



Bolsonaro's creeping popularity

by Andrew Thompson

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What happened?

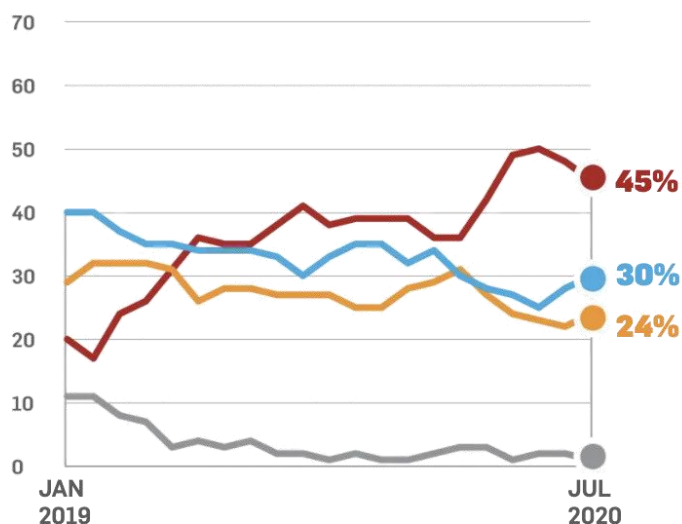
A monthly XP/Ipespe opinion poll published on 20 July showed Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro's approval rating rising for the third month in a row, up by 2 percentage points to 30%.

The details

Brazilians who already dislike Bolsonaro have many reasons to dislike him even more intensely. The last few months have seen the COVID-19 crisis appear to spiral out of control with Brazil now the world's second-biggest outbreak of the virus after the United States (more than 2.1mn cases). After two changes there is still an unfilled vacancy at the health ministry. The economy is heading downwards too, with the UN's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) predicting it will fall by a dramatic 9.2% this year. The Amazon fires season has started up again with Bolsonaro reluctant to tighten environmental protection. There have been apparently endless quarrels among ministers. And the president and his sons are implicated in various types of wrongdoing including electoral fraud, political manipulation of the federal police and the organisation of false news campaigns by a unit inside the

EM PORCENTAGEM
 ÓTIMO/BOM REGULAR RUIM/PÉSSIMO
 NÃO SABE/NÃO RESPONDEU

Avaliação do desempenho do governo Jair Bolsonaro



Red = bad or terrible; blue = excellent or good; orange = fair; grey = don't know or didn't answer.

Source: XP/Ipespe, O Estado

presidential palace dubbed “the office of hate”. In theory at least these claims, if proven, could lead to impeachment or dismissal by the Supreme Court.

The poll does show that all this matters. Nearly half of all Brazilians (45%) think the president is doing a bad or terrible job. But what it also shows that the Brazil’s deeply controversial president has a solid – and for the last few months at least, modestly growing – basis of support. Nearly one third of Brazilians think Bolsonaro is doing well. Why? There are no simple answers but a number of factors may be relevant. One of Bolsonaro’s electoral promises – a reduction in crime – has been delivered (although it may just reflect a temporary truce imposed by the dominant gang, Primeiro Comando da Capital – PCC). Economic hardship is real but COVID-19 emergency payments to the poor have reached an estimated 60 million households. The president’s economy minister still attracts business support and may deliver tax reforms. With municipal elections due in November the government is planning public works in the impoverished north-east. There are some indications that Bolsonaro has lost middle class support but gained some appeal among the poor. Another major factor is that many Brazilian still distrust parties of the left, tainted by corruption when they were in office in 2003-2016.

What does it mean?

In a word, the Bolsonaro story is far from over: at the moment he looks like a one-term president, but it is not yet clear whether his opponents can unite behind an alternative candidate for the 2022 presidential race; this November’s municipal elections may give a first hint.

About the Author

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As well as being a Canning House Associate Fellow, Andrew is a former foreign correspondent (Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro) and a broadcaster for the BBC’s Latin American Service. Working through La Rambla Research Ltd., he writes about economics, political risk, and business in Latin America.



These stories are also available on Andrew’s blog site, [La Rambla Research](#).