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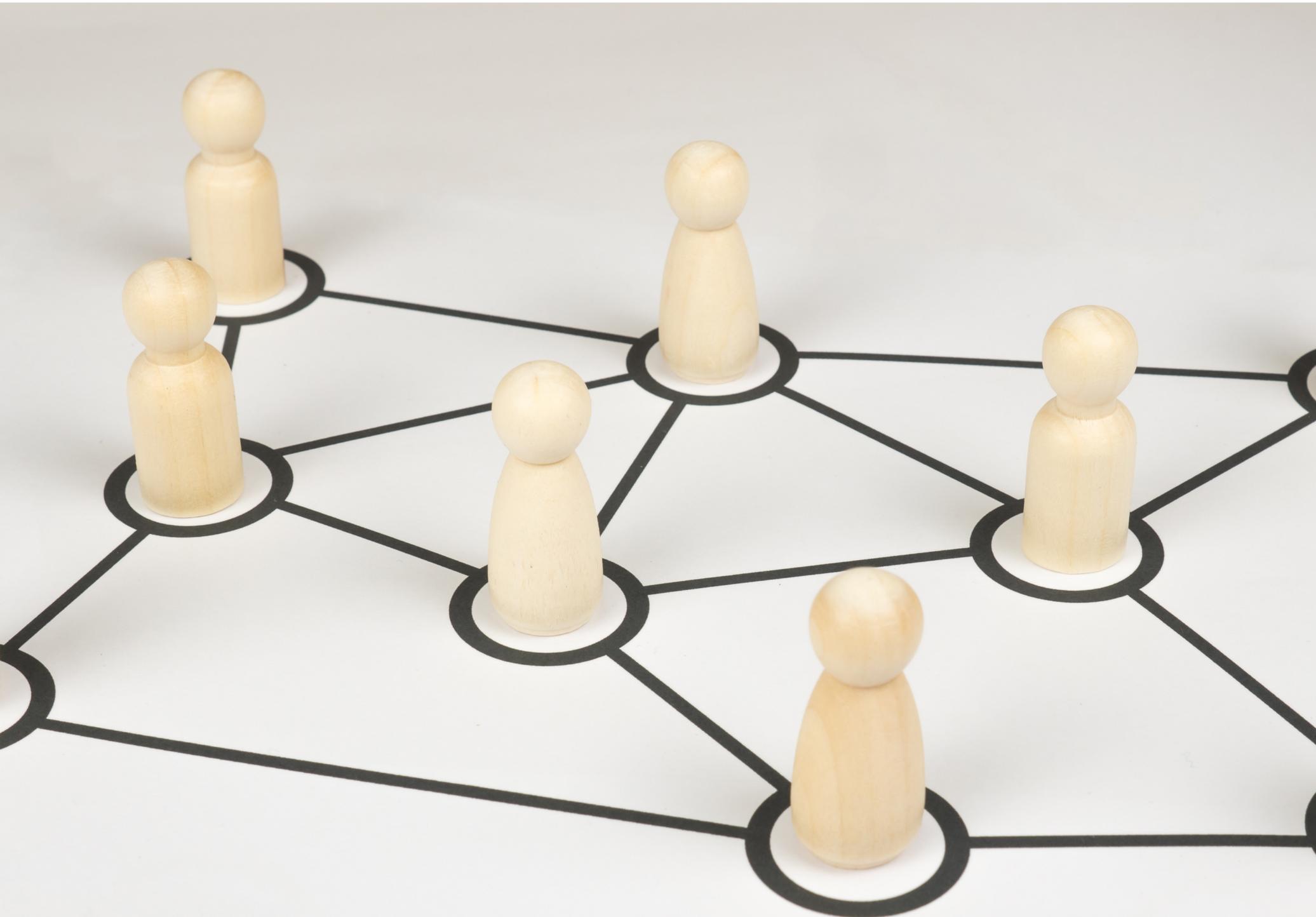
FORTALECEMOS
LAS DEMOCRACIAS
DE AMÉRICA LATINA

STRENGTHENING
DEMOCRACIES
IN LATIN AMERICA

JANUARY 2022

Image of power Power of an Image

REPORT ON PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL RATINGS IN LATIN AMERICA
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2022



The balance of 2021

As 2021 draws to an end, the region overall can be described as one with low average presidential approval ratings, fragmented and polarized electoral processes and outcomes, adversarial parliamentary dynamics, and with an emerging crisis of democratic institutions. Here we break down each of these trends.

A region with low levels of presidential approval

With few exceptions, most of the region's presidents have approval ratings **below 40%**. Leading the ranking of those losing most ground in 2021 **(1)** are Guillermo Lasso (-33%), Luis Arce (-20.6%), Alberto Fernández (-14%) and Luis Abinader (-11%).

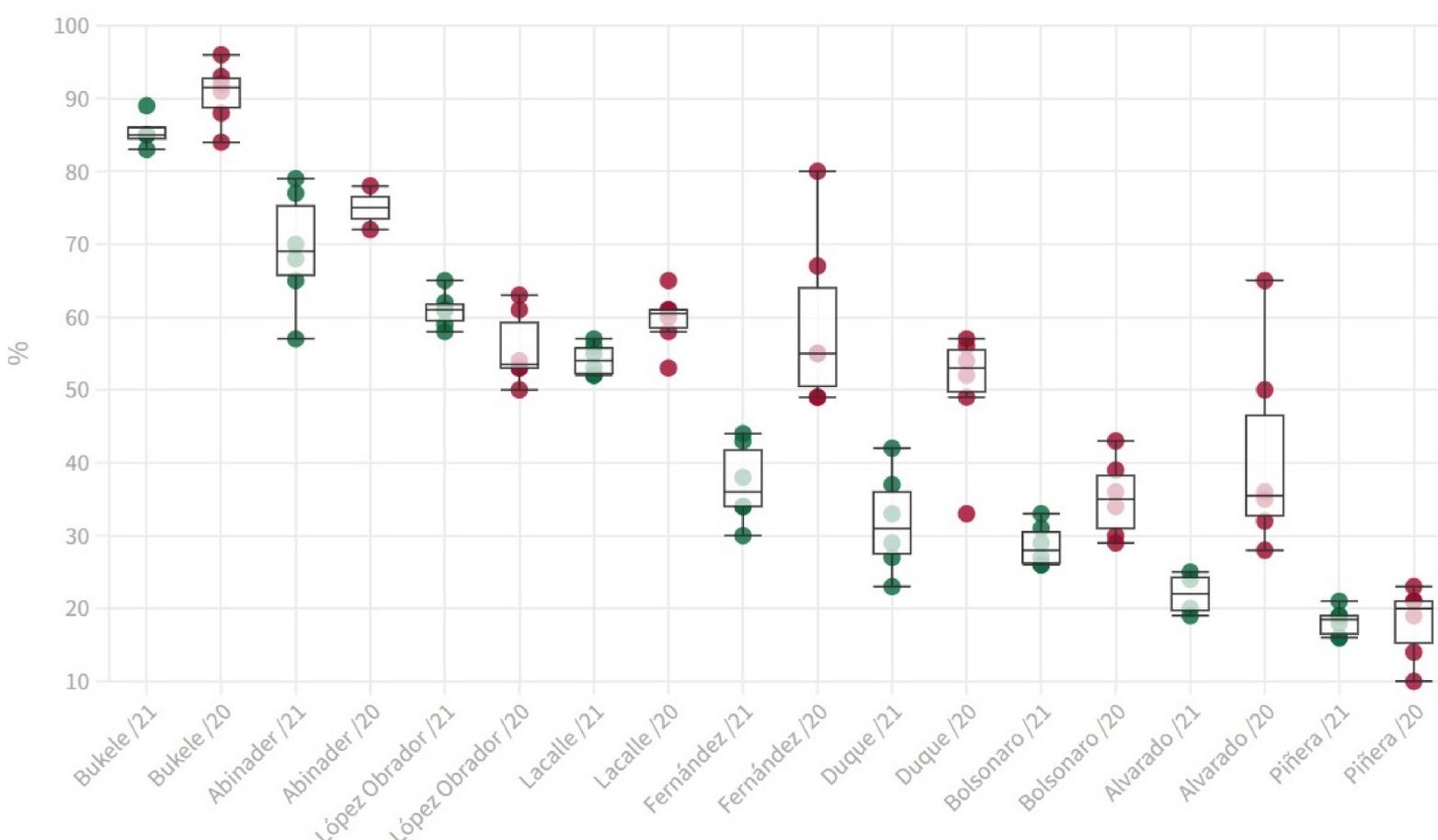
The levels of executive approval during 2021 were in general terms lower than those of 2020 and also present a smaller range of variation **(Figure 1)**. In other words, presidents are less popular than in the first 10 months of the pandemic but have seen less pronounced drops in approval.

This appears to point to a more compact (less variant) level of public support and also one that has been resistant to dipping beneath certain threshold values. If we look, for example, at swings between the first and last two months of 2021, we see that:

- Five presidents kept within a $\pm 4\%$ approval range: López Obrador (+4%), Nayib Bukele (+2%), Piñera (-0.60%), Lacalle Pou (-3%) and Alvarado (-3.60%).
- Three remained in a range of -5% to -10%: Bolsonaro (-7%), Duque (-8%) and Panama's Cortizo (-9%).
- While two saw a loss of over 11 points: Fernández (-14%) and Abinader (-11%).

This relatively consistent picture diversifies, however, when considering the starting point. López Obrador, Lacalle Pou and Bukele stabilized at high or very high levels of approval; while Bolsonaro, Duque, Piñera and Alvarado did so at low or very low levels **(Figure 2)**.

Figure 1: Percentage of presidential approval 2021 vs. 2020



Source: Author's own elaboration based on a compilation of public opinion surveys carried out between January 2020 and December 2021.

(1) This data was calculated as the difference between the first available measurement of 2021 and that of the last bimester.

Some cases deserve a special mention. Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), for instance, who is now halfway through his term, is the only president whose average approval rating in 2021 exceeds that of 2020. Meanwhile, with a drop of 14 points, mostly sustained in the first half of the year, Alberto Fernández is the worst performing of the presidents with more than two years in office. Iván Duque is the only president to have recovered some support. This came after a previous steep drop in approval amid Colombia's social unrest in May 2021, falling 21 points to a low of 23%. In the following four months he saw a 'dead cat bounce' of 10% points with and more being lost toward the year end. Duque is ineligible to run again for the May presidential elections this year, and prospects for the ruling party as a whole are bleak.

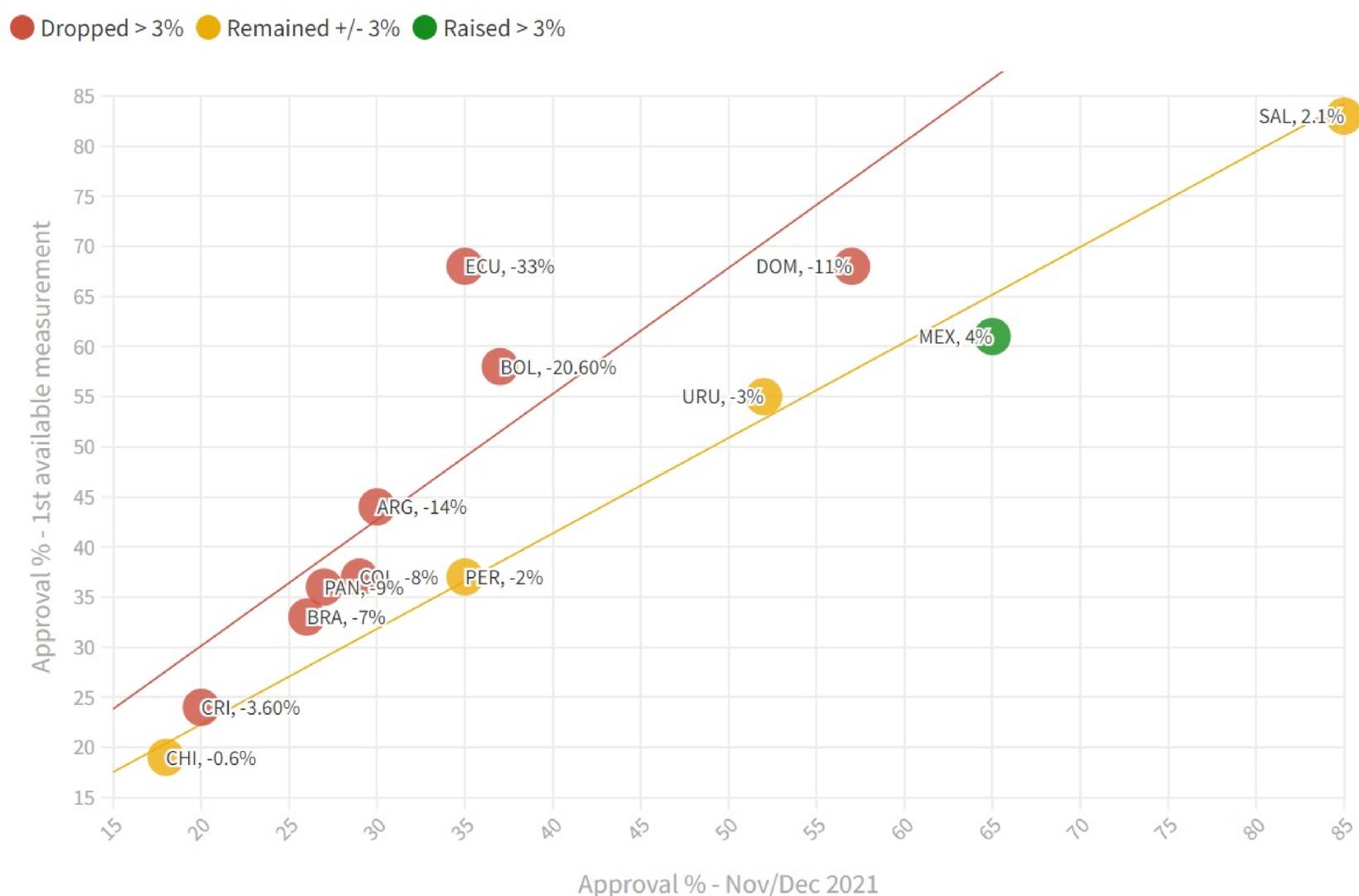
With the exception of Pedro Castillo, already relatively unpopular when he was sworn in in July last year, all the region's newly arrived presidents - i.e those under 18 months in office - saw 10+ point drops over the year. Likewise, presidents who were nearing the end of their terms - Sebastián Piñera, Carlos Alvarado and Juan Orlando Hernández - also

suffered from low approval (18%, 20% and around 30% respectively). This phenomenon of low approval both among newly arrived and soon to leave presidents has not been seen in the region for a long time. Presidential honeymoons, it appears, are short, and public love for them, where it exists, unsustainable.

Elections: the upshot of retrospective voting, political fragmentation and polarization

In 2021 there were 11 national elections (counting presidential run-offs and excluding mandatory primaries). Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Honduras and Nicaragua held presidential and legislative elections, while Mexico, Argentina and El Salvador saw mid-term legislative elections. Below we offer some commentary on these elections.

Figure 2: Percentage of presidential approval Nov-Dec 2021 vs. first available data for 2021.



Source: Author's own elaboration based on a compilation of public opinion surveys carried out between January and December 2021.

- Votes to punish or reward

Apart from the outlier case of Nicaragua where opposition candidates were hounded and mostly imprisoned, most ruling parties fared badly in the elections, losing everywhere except in Mexico and El Salvador.

Undoubtedly the pandemic put unprecedented strain on the region's governments, though it would be rash to attribute the electoral fallout simply to their handling of the Covid-19.

Administrations the world over toiled with this same challenge yet, as political analyst [Facundo Cruz](#) points out, in no other region than Latin America did ruling parties lose more elections than they won between 2020 and 2021.

Instead, much points to voter decisions being influenced by contextual factors preceding the pandemic: economic recessions, institutional weaknesses and instability and social discontent, which boiled over in late 2019 in Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador and again between late 2020 and early 2021; and public distrust in public institutions. Several or all of these factors combined to heap significant further pressure on ruling parties and presidents alike.

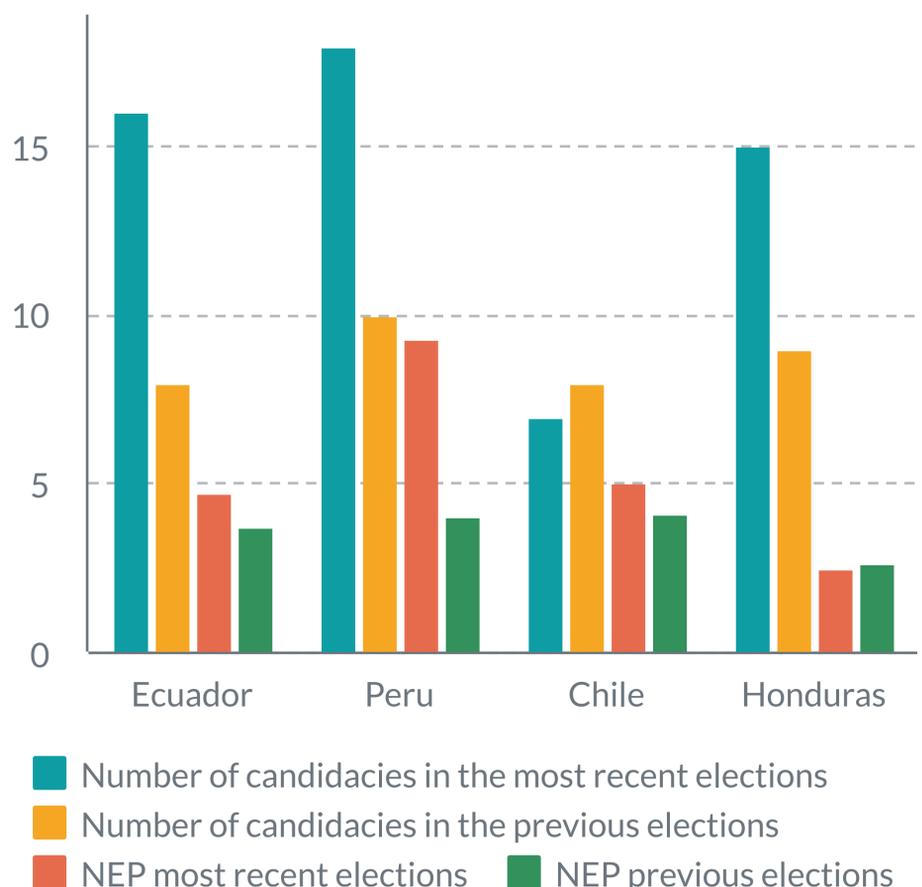
The region's social and economic ills – hardly mitigated by a economic recovery in the second quarter of 2021 that saw an average year close growth of 6.2% – could worsen under [ECLAC's projections](#) for 2022: an average economic slowdown to 2.1% and currency depreciations and increased in inflation.. Survey data suggests cost increases, in particular, are a top public concern such as in Brazil, Costa Rica and Argentina.

- Political fragmentation:

The electoral results also suggest a growth in political fragmentation with respect to previous elections – reflected in a higher than normal number of candidacies and lower percentage victories for those making it through to the second rounds (**Figures 3 and 4**).

In Ecuador and Peru, the number of presidential candidates increased from 8 to 16 and 10 to 18, respectively, which measured in terms of number of parties (NEP in Spanish) represents a growth of 3.7 to 4.7 and 4 to 9.3. The number of candidates also increased significantly in Honduras (from 9 to 15), although in this case the initial dispersion of the vote was counteracted by the withdrawal of Salvador Nasralla, third in the electoral race, a decision that paved the way for the presidency of Xiomara Castro. In Chile, the number of candidates did not increase, but fragmentation did (i.e support was less concentrated/ spread more evenly).

Figure 3: Number of presidential candidacies & Effective Number of Parties (NEP), in the most recent elections vs. the previous elections.



Source: Own elaboration based on electoral official data and Wikipedia data.

(2) The NEP is a formula developed by Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera to measure the number of political parties competing for a given office at stake (presidential or legislative) weighted by the proportion of votes each party obtains. With a scale that goes from 0 to infinity, it allows considering how many political parties or coalitions are effectively important based on the popular support that each one obtains. The indicator is the most widely used to characterize the format of party competition. It is also often used to measure legislative fragmentation by taking into account seats instead of votes.

In Costa Rica, whose presidential and legislative elections will take place on February 6, there are 25 registered candidates (versus 12 in 2018), with three registering between 21% and 25% in the latest polls.

The same trend of more spread-out voting was also on evidence in Chile, Ecuador and Peru, reflected in smaller percentage victories for the winning candidates of the primaries: 25.8% for Boric (vs 39.60% for Sebastián Piñera in 2017); 19.74% for Lasso (vs 39.35% for Lenin Moreno); and 18.99% for Castillo of Peru (vs Keiko Fujimori's 39.86% in 2016) (**Figure 4**). Also note that in Chile and Ecuador, the winners in the first round in 2017 also won the runoff, while in 2021 the winners were eventual runners up.

- Political polarization:

Latin America's elections in 2021 have widely been looked at through a lens of ideological polarization, weakening stability of political systems, challenges to governance and the emergence of anti-establishment sentiment and candidates. And indeed polarization appears to have been enhanced in those countries that saw presidential runoff elections, suggesting a clear link between the two.

Chile's ballotage pitted a left-wing candidate against a hardline conservative neither of whom, moreover, sprung from either of the coalitions dominating Chilean politics in recent decades. Ultimately in that country, the victory of President-elect Gabriel Boric suggests a shift towards the

center helped broaden his voter appeal and tip the scales in his favor.

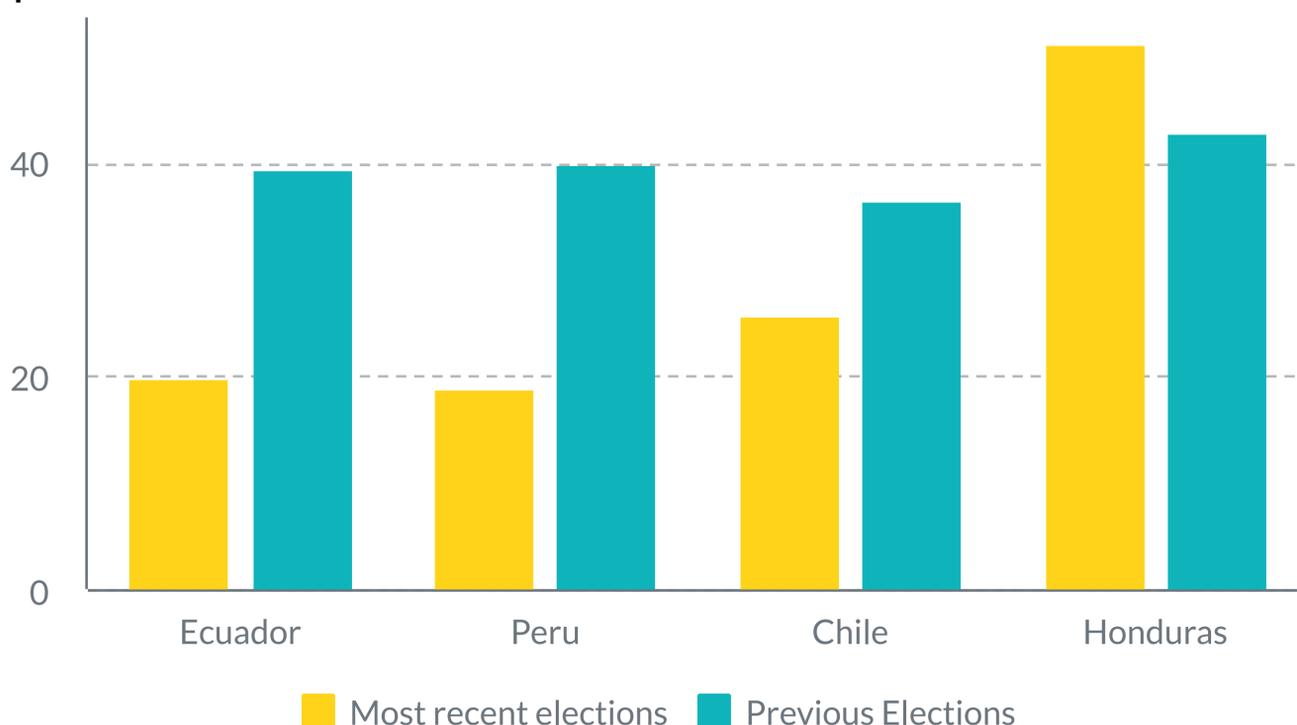
The presidential runoff in Peru was equally polarized in ideological terms but, contrastingly, this saw a left-wing newcomer face off against a household conservative. When it came to creating his ministerial cabinet, Castillo made some attempt at moderation to make it easier for him to govern but not enough to prevent tensions surfacing including within the Peru Libre party itself.

In Ecuador, meanwhile, the election was marked by a cleavage between the Correist and anti-Correist streams (ie, between those loyal or opposed to former president Rafael Correa). The right-winger Lasso was able to cash in on this, triumphing over the Correist pick, Andres Arauz, who had beaten him handsomely in the first round. And this, despite the fact that the main left and center-left forces accumulated slightly more than 67% of the votes and the legislative seats.

In Honduras, elections that put an end to decades of two-party dominated politics were also mired by polarization and violence - which reignited a few days before Castro's inauguration after the breakup of the Libre party bloc in the opening session of Congress.

Nayib Bukele of El Salvador is another President that has managed to capitalize on polarization between two long-standing dominant parties, gaining a qualified majority in the Legislative Assembly thanks to support from his ally GANA.

Figure 4: % of votes obtained by the winner of the first round in the most recent elections vs. in the previous elections.



Source: Own elaboration based on data obtained from Wikipedia

Executives with Adversarial Congresses

By and large, however, the elections produced executives faced with fragmented congresses, which has led to the challenge of cross-party alliance making (as well as internal consensus building) to reach majorities for legislation.

In **Argentina**, the ruling party lost its majority in the Senate – the first time that has happened for the Peronists since the country’s return to democracy – and is now reduced to holding non-overall majority (though still the largest) blocs in both chambers: 118 members in the Chamber of Deputies (11 short of a majority) and 35 in the upper chamber (2 short). The challenges posed by this shrinkage became evident only a few days before the swearing in of Argentina’s next legislators, with the rejection of the 2022 Budget Bill against the backdrop of knife-edge debt renegotiations with the IMF – also something not witnessed since the 1980s.

In **Chile**, the two hitherto dominant coalitions in Congress both saw their representation fall, though they preserve a strong legislative presence. In fact, once the chambers are renewed, between them they will continue to control 84% of the Senate and 58% of the Chamber of Deputies. President-elect Gabriel Boric is trying, meanwhile, to gain some political leeway by bringing into his cabinet figures from diverse party backgrounds plus independents. For the moment, the new government has only secured 5 seats in the upper house (where it is the third largest bloc) and 37 in the lower house (joint second largest with the New Pact bloc).

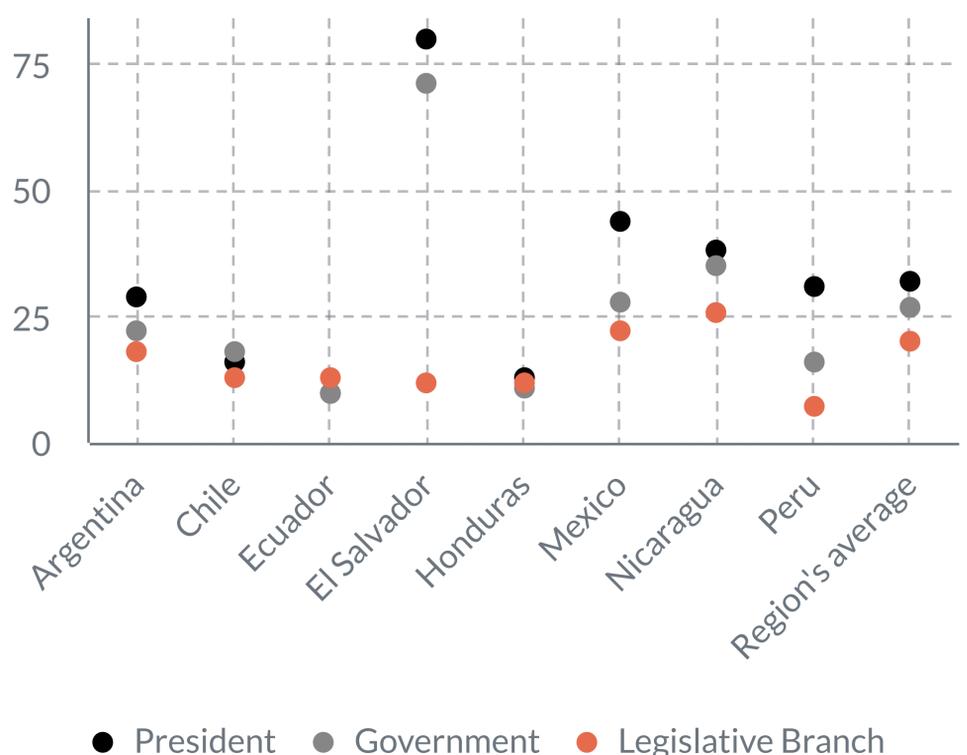
In **Peru**, the plenary of the unicameral congress was initially divided into 10 benches, which is a notable increase in fragmentation on the 2016 general elections. The ruling bloc Perú Libre is the first minority (largest bloc, without being in majority), but it has already lost 5 of its original 37 members out of a total of 130. The presidency of the congress, on the other hand, is in the hands of the opposition. It should be noted that in December Castillo survived a vacancy motion, an extraordinary mechanism through which Congress removed Martin Vizcarra in 2020.

In **Ecuador**, with only 12 of the 137 seats, the ruling bloc CREO was initially the fifth minority, in an Assembly far more fragmented than the one elected in 2017. Since then, the original 13 benches were reconfigured into 8 and the ruling party, already distanced from its ally Partido Social Cristiano, managed to add 13 legislators under the label of Bancada del Acuerdo Nacional. The Correists, meanwhile, continue to be the first minority by some margin, while Movimiento Pachakutik controls the presidency. Beyond these rearrangements, the construction of majorities for passing laws is not easy for any of the blocs and the government has already faced setbacks such as its failure in September to pass a *Bill for the Creation of Opportunities*.

In **Honduras**, Xiomara Castro put an end to decades of alternation between the National and Liberal parties, thanks to an alliance between the Libre and Salvador parties in the framework of which it had been agreed that the presidency of the Assembly would be ceded to the latter. The pact finally did not hold due to the unexpected defection of 20 members of Libre, which today leaves the ruling party in a precarious political and legislative position, and the outgoing Partido Nacional as the first parliamentary minority.

The Legislative branch is the realm of government that is least trusted by citizens in the region.

Figure 5: Public trust in the President, the government & the legislative branch



Source: Latinobarómetro 2020

New faces of politics *política*

The elections witnessed a bursting onto the scene of unconventional figures keen to - and almost able to - capitalize on the discontent of the electorate through rhetoric laying into the ruling classes and traditional politics and foregoing moderation by cutting ties to recognized parties. This includes figures as diverse as José Antonio Kast and Franco Parisi in Chile, Yaku Pérez and Xavier Hervas in Ecuador, or Javier Milei and José Luis Espert in Argentina. The results suggest that there is currently an electoral niche for these options, although it is hard to say if they will be able to expand or even sustain their support over time.

In Chile, Kast not only managed to make his way to the second electoral round, but also obtained together with Frente Social Cristiano 15 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and one in the Senate. The remote candidate, Parisi, came a surprising third in the first round and won 6 seats in the lower house for Partido de la Gente.

In Ecuador, Yaku Perez of Movimiento Pachakutik came within a whisker of making it to the second round, while newcomer Hervas of Izquierda Democratica reached fourth place with just over 15% of the vote. In the Assembly, they respectively hold 25 and 15 congress members (out of a total of 137).

In Argentina, the libertarian right made electoral gains in some districts and now has 4 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, alongside leftist parties which also made historical breakthroughs in the September primaries.

However, as shown in **Table 1**, the vast majority of the region's presidents still hail from a strong political background and are tied to established party structures. Maduro, Ortega, Hernández and Piñera have more than one presidential term to their credit. Fernández, Arce, Alvarado and Cortizo held positions in the National Executive Branch, as well as Andrés Araúz who faced Lasso in the second round. López Obrador was head of government of the Federal District; Bukele, mayor of Nuevo Cuscatlán and San Salvador; and Lasso, governor of Guayas at the end of the 90's, although his recent trajectory is decidedly linked to the financial sector. Many others made the leap from the National Legislative Branch: Bolsonaro, Duque, Lacalle Pou and Boric, as well as second-round contenders José Antonio Kast and Keiko Fujimori.

Table 1. Presidents in office or elected according to previous political experience and party ties.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE	PARTY TIES	
In the Public Sector	Established Party	New Party
National Executive Branch	Alvarado Quesada (CRI) Arce (BOL) Cortizo (PAN) Fernández (ARG) Maduro (VEN) Ortega (NIC) Piñera (CHI)	
Subnational Executive Branch	López Obrador (MEX) Lasso (ECU)	Bukele (ELS)
National Legislative Branch	Abdo Benitez (PAR) Bolsonaro (BRA) Duque (COL) Hernández (HON) Lacalle Pou (URU)	
In other sectors	Abinader (DOM)	Castillo (PER) Giammattei (GUA)

A generalized crisis of confidence in democratic institutions

As we analyzed in the [previous issue](#) of this report, a corollary of the picture so far is the widespread crisis of confidence affecting both government institutions and the political actors in charge.

In this context of disenchantment, how has polarization impacted electoral participation? Does competition between ideologically opposed political options generate voter apathy or drive more citizens to the polls. In Chile, Ecuador and Honduras electoral participation was seen to increase. Chile's, in fact, was the highest turnout in the entire democratic history of the country and saw the highest number of votes cast. Ecuador's turnout exceeded its historical average of 75% in both the first round (81%) and second (82%). In Honduras, those figures rose from 58% to 69%. However, the same did not occur in Peru where, beyond the increase in turnout between the first and second round (from 70.04% to 74.57%), both were a lot lower than the 82.86% average for presidential elections over the last 20 years.

Overall these data suggest that, despite the limitations of the region's political systems in responding to the fundamental problems of inequality and crises of representation, and accepting the outliers of Venezuela and Nicaragua, democracy appears alive and well. This contention is backed by the discussed overall growth in electoral participation, and by the still limited voter support for fringe political alternatives.

A sauté to start the year

The electoral tail of 2021. On January 9, the **Venezuelan** opposition achieved a historic victory in the state of Barinas, homeland of Hugo Chávez, which had been governed uninterruptedly by the PSUV since 1998. Why was the electoral definition in Barinas delayed? Because last November 21, the Supreme Court of Justice ordered the interruption of the counting of votes which gave the winner by a narrow margin to Freddy Superlano, the MUD candidate, under the argument that he was disqualified from holding public office.

In short, the formulas were renewed with new faces, the opposition vote was aligned behind the candidacy of Sergio Garrido and the margin, far from being reversed, increased to 12%. For an analysis of the political map left by the regional and municipal elections, see this [DL report](#).

On January 27, Xiomara Castro was inaugurated as the first woman president of **Honduras**. This historic event was watered down by the premature political crisis she faced when her bloc split in the election of congressional authorities. Ultimately, this resulted in two parallel boards of directors: one headed by Jorge Cálix with the support of the ruling party Partido Nacional, Partido Liberal and 20 members of the Libre party to which he himself belongs; the other by Luis Redondo, the name originally targeted in the pre-electoral agreement with the Salvador party of Honduras. Castro recognized the latter and expelled 18 of the 20 rebels from the party. However, shortly thereafter he announced that he would offer Cálix a not inconsiderable space in his cabinet in an attempt to navigate the crisis.

In **Chile**, President-elect Gabriel Boric presented the cabinet that will accompany him as of March 11. Of the 24 positions, 14 will be filled by women and a third by independents. The appointments, which include figures from Partido Socialista, Partido Comunista and the ex-Concertación, reflect an effort to gain muscle in Congress where the Apruebo Dignidad bloc is in the minority. In a sign of moderation oriented to the markets, the Ministry of Finance will be in charge of Mario Marcel, until now president of the Central Bank.

In 2022 there will be two key elections in the region: the presidential and legislative elections in Brazil and Colombia, in addition to those in Costa Rica, which will inaugurate the electoral year on February 6.

In **Brazil**, polls continue to favor former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva by a wide margin. In the first fortnight of January, Poder Data and Exame-Idea placed him at around 42 and 41% respectively, against 28 and 24% for Bolsonaro, while the measurements of XP/Ipespe and Quaest/Genial are even higher: 44 and 45% respectively, against 24 and 23% for the incumbent president. In this context, Lula slipped the possibility of summoning the former governor of São Paulo, Gerardo Alckim, as a possible running mate.

The figure of Alckim, a center-right politician whose extensive administration has been stained by several corruption scandals, would be the result of attempts to build a broad alliance to dynamite Bolsonaro's chances of remaining in power.

With only four months left for the presidential elections in **Colombia** - and a little more than a month and a half for the legislative elections - there are more than 20 names in the running. Centro Democrático, led by former president Álvaro Uribe, defined through a controversial internal contest that its ticket will be led by Óscar Zuluaga, former finance minister of Uribe and former senator of the Republic. The Centro Esperanza coalition will have to define its ticket among several strong figures including Sergio Fajardo, Alejandro Gaviria, Juan Manuel Galán and, most recently, Ingrid Betancourt. Also the coalition Pacto Histórico por Colombia has several confirmed pre-candidatures, among them the senator and former mayor of Bogotá Gustavo Petro who for now continues to lead the polls of voting intentions.

In **Costa Rica**, there are more than 20 confirmed candidacies. However, electoral polls suggest that the race is likely to be defined among three contenders: former president José María Figueres (1994-1998) for Partido Liberación Nacional, former conservative deputy Fabricio Alvarado who in the 2018 presidential election reached the second round with Partido Restauración Nacional and former first vice-president Lineth Saborio (2002-2006) for Partido Unidad Social Cristiana. If the projections are confirmed, the dispersion of the vote is going to be high and the election will probably end up being defined in a second round. According to the last [CIEP-UCR](#) survey, even though the willingness to vote is high, 40% of the population has not yet defined its choice.

About this publication. Image of Power provides bimonthly analysis of presidential approval ratings in 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean drawing on survey data from 80 sources. The Presidential Image Ranking only includes those cases where a minimum of three measurements are available over the study period and from at least two different sources.

This number also includes:

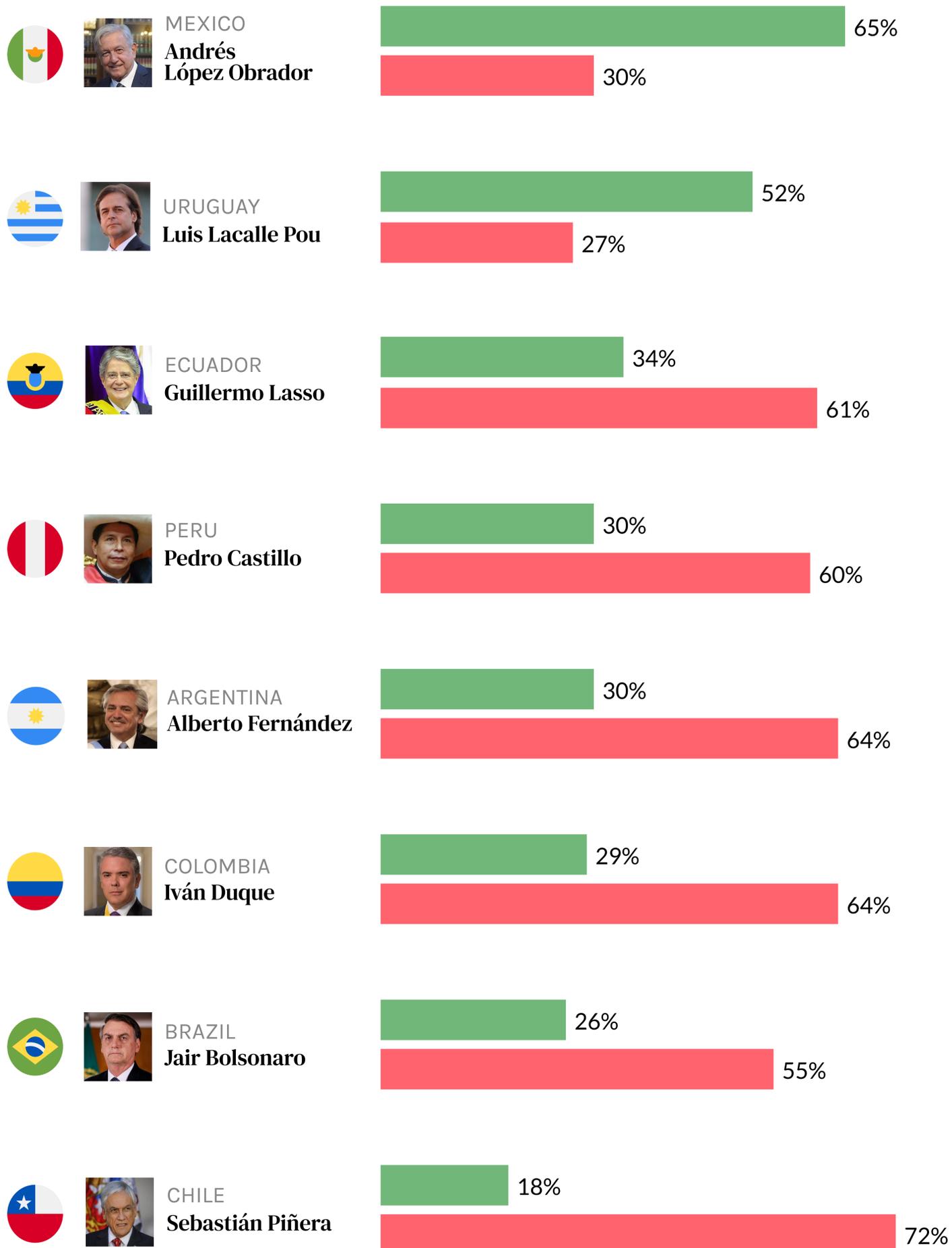
- Presidential Image Ranking, November-December 2021
- Changes in presidential approval between January 2020 and December 2021
- With the exception of Arce, all the presidents who took office in the last year and a half have suffered sharp declines.
- Gabriel Boric: signs and challenges of the youngest president-elect in Chile's history
- AMLO reaches the halfway point of his term with more than 60% favorability

Presidential Image Ranking

November - December 2021

This ranking includes cases where a minimum of three measurements are available over the study period from at least two different sources.

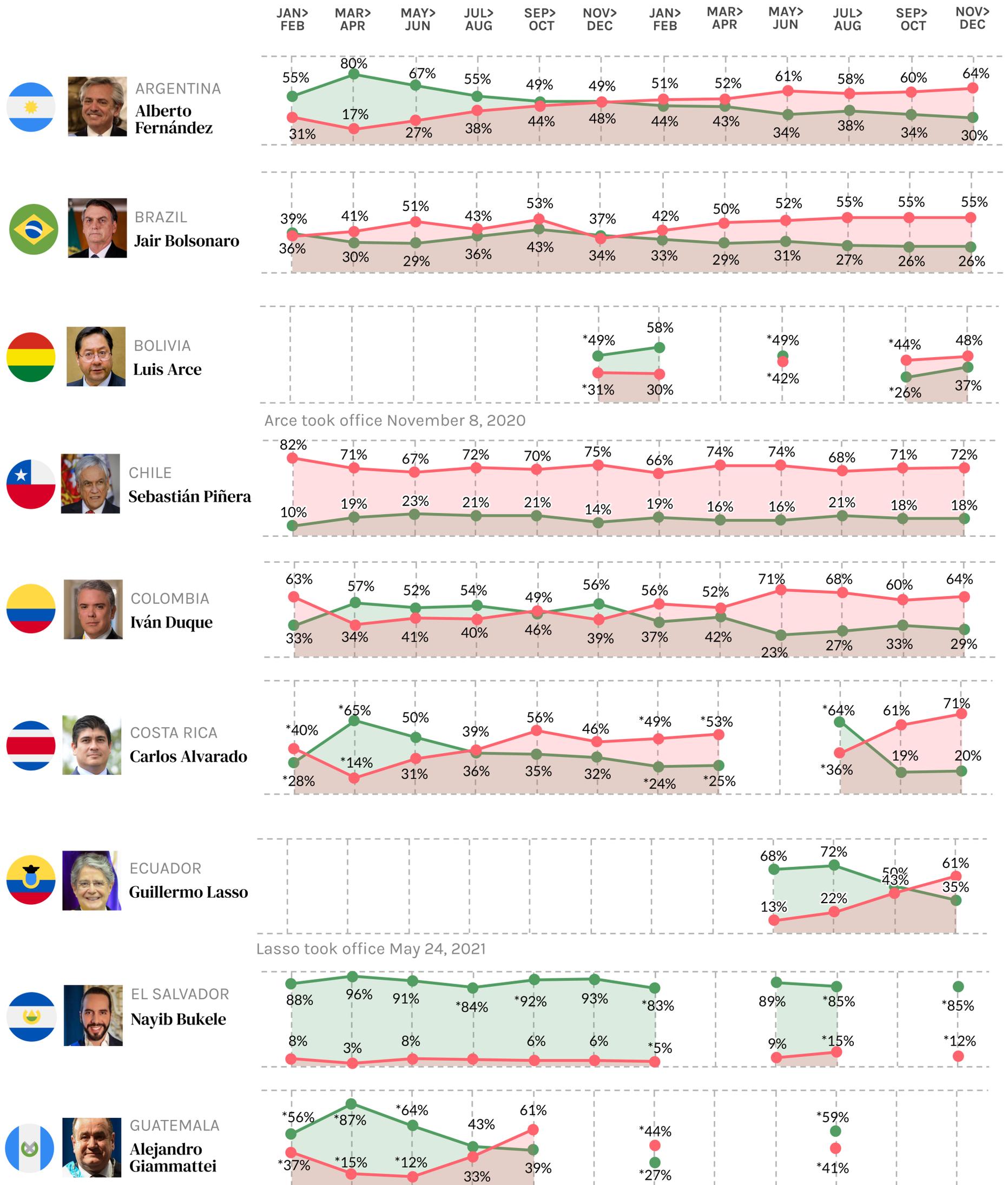
Positive
Negative



Changes in presidential approval between January 2020 and December 2021

January 2020 - December 2021

Positive
Negative

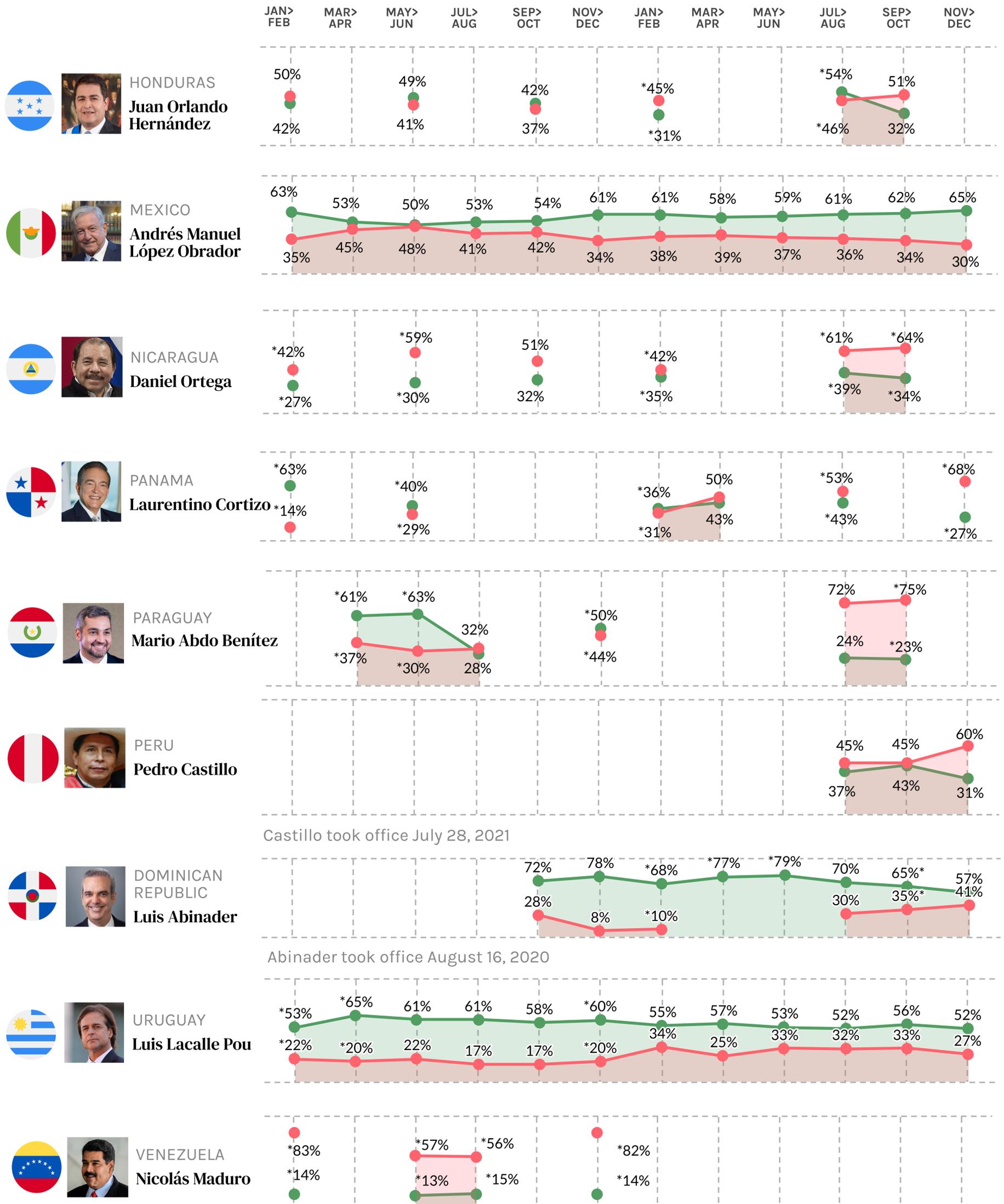


Source: Author's own elaboration based on a compilation of public opinion surveys carries out between January 2020 and December 2021. (*) Based on a single data source. To see the sources: [click here](#).

Changes in presidential approval between January 2020 and December 2021

January 2020 - December 2021

Positive
Negative



Source: Author's own elaboration based on a compilation of public opinion surveys carries out between January 2020 and December 2021. (*) Based on a single data source. To see the sources: [click here](#).

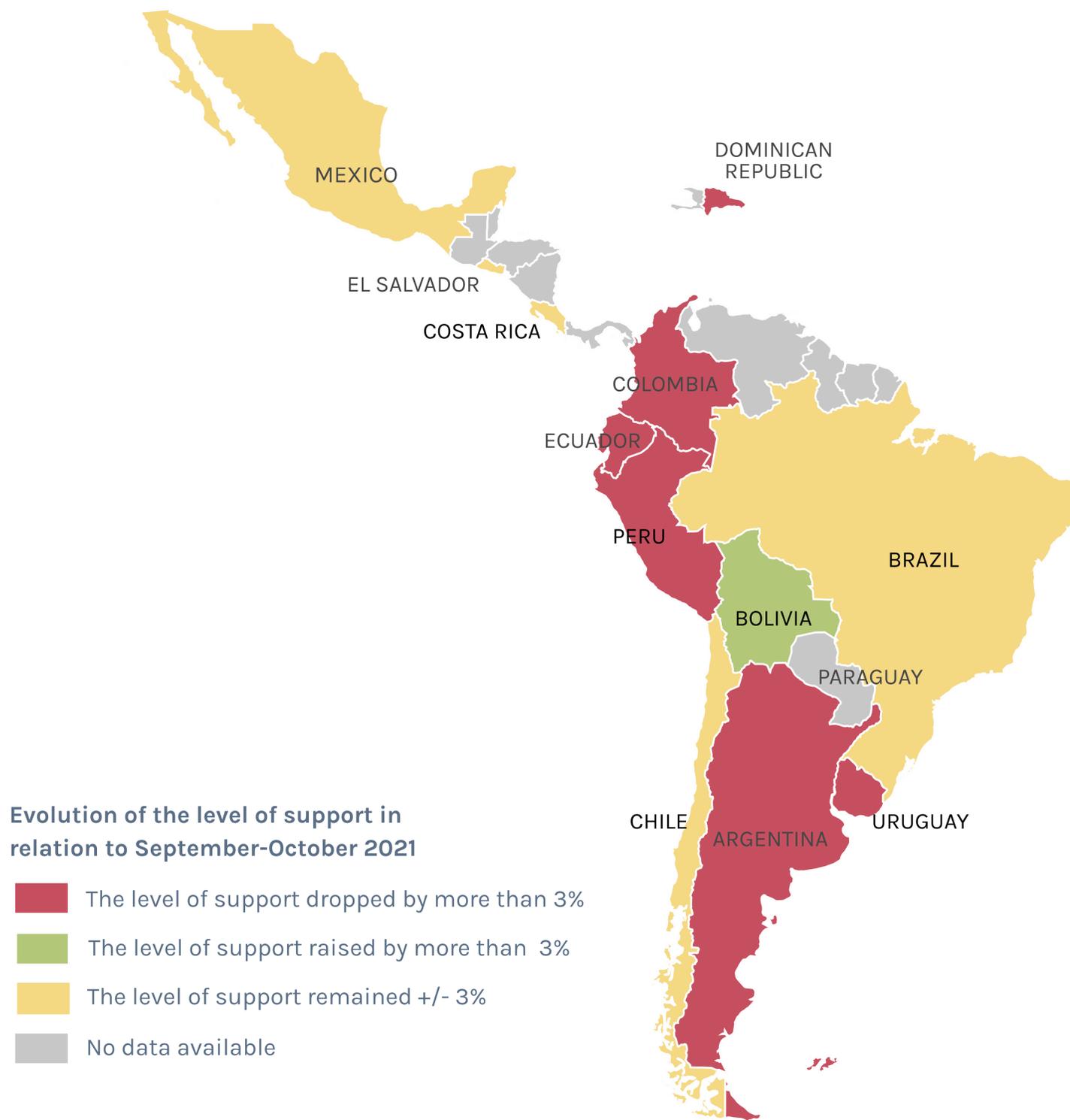
With the exception of Arce, all the presidents who took office in the last year and a half have suffered sharp declines.

The two-month period November - December closes with sharp drops for Guillermo Lasso, Pedro Castillo and Luis Abinader. Citizen support for the Ecuadorian president dropped by half from the peak of 72% registered in the middle of the year when he was barely in his first 100 days of government, in spite of the advances in the vaccination campaign against COVID-19. Among the reasons are the insecurity and prison crisis, and the investigations triggered by his appearance in the Panama Papers. However, the request for impeachment that some sectors tried to push for in an Assembly which, due to its fragmented composition, makes it difficult to build majorities, did not prosper.

In Peru, Castillo has already accumulated 12 cabinet changes, distanced himself from the Peru Libre party that brought him to power and survived a motion of vacancy due to moral incapacity promoted by Fujimorism in Congress, where the ruling party has already lost at least 5 members.

Sebastián Piñera and Carlos Alvarado reach the end of their respective mandates with a low level of popularity, but which has remained stable in recent months. Arce is the only president to register an increase in support in the last two months of the year

Map 1: Evolution of the level of support vs September-October 2021



Gabriel Boric: signs and challenges of the youngest president-elect in Chile's history

The balloting of December 19 gave as winner Gabriel Boric (Apruebo Dignidad) by more than 55% of the votes. This meant a reversal of the results of the first round held on November 22, in which his main contender, José Antonio Kast, surpassed him by more than two points (27.91% vs. 25.83%).

How can this victory be explained? In the first place, by a campaign whose agenda was largely based on the demands that originated the 2019 protests. Although during 2020 and part of 2021 social demands seemed to have lost the momentum of the first moments, the approval of the constitutional referendum and the results of the regional elections last May are proof that those slogans were still present in the popular mood. Secondly, he was more adept at attracting voters from other political forces and capturing the moderate electorate tired of traditional politics.

His triumph opens the door to a renewal of national political leadership, however, the great challenge for the president-elect will be to find a balance between his two versions. On the one hand, that of the former student leader who predicted a revolution for the country. On the other, the more moderate candidate of the second round who promises stability and fiscal responsibility.

In the weeks after the election, Boric met with referents of the ruling coalition Chile Vamos to talk about two divisive issues: the situation in Araucanía, hot zone of the conflict with the Mapuche community, in relation to which he already advanced that he does not plan to renew the state of emergency, and the amnesty bill for people imprisoned during the 2019 protests. He also gave a strong signal of support to the constituent process - of which he was the architect - and to the assembly in charge of its drafting. On another note, he was reluctant to support new withdrawals of savings from private pension funds and pointed to the need to make the police more efficient.

On January 21, Boric unveiled his cabinet as promised and the appointments came with several surprises. To begin with, of the 24 positions, 14 will be filled by women, 7 by people under 40 years of age and a third by independents or figures far from partisan politics. Such is the case of Izkia Siches, a physician with no experience in public management who will occupy the strategic Ministry of the Interior.

The composition is also politically diverse. The incorporation of figures from the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the ex-Concertación also shows an effort to gain muscle in a fragmented Congress, however, according to what was reported, they generated some discomfort among sectors of their own bloc that saw their weight excessively diminished.

Another key appointment, which was read as a sign of moderation in economic policy aimed at the markets, was that of Mario Marcel as head of the Ministry of Finance. Marcel is the current president of the Central Bank, a position he has held since 2016. Articulation and communication, on the other hand, has been delegated to Giorgio Jackson, future Minister of the General Secretariat of the Presidency, and Camila Vallejo, future Minister of the General Secretariat of Government, both figures from his circle of trust who burst onto the political scene during the student protests of 2011.

The "Apruebo Dignidad" bloc has secured only 37 seats in the Chamber of Deputies out of a total of 155, and only 5 in the Senate. In both cases, the first minority corresponds to the Chile Vamos coalition.

AMLO reaches half of his term with over 60% approval rating

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador reaches the halfway point of his term, positioning himself as one of the heads of state with the highest approval ratings in the region. He is, in fact, the only one who grew in average popularity compared to 2020. **How can this phenomenon be explained?**

In short, the president has been skillful in capitalizing on the successes of his government and making them his own, while diluting the political cost of his most controversial decisions through a cabinet that underwent more than 30 changes during 2021

On the one hand, AMLO has been able to build a narrative and an image for his government and his person. The use of novel communication techniques - particularly his morning press rounds- his high media presence and his frequent tours around the interior of the country seem to have contributed to consolidate the perception of a president present and close to the people. As we analyzed in [our last edition](#) based on data from the most recent Latinobarómetro survey, during 2020 the figure of the president was the one that inspired the greatest trust in the population, even higher than that generated by the very government to which he belongs, or executive branch.

Although AMLO campaigned by waving the promise of a "fourth transformation" in Mexico's history, in the end, since his arrival to power there were more signs of continuity than of change, as it emerges from the negotiation of the T-MEC with his peers from the United States and Canada or the creation of the National Guard in a situation of increasing episodes of violence.

On the other hand, some of his most ambitious projects have generated controversy. Among the most recent are his national infrastructure plan, the decision to shield public works in strategic sectors by declaring them matters of national security or the constitutional amendment bill to reform the electricity sector. The new composition of the Chamber of Deputies will be key in the fate of the latter given that, despite the comfortable results obtained by MORENA and its allies, the coalition lost the qualified majority that would have allowed it to move forward without the need to negotiate with the opposition.

Methodological notes

November-December 2021

This monitoring of presidential image compiles surveys conducted in 18 countries in the region. The survey includes measurements of the level of presidential approval, presidential image and level of approval of the government's administration from a group of 75 consulting firms and research centers, subject to expansion.

The measurements are integrated by means of a simple average per country for the period surveyed. Data sources are not weighted according to the methodology used, sample size or pollster. The averages for this two-month period are compared with those of previous twomonth periods, using the same methodology.

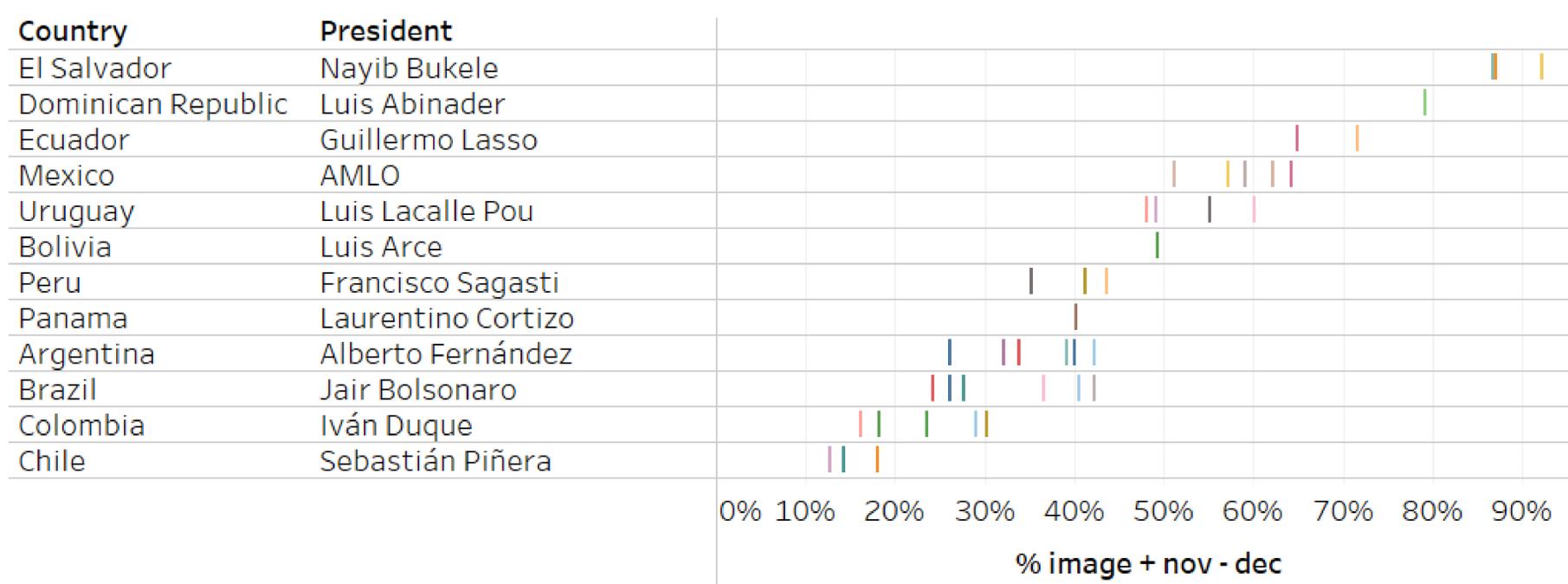
Although the ultimate goal of this report is to average multiple data sources, its fulfillment is conditioned by the availability of information

For this reason, all those cases in which the figures are based on a single source of data for each period considered are identified.

The ranking of presidential image only includes cases with at least three measurements obtained from two or more data sources (consulting firms / research centers) over the period under review.

Since in some cases a considerable level of dispersion between measurements has been noted, Tables 1 and 2 below - also available in the interactive version - disaggregate the values according to data source for the two-month period considered in this report.

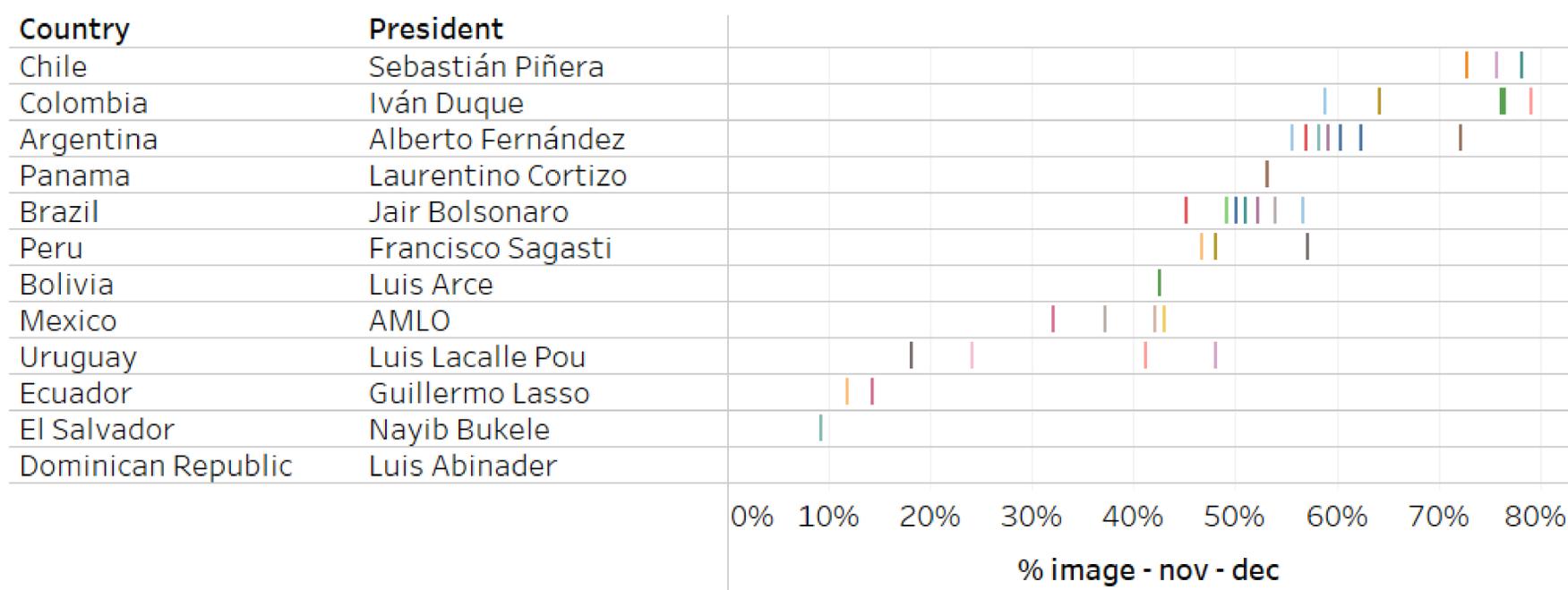
Chart 1. Variation in the measurement of Presidents' positive images - Nov - Dec 2021



Methodological notes

November-December 2021

Chart 2. Variation in the measurement of Presidents' negative images - Nov - Dec 2021



Sources

- Acierto Consultora
- AtlasIntel
- Cadem
- CEDATOS
- CELAG
- Centro Económico del Cibao
- CNC
- Consulta Mitofsky
- Critería
- D'Alessio IROL y Berenzstein..
- Datafolha
- Datexco - Pulso País
- Datum
- El Financiero
- Enkroll
- Equipos
- EXAME Research
- Factum
- Gallup
- GEA-ISA
- Giacobbe & Asoc
- Guarumo
- ICTI-CEC UFG
- IEP
- Invamer
- IPEC
- IPSOS
- IUOP-UCA
- JOTA
- LPG-Datos
- Management & Fit
- Nómade
- Opción Consultores
- Paraná Pesquisas
- Perfiles de Opinión
- PODER360
- Poliarquía
- Pulso Ciudadano
- UDESA - ESPOP
- Varela y Asociados
- XP/Ipespe
- Zuban Córdoba & Asoc



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