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Venezuelans down on president, tolerant of his detractors

by Jim Patterson (<http://news.vanderbilt.edu/author/patterjm/>) | Posted on Tuesday, Mar. 3, 2015 — 10:45 AM

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Job approval ratings for President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela are lower than any of his peers in Latin America and the Caribbean, while support is high for the rights of regime critics to protest, vote, exercise freedom of expression, and run for public office.

On a scale from 0 to 100, Maduro scores an average of 34.3 in presidential job approval, according to the 2014 survey by the [Latin American Opinion Project](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/index.php) (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University. That places Venezuela at the very bottom of its Latin American and Caribbean counterparts, with Costa Rica closest to it at 37. Most of the other countries in the region score in the 50s and 60s.

“Maduro’s dismal presidential approval ratings reflect public discontent with the severe political, social and economic problems facing Venezuela,” write Mariana Rodríguez and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister in the [AmericasBarometer: Topical Brief dated March 2](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITBo18en.pdf) (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITBo18en.pdf>) ([click here to read the report in Spanish](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITBo18es.pdf)) (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITBo18es.pdf>).

“This problem-plagued climate has fueled a growing call by opposition leaders and activists for citizens to voice grievances and demand change from the government.”

The Maduro administration recently arrested opposition figure Antonio Ledezma, mayor of Caracas, on conspiracy charges for an alleged coup plot against the president. Last year, violent clashes between government security forces and street demonstrators left more than 40 people dead, hundreds injured and thousands arrested. In addition to Ledezma, 33 mayors across the country face charges related to the protests, and alleged involvement in conspiracy and coup plotting.

These moves to muzzle critics have generated little momentum among Venezuelans, the LAPOP survey shows. On a scale of 0 to 100, support is fairly high, at 61.8 units, for the political rights of critics of the Venezuelan system of government. That is the highest rate of political tolerance in the Latin America and Caribbean region, with the vast majority of countries scoring in the 40s and 50s.

“These data suggest that strident moves against opposition leaders, to the extent that they appear to be moves designed to silence regime critics, may further undermine President Maduro’s popularity,” Rodríguez and Zechmeister write.

LAPOP develops, implements and analyzes the AmericasBarometer public opinion surveys. Since the 1970s, LAPOP has gathered a treasure trove of opinion data containing political perspectives from Latin American and Caribbean citizens. LAPOP data and reports are available to interested researchers at the [LAPOP website](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/index.php) (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/index.php>).

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