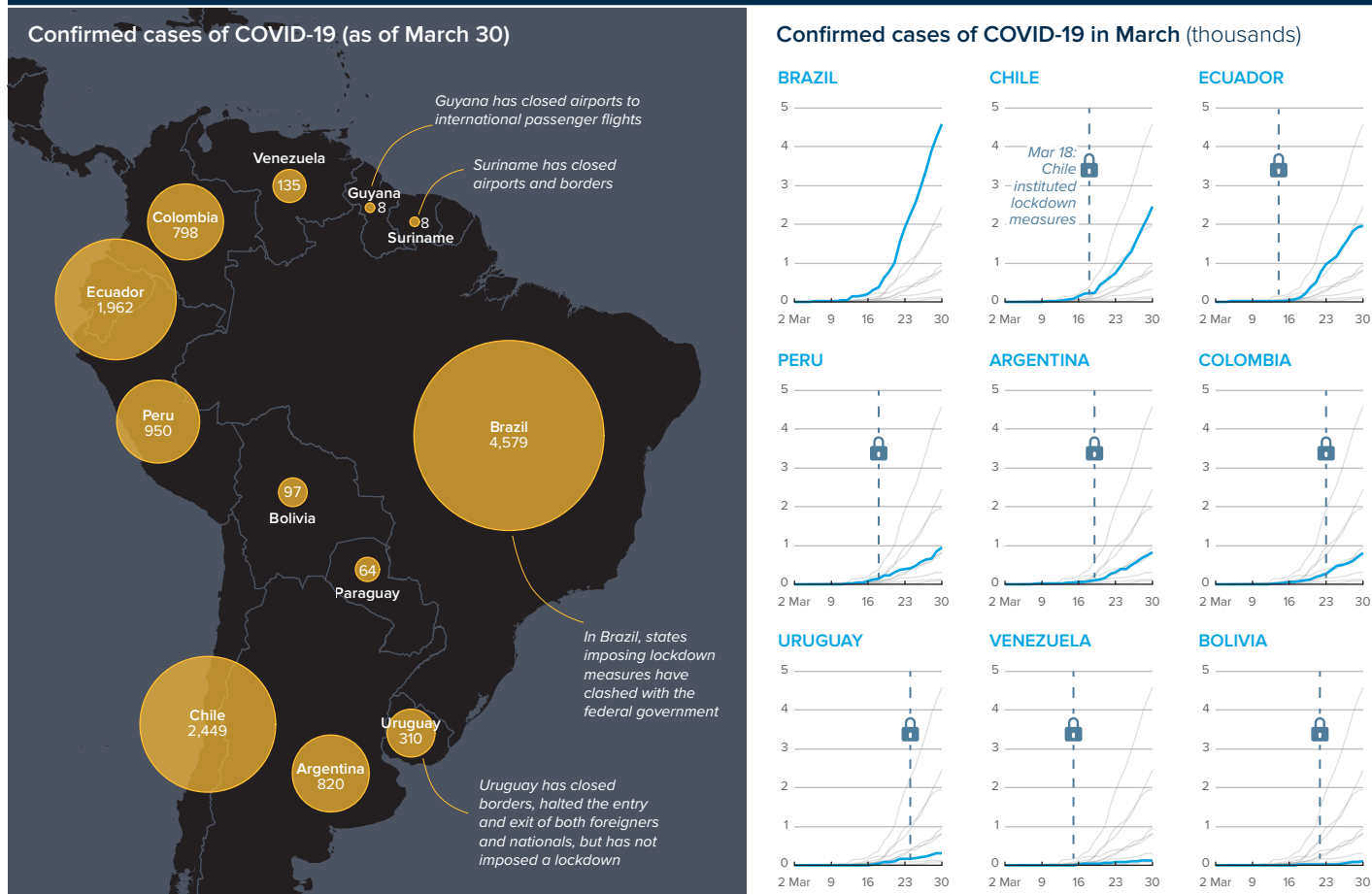


March 31, 2020

COVID-19 poses a critical challenge in South America

The coronavirus will have widespread social, economic and political impacts with which authorities will struggle

Brazil is the only South American country not to impose stringent national measures



While COVID-19 in South America was initially a ‘high-income’ disease linked to people travelling from abroad, it has now spread via community transmission to low-income sectors.

Currently ECLAC estimates a (possibly optimistic) Latin American GDP contraction of 1.8% this year, with a 10-point rise in unemployment and poverty jumping from 185 to 220 million. This will expand poverty and debt concerns and reduce resources to combat the crisis.

As the world’s most urbanised region, with over 80% in cities, social distancing is challenging, especially in large shantytown areas.

– Ageing populations (11.1% over 65 in Chile, 11.8% in Argentina and 14.4% in Uruguay) could boost the death toll.

– Weak public health systems and the onset of winter may exacerbate the severity of the outbreak.

– The existing Venezuelan crisis and migrant outflows make the country a flashpoint.

See also: [COVID-19 may cost Brazil’s Bolsonaro dear politically](#) -- March 25, 2020
[Bolivia election suspension will be tolerated for now](#) -- March 24, 2020
[COVID-19 impact will extend recession in Argentina](#) -- March 17, 2020