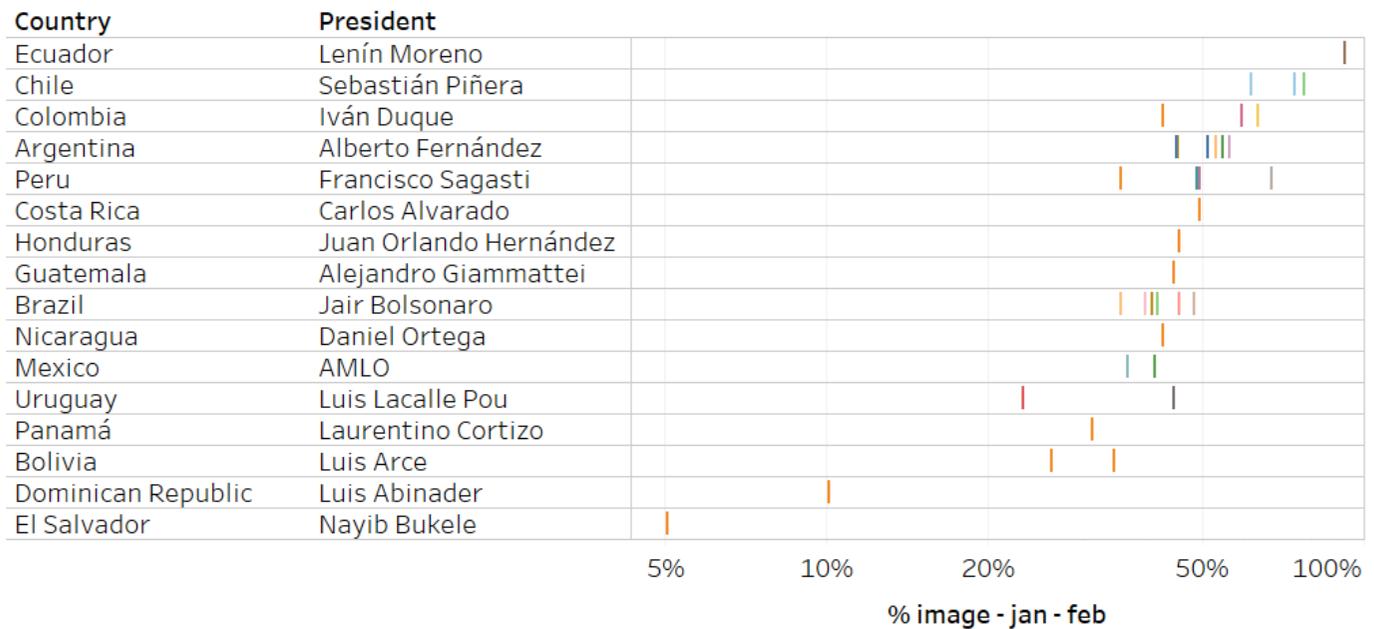
Sources

- Analogías
- Cadem
- CID Gallup
- CNT/MDA
- Consulta Mitofsky
- Criterias
- Datafolha
- Datexco
- Datum
- El Financiero
- Equipos Consultores
- EXAME Research
- Factum
- IEP
- INVAMER
- IPEC
- IPSOS
- Opinaia
- Perfiles de Opinión
- PoderData
- Poliarquía
- Pulso Ciudadano
- Q Social Now
- Ricardo Rouvier Asociados
- Synopsis
- XP/Ipespe
- Zuban Cordoba y Asociados

Methodological notes

January - February 2021

Chart 2. Variation in the measurement of Presidents' negative images - January - February 2021



Sources

- Analogías
- Cadem
- CID Gallup
- CNT/MDA
- Consulta Mitofsky
- Critería
- Datafolha
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El Salvador. Legislative elections. Post-election report.

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Benefits to pharmaceutical companies in vaccine purchases in Latin America. Together with Red PALTA

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