



# LABOR OBSERVATORY OF THE AMERICAS



## Country Profile Uruguay

2021



### Total Area:

176.215 km<sup>2</sup>



### Population (2017 Census):

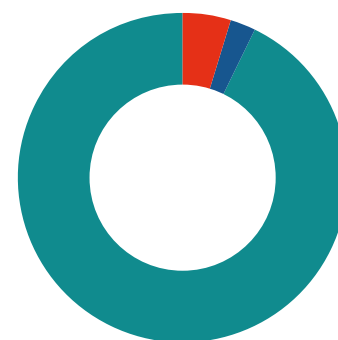
3.286.314  
people<sup>1</sup>



### Population estimated as of June 2021:

3'485,152  
people

### Population composition



In the 2011 census, **4.8%** identified as Afro or Black; **2.4%** as Indigenous, and **90.7%** as White.



### Economically active population:

(octubre 2021)

1'791.000  
people



### Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020:

53,63 billion  
US dollars<sup>2</sup>



### GDP in 2021:

GDP registered a 5.9% increase in the third quarter of 2021, compared to the third quarter of 2020<sup>3</sup>

**51,7%** ♀ **48,3%** ♂

In the 2011 census, In 2020, it's estimated that women make up 51.7% of the population, and men 48.3%

<sup>1</sup> The majority of the statistics noted here were obtained from the National Statistics Institute (INE for its acronym in Spanish) of Uruguay, in its 6-month reports available for 2020 and 2021.

<sup>2</sup> <https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/national-profile.html?theme=2&country=ury&lang=en>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bcu.gub.uy/Estadisticas-e-Indicadores/Paginas/Ultimo-informe-disponible.aspx>



# Analysis of socio-economic situation

## Employment.

The employment rate in October 2021 stood at 56.8% (1,648,000 people). While the employment rate has grown 2.3 percentage points compared to October 2020 (54.5%), it has not stabilized at the October 2019 level, prior to the pandemic (57.4%).

## Economically Inactive Population.

In January 2021, this stood at 1,107,000 people.

## Informal employment.

In October 2021, 367,504 people worked in informal employment conditions, an increase of 0.7 percentage points compared to the same month the previous year. <sup>4</sup>

## Unemployment.

The unemployment rate in October 2021 stood at 8% (143,000 people), a reduction of 3.2 percentage points in comparison with the previous year. The unemployment rate for women (9.2%) in October was 2.3 percentage points higher than that of men (6.9%).

## Pobreza.

During the first half of 2021, 10.2% of the population was living in conditions of poverty, a reduction of 1.4 percentage points in the year-on-year comparison. Meanwhile, 0.2% of the population lives below the poverty line.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.observatorioseguridadsocial.org.uy/images/12\\_2021\\_Monitor\\_Laboral.pdf](https://www.observatorioseguridadsocial.org.uy/images/12_2021_Monitor_Laboral.pdf)



# Context Highlights 2021

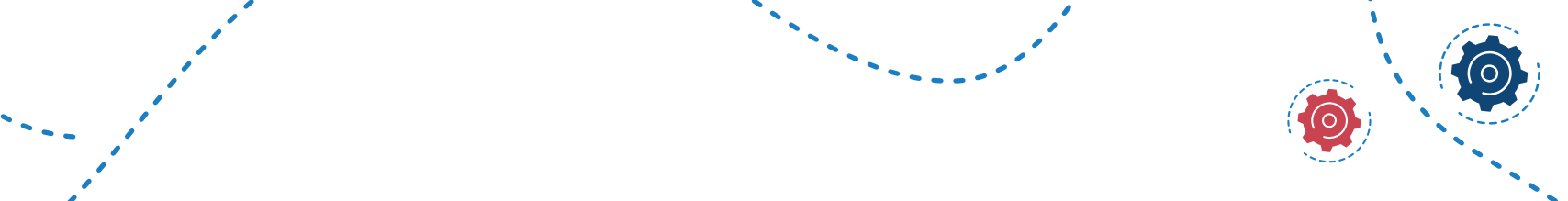
On 8 July 2021, the National Pro-Referendum Commission delivered 797,261 signatures to the electoral court, enough to hold a referendum in March 2022 to repeal 135 articles of the Urgent Consideration Law (LUC for its acronym in Spanish). The parliament approved the law in 2020, and it is considered the main legislative initiative that the government of Luis Lacalle Pou used to roll back the policies adopted by the Frente Amplio during its 15 years in government.

The social and political sectors that make up the National Commission<sup>5</sup> point out that 135 of the 476 articles of the LUC install a regressive model for the country in terms of State participation in the guarantee of fundamental rights. These articles propose reforms to education, labor relations, security, finance, and housing. In the educational field, there

is concern about the defunding of public education, which facilitates the strengthening of private education; one of the most shocking measures is the reduction of 20,000 teaching hours in secondary education.

In the area of security, the LUC made the carrying of weapons more flexible, increased penalties for certain crimes committed by adolescents, and increased the power of the police and military to conduct raids without a warrant. This has resulted in increased police repression and prosecution on charges of “aggravating police authority”, which is considered a crime since the approval of this law.

<sup>5</sup> From Radio Mundo Real /Real World Radio: The National Pro-Referendum Commission has the support of more than 100 organizations, including PIT-CNT, FEUU, Frente Amplio, the Uruguayan Federation of Housing Cooperatives for Mutual Aid (FUCVAM for its acronym in Spanish), the Feminist Intersocial, REDES /FoE Uruguay, among others.



The year 2021 was also marked by mobilizations against other policies promoted by Lacalle Pou. Among them, the mobilization of rural workers opposed to the defunding of the National Colonization Institute (INC for its acronym in Spanish). This policy initiative aims to divert resources for the regularization and relocation of settlements; the 50% reduction of the INC budget threatens the redistribution and equitable access to land for organizations of family producers and rural waged laborers, and generally threatens rural development policies.

The demand to the government is for greater measures to address the problems of unemployment and poverty, which, although

there has been a slight improvement in 2021, have not returned to the pre-pandemic levels. On the other hand, the indicators for measuring monetary poverty make other variables invisible, such as access to education, healthcare, and formal employment, all of which influence a person's standard of living. The number of people living on the streets this year increased by an estimated 16%.



# Actions/Denunciations (national and international) by Trade Unions and other social sector

The trade union movement denounces that the LUC restricts the right to strike, affecting the freedom to form unions and legitimizing the criminalization of social protest.

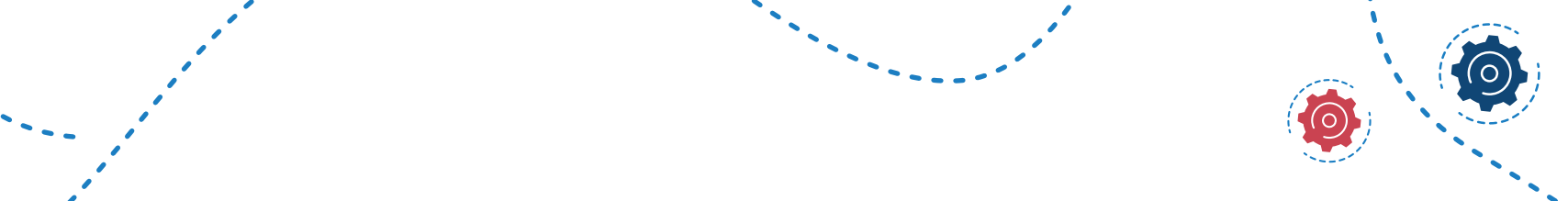
The Uruguayan trade union movement mobilized in rejection of the police force's excessive repression in December 2021 against the National Union of Transport Laborers and Workers (UNOTT for its acronym in Spanish), that had mobilized to demand labor rights guarantees and a wage adjustment.

The Meat Industry Workers' Federation (FOICA for its acronym in Spanish) denounced the discriminatory actions of the multinational corporation Marfrig; the company gave 25,000 Uruguayan pesos to

workers who did not adopt the union measures in the Wage Councils. FOICA sees this as an attack on union organizing through discriminatory allocations. The unions warn that this type of actions have been taking place since the current government took office; a government that welcomes multinational companies trying to favor non-unionized workers, thus creating divisions and discrimination.

Meanwhile, the Uruguayan Association of Bank Employees (AEBU for its acronym in Spanish) called for a strike on 28 December in response to the government's repeated intentions to lower the salaries of public bank employees. The condemnation of the government's attempts to take action





against the rights of bank employees was complemented by a call for the National Plenary of Official Bank Delegates to agree on actions of struggle to accompany the negotiations with the executive branch.

The Uruguayan feminist movement has denounced attempts by the current government to make changes in the process of Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy, which could result in non-compliance with the law that has approved the practice since 2012. President Lacalle Pou has stated that Uruguay must have strong protection for unborn children, with a policy of discouraging abor-

tions. At the same time, the president of the State Health Services Administration (ASSE for its acronym in Spanish), Leonardo Cipriani, has publicly stated that he will review the abortion processes to ensure that the interdisciplinary teams that treat women who want to have an abortion are not acting in an automated manner. The feminist movement believes these statements call into question the effective fulfillment of the right conquered through the struggles of women and different social sectors.

# Trade union proposals and initiatives

Uruguay's trade union confederation and TUCA affiliate, PIT-CTN, held its XIV Congress in 2021, defining the main directions for the next years and electing new authorities. As mentioned in the 2021 context highlights, one of the most important proposals of the Uruguayan trade union movement is the referendum process to confront the threats that the LUC presents to the rights of workers and society in general. Although the process is not carried out exclusively by PIT-CNT, the trade union movement has played a fundamental role in the mobilization and dissemination process towards the referendum, as it has done in other similar processes in Uruguay's history.

Another issue to highlight is the struggle against the government's proposal for social security reform, understood as part of the assault on working class peoples, pushing regressive changes of a neo-liberal nature.

The union confederation sees social security as a fundamental human right, based on the princi-

ples of solidarity, universality, comprehensiveness, and co-management. Based on these beliefs and principles, it was decided to develop a plan of action to confront the Uruguayan government's reform proposal by joining forces among social and political organizations, within a broad framework of social mobilization.

One of the highlights of the proposals that came out of the Congress include the challenge of defending work and collective bargaining in a context of attacks from the right-wing government. Another highlight is the importance of convening a new peoples' congress, with the participation of popular grassroots organizations that can jointly envision a program of transformations with quality work, human rights, and the distribution of wealth.



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Cícero Pereira da Silva - **Secretary for Trade Union  
Training and Education**

Bárbara Figueroa - **Secretary of Sustainable Development**

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**Contents and Writing** - Danilo Urrea

**Review and editing** - TUCA team

**Translation** - Analía Penchaszadeh / Alberto Villarreal

**Graphic design and layout** - Gervasio Della Ratta

