



Costa Rica's Chinchilla gets lowest approval rating on record

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The president's approval rating is so low, it's negatively affecting Ticos' opinion of democracy, according to the Latin American Public Opinion Project.



Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla during the International Conference of Support for the Central American Security Strategy, on June 22, 2011 in Guatemala City. *AFP PHOTO/ Rodrigo ARANGUA*

Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla is the **most unpopular president** in over 20 years, according to a survey published Monday in the daily La Nación.

Six out of 10 Costa Ricans rated the president's performance as "poor" or "very poor," the lowest approval rating since the polling agency Unimer started collecting results in 1991, according to La Nación. Only 9 percent of those surveyed rated the National Liberation Party (PLN) leader's performance as "good" or "very good."

According to Unimer, President José María Figueres was the last president to hold the ignoble honor with a 20 percent disapproval rating in 1995.

Another 31 percent rated Chinchilla's work as "moderate."

Anyone who has opened a newspaper during the last two years can see that the president's term has been rife with corruption scandals and general discontent.

Most recently, the president's administration has been ensnared in a conflict-of-interest scandal involving a Chinese-funded **oil refinery expansion** in Moín, Limón, on the Caribbean coast, a **trip to Peru** on a private plane owned or operated by someone with alleged ties to **drug trafficking**, and **strikes** from teachers and public-sector **unions**.

Chinchilla's government also hit a bump with the bloated **\$40 million** Route 1856 highway along the northern border with Nicaragua, and the failed improvement project to the San José-**San Ramón** highway.

The president is not likely to get any sympathy from her predecessor, President Óscar Arias. Over the weekend, **Arias slammed her governance** in a video from Repretel. Chinchilla served as Arias' vice president and minister of justice during his most recent term in office, from 2006 to 2010.

While the president's plunging approval ratings don't bode well for her remaining time in office, they may have a lasting effect on Ticos.

According to a **2012 survey** from the **Latin American Public Opinion Project** at Vanderbilt University, Costa Ricans reported their lowest support for democracy and the political system since the group started collecting data in the 1970s.

LAPOP's report cited Chinchilla's perceived performance and corruption as the two principal causes of **Tico's falling opinions of democracy** and their political system.

Chinchilla ends her four-year term as president in May 2014.