



[Bolsonaro Tests Positive for COVID-19 After Previously Downplaying the Virus](#)

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has tested positive for COVID-19, after months of downplaying the significance of the virus. Bolsonaro had previously opposed state governors' decisions to impose lockdowns, attended anti-lockdown protests, met with supporters without wearing a mask, and pushed for businesses to reopen – all despite the growing health crisis in the country. His revelation comes as Brazil is struggling to contain the pandemic, with critics saying that his dismissive attitude toward the outbreak has hindered those attempts. Brazil is second worldwide, behind only the United States, in both confirmed COVID-19 cases and fatalities. Even more worrying, health experts warn that those figures in the South American country are also likely an undercount.

Bolsonaro has made frequent public appearances in Brazil without a mask, and is one of only a few Latin American leaders who has not imposed a national lockdown to limit the spread of COVID-19. In the news conference earlier this week announcing he has the virus, Bolsonaro revealed that he is using hydroxychloroquine to try and speed his recovery, even though the drug has not been proven to be effective against the illness. He also took his mask off during the news conference, prompting the Brazilian Press Association to announce that it will be suing the president for putting journalists at risk. Last weekend, Bolsonaro celebrated the United States' Independence Day with U.S. Ambassador to Brazil Todd Chapman, and later shared photos on social media. The pictures showed Bolsonaro in close proximity to the ambassador and other ministers and aides, with none wearing masks.

The Brazilian president had previously tested negative for COVID-19 on at least three separate occasions. The tests were taken between March 12th and March 17th, after Bolsonaro returned from a bilateral meeting with U.S. President Trump in Florida and it was discovered that many in his entourage tested positive for the virus. From the start of the pandemic, Bolsonaro had dismissed the disease as a “measly cold” and a “little flu” while scoffing at social distancing measures intended to slow its spread. He stated that he has little to worry about if he gets the coronavirus because his “history as an athlete” will protect him. Recently, he even watered down a law requiring face masks by vetoing their use in certain settings such as shops, churches, and schools, and also vetoed the distribution of masks to the poor.

Overall, Brazil has become a global hotspot for the virus, trailing only the United States in both confirmed cases and fatalities. In addition to clashing with state governors over response measures, Bolsonaro has also butted heads with his own health minister. Brazil's health ministry is currently led by an interim chief after Bolsonaro fired his first minister and a second one resigned. The latter, Dr. Nelson Teich, resigned after only a few weeks on the job.

Bolsonaro joins other prominent world leaders to have contracted COVID-19 including British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Prince Albert II of Monaco, and Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez.