

### Uruguay's Social Policy Response to Covid-19: Strong Fundamentals, Selective Expansion

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Covid-19

Social Policy Response Series

Cecilia Rossel  
María Gutiérrez

**Uruguay's Social Policy  
Response to Covid-19:  
Strong Fundamentals,  
Selective Expansion**



**Cecilia Rossel, María Gutiérrez**

Uruguay's Social Policy Response to Covid-19: Strong Fundamentals, Selective Expansion

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# URUGUAY'S SOCIAL POLICY RESPONSE TO COVID-19: STRONG FUNDAMENTALS, SELECTIVE EXPANSION

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Cecilia Rossel \*

María Gutiérrez \*\*

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## ABSTRACT

Uruguay's social policy response to Covid-19 built on a strong social protection system and a favorable social situation that existed before the pandemic arrived. The country's favorable position in the region enabled the government to gradually reformulate key existing social policies to cover a broad proportion of the population. The newly installed government's response occurred within the country's structurally divided social protection architecture, which covers both formal workers and families not covered by the social security system. However, efforts in the two parts of the system have not been equally effective and there remains a portion of the population not covered by any of these social protection policies.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic arrived in Uruguay in early March 2020. The first cases were detected on 13 March, in individuals who had returned from Europe a few days earlier. The first Covid-19-related death occurred on 28 March.

From the beginning of the pandemic until 30 September, Uruguay had 2,046 detected cases. At the end of September, the number of new daily cases averaged around 14. Over the months, the country's testing capacity increased significantly, especially after the country's public university, the University of the Republic (*Universidad de la República*, UDELAR), and the Pasteur Institute (*Instituto Pasteur*) developed a local test to diagnose coronavirus. Tests are administered to patients presenting symptoms and individuals who have had contact with an infected person.<sup>1</sup> Overall, even after cases began to increase in the fourth quarter of 2020, Uruguay stands out in the region as one of the countries that has managed the pandemic most successfully.<sup>2, 3</sup>

On 13 March, the government declared a health emergency due to the pandemic (Decree 93/2020). Decree 93/2020 established a series of measures to stop the massive contagion. The Decree suspended all public shows (art. 3) and recommended that local authorities consider suspending events involving crowds. The population was also urged to reduce social contacts and events (art. 5 and 6). The Decree also requested extreme measures for cleaning and disinfecting all public and private spaces. It further required the isolation of Covid-19 patients or individuals coming from high-risk areas, as well as of individuals with one or more respiratory symptoms or individuals who had been in direct contact with confirmed Covid-19 cases. In contrast to the

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1 In March, around 300 tests were taken per day. By October, about 2,400 tests were being taken per day and by January, the average number of daily tests was around 6,200.

2 After 30 September, the country experienced an increase in Covid-19 cases. By 30 October, there were around 539 new cases daily and by 16 January 2021, the average number of new daily cases had risen to 956. See detailed figures in [https://observatoriocoviduy.org/observatorio\\_covid.html](https://observatoriocoviduy.org/observatorio_covid.html).

3 See, for example, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-52928601> and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-55623269>

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actions of other governments in the region, the Uruguayan government did not establish a general compulsory lockdown. However, it established mandatory 14-day quarantine for those with symptoms and those who tested positive.<sup>4</sup> Preschool, primary, and secondary schools were temporarily closed.<sup>5</sup>

## URUGUAY'S SOCIAL POLICY RESPONSE

When the pandemic started, Uruguay was in the middle of a political change. After winning the general elections in November 2019, Luis Lacalle Pou had assumed office as president on 1 March. Lacalle Pou won against the left-wing party Broad Front (*Frente Amplio*, FA), which had ruled for the previous fifteen years (Nocetto, Piñeiro and Rosenblatt, 2020). Pou belongs to the right-wing party National Party (*Partido Nacional*, PN) and leads a coalition government formed by several other right-wing and centrist parties. This “right turn” led to the restructuring of the parties on the political right (Nocetto, Piñeiro and Rosenblatt, 2020; Queirolo, 2020) and uncertainty in the field of social policy (Pérez Bentancur, Piñeiro and Rosenblatt, 2020).<sup>6</sup>

Lacalle Pou's government inherited one of the oldest and most developed social protection systems in Latin America (CEPAL, 2010; Filgueira & Filgueira, 1994; Mesa-Lago, 1991; Ocampo and Gómez-Arteaga, 2017).<sup>7</sup> Social security coverage for workers is the highest in the region (around 75%) (OIT, 2018). Therefore, while, on average, around half of the workers in the region are informal, informality in Uruguay is significantly lower. Social security coverage among salaried workers is over 80% (Rossel, 2016). Despite this, the social security system is somewhat fragmented and stratified, offering unequal benefit levels across occupations and activity sectors (Filgueira and Filgueira, 1994; Filgueira, 2001). During the three governments of the FA, certain social security parameters that structured the contributory component were adapted. The government also established new benefits and expanded pre-existing benefits for particular categories of workers (Filgueira & Hernández, 2012; Midaglia & Antía, 2007; Rossel et al., 2015). Uruguay was also a pioneer in establishing a social assistance system for the most vulnerable individuals. Although non-contributory benefits were historically marginal compared to contributory social policies, the FA governments expanded the non-contributory component of social protection. Through the creation of a set of cash transfer policies for the most vulnerable, the government managed to consolidate a strong social assistance policy, which broke with the contributory and stratified model that had previously structured social protection (Amarante and Vigorito, 2012). In contrast to what happened in other countries in the region, income transfers became a stable part of the social protection architecture (Antía et al., 2013). As a result, Uruguay's social situation before the Covid-19 crisis was among the best in the region, with relatively low poverty, unemployment and informality levels (CEPAL, 2019).

A few weeks after the Covid-19 virus started circulating in Uruguay, there were projections of the possible impact the pandemic could have on the country's main social indicators. Simulations that seek to quantify the effect of the contraction on employment and income levels indicate a significant increase in the number of households and people below the poverty line. In response to a 3.5% decrease in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the incidence of poverty increases to 11.6% (an increase of 3.1 percentage points), which represents between 94,000 and 127,000 people who fall below the poverty line (Brum and De Rosa, 2020)<sup>8</sup>.

4 Decree 93/2020 (Article 8). Article 11 established sanctions for breaking the compulsory isolation.

5 The temporal closure of public and private schools was announced in a press conference on 14 March 2020 and formalized by Presidential Decree 101/020 of 16 March 2020. On 8 April, the President announced that classes would resume in rural schools from 22 April. Urban schools would start in a distance learning scheme and return to presence learning in the following weeks. See the section devoted to Measures related to health and education services for more detail.

6 Including the Colorado Party (*Partido Colorado*, PC), Open Townhall (*Cabildo Abierto*, CA) and the Independent Party (*Partido Independiente*, PI).

7 Uruguay has a GDP per capita of USD 16,190 and a population of almost 3.5 million.

8 A similar trend, although with a different poverty measure, was projected by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC or CEPAL in Spanish). The poverty rate, which was around 2.9% in 2019, was expected to almost double in the worst-case scenario for 2020, reaching 5.7% of the population (CEPAL, 2020a).

The government's social response to the pandemic started relatively early, a few days after the health emergency was declared, when the first set of measures to contain its economic and social impacts were established.<sup>9</sup> One of the first actions was the creation of the Covid-19 Solidarity Fund (*Fondo Solidario Covid-19*, Law 19,874), to cover the projected expenditures for the main health measures that were being deployed, the activities of the National Emergency System and the payments of Disability Insurance and Unemployment Insurance benefits provided by the Social Security Bank (*Banco de Previsión Social*, BPS). The Fund was to be financed by several sources, including contributions from the salaries of public officials who earned more than UYU 80,000.<sup>10</sup> The percentage that was withdrawn from a worker's salary varied from 5–20% depending on the amount they earned. The measure covered some 15,000 public servants working in national government, local governments, autonomous entities, and decentralized services. The percentage withdrawn reached 20% for people with elected and appointed political positions, legislators, mayors, ministers, undersecretaries, and positions of political trust. On 8 January 2021, the government reported that the Fund had collected USD 625 million. Private firms also donated money to the Fund, but there is no available information about their percentage of the total amount. Around USD 120 million of the total were devoted to non-contributory policies, mainly cash transfers.<sup>11</sup>

Because of the previous relative strength of the Uruguayan social protection system, most measures taken to contain the social effects of the Covid-19 crisis aimed at making existing policies more flexible and broadening their coverage. Therefore, the main actions taken to counter the Covid-19 pandemic's impact did not imply significant legislative reforms.<sup>12</sup> Probably because of this, Uruguay has spent relatively few resources to address the social consequences of the pandemic compared to other countries in the region. Indeed, Uruguay and the Dominican Republic are the Latin American countries that have devoted the least fiscal effort to combat the effects of the Covid-19 crisis (CEPAL, 2020b).

While there were other types of measures to protect vulnerable populations, the government responded through two main groups of measures: contributory social protection programs and non-contributory monetary transfers. The following sections describe the efforts taken through both types of policies.

## Contributory social protection

Immediately after the health emergency was declared, the government decided to offer paid leave from work to all formal workers aged 65 or more (Decree 109/020).<sup>13</sup> Also, Decree 217/2020 extended the National Health Insurance coverage to those workers who had lost the jobs from which they had received their health insurance (but not to those who lost their jobs due to misconduct) and to those whose unemployment insurance period ended between 1 August and 31 October 2020.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, through the *Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social* (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, MTSS), the Executive created a special partial unemployment insurance for workers affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This measure increased the flexibility of the existing unemployment insurance (established in Law 15,180),<sup>15</sup> allowing workers to receive the benefit if they remained employed but had their hours reduced. For

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9 The detailed list of social protection measures is available at <https://www.presidencia.gub.uy/comunicacion/comunicacionnoticias/medidas-gobierno-social-emergencia-sanitaria-covid19#navegacion-contenido> [Last accessed January 28, 2021]

10 For reference, on 30 September 2020, EUR 1 equaled UYU 49.90 and USD 1 equaled UYU 42.58.

11 See <https://www.presidencia.gub.uy/comunicacion/comunicacionnoticias/arbeleche-bartol-fondo-coronavirus-2020-625-millones-dolares>

12 Moreover, many of the measures taken to cope with the coronavirus crisis were established through ministerial resolutions (not through new laws).

13 See [https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-trabajo-seguridad-social/sites/ministerio-trabajo-seguridad-social/files/documentos/noticias/mtss\\_16.pdf](https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-trabajo-seguridad-social/sites/ministerio-trabajo-seguridad-social/files/documentos/noticias/mtss_16.pdf)

14 See <https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/decretos/217-2020>

15 Until 2008, Uruguay had long-standing unemployment insurance, which provided a monthly cash subsidy for all unemployed salaried workers. To be eligible for the insurance, which provides benefits for up to six months, one must have paid into the system for at least six months during the previous year. The reform promoted in 2008 (Law 18,399) replaced the fixed-amount payment system with a decreasing-payment system (maintaining the same total amount of subsidy) to stimulate workers to search for employment in the context of the international financial crisis.



example, workers could receive the benefit for some, but not all days of a month or for half-days. It also incorporated new activity sectors (education, culture and sports) into the flexible unemployment insurance regime. For those whose monthly hours were reduced by at least six full days, the partial unemployment insurance covers the worker's lost salary for up to a maximum of 19 days per month. The insurance also covers those who suffered a reduction of at least 50% of their daily working hours and workers with part-time or commission-type remuneration who experienced a reduction of 50% or more of their average income for the immediately preceding six months.<sup>16</sup>

The partial unemployment insurance program was conceived as a temporary measure, and it has been renewed several times since the beginning of the pandemic, through ministerial resolutions. At the time of writing this report, this measure will be implemented until February 2021.<sup>17</sup>

Between March and September 2020, an average of 142,723 people received the monthly unemployment insurance: 63% of those recipients were laid off—i.e., suspended—completely from their job, 14% were placed on a reduced work schedule, and the remaining 23% (32,365) were fired.

Also, 417,200 applications for unemployment insurance benefits (including all types) were granted. This represents a 436% increase in the monthly average number of applications compared with the same period of 2019.<sup>18</sup> This level of increase in unemployment insurance benefits is unprecedented. Not even during the crisis of 2002 were the numbers this high (Bai et al., 2020).

Finally, after the health emergency was declared, the government encouraged employers to allow teleworking. This led to further discussions to regulate the teleworking regime but the discussions did not produce new legislation.

## — Non-contributory transfers

A few weeks after the health emergency was declared, the government announced a set of measures to minimize the pandemic's economic impact among the poor population. On the one hand, it doubled the amount of the cash transfers provided through the food stamps program Social Uruguay Card (*Tarjeta Uruguay Social*, TUS)—a cash transfer program that enables recipients to purchase food and hygiene products—for three months.<sup>19</sup> The measure affected 88,875 households. Doubling the amount of the TUS cash transfer cost around UYU 289 million per month. On the other hand, Family Allowances under the Equity Plan (*Asignaciones Familiares, Plan de Equidad*, AFAM-PE) were also doubled for three months for those households that were not already receiving

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16 Regarding the amount of the benefit, monthly-paid workers and those with mixed remuneration receive a subsidy of up to 25% of the monthly average salary they received during the six months immediately preceding their suspension or reduction, depending on the number of days of suspension or reduction. Since April 2020, the amount individuals receive, including the subsidy and the amount paid by the employer according to the period worked, cannot be less than 75% of the worker's average monthly income over the last six months. Day laborers are entitled to receive a subsidy based on the individual's average wage and the number of days not worked. The average salary is calculated by dividing the total remuneration received in the last six months by 150. In all cases, the amount of the subsidy cannot exceed 12 monthly salaries, and the wages worked plus the wages in subsidy cannot exceed the monthly average of the last six months. Workers with part-time or commission-type remuneration receive a subsidy equivalent to the difference between 75% of their monthly average income over the previous six months and the amount paid by the employer for the period worked, which cannot be less than 25% of the worker's monthly average income.

17 Seven different ministerial resolutions were published with revisions to the content and duration of the benefit. The dates of the resolutions were: 18 March (143/020), 20 March (163/020), 3 April (w/o no.), 15 May (440/020), 10 June (576/020), 21 July (1024/020), 15 September (2182/020).

18 Social Security Indicators, BPS: <https://www.bps.gub.uy/bps/file/17602/1/iii.3-seguro-por-desempleo.xls>

19 The TUS was created in 2006 as a monetary transfer aimed at households in situations of extreme socioeconomic vulnerability. The benefit is provided via a prepaid debit card. The card allows beneficiaries to purchase products that help individuals meet minimum nutritional requirements and can be used to buy food, personal hygiene items, and household items. The amount of money credited to the card received by each beneficiary household is determined according to the number of pregnant women and dependents under 18 years of age in the family. Households with children under four years of age receive an additional amount, and the 30,000 poorest households receive double the amount. TUS covers around 80,000 households (Filgueira and Hernández, 2012).

the doubled TUS cash transfer.<sup>20</sup> The AFAM-PE cash transfer covers a total of 120,000 households. Each time the amount was doubled, the Ministry of Social Development (*Ministerio de Desarrollo Social*, MIDES) transferred UYU 333 million.<sup>21, 22</sup>

The government also established a new emergency food basket for informal workers and for other citizens not covered by either the TUS or AFAM-PE programs. Immigrants who do not yet have an identity card can receive a coupon equal to UYU 1,200. Other eligibility requirements for the emergency food basket include being unemployed, not contributing to the social security system or receiving any social security benefits, and not receiving any other transfers such as a retirement pension, contributory family allowances, or food stamps. The government also doubled the amount of food delivered to soup kitchens dependent on local governments all across the country, except for those in Montevideo, the capital.

Although these measures slightly moderated the increase in poverty, they were insufficient to contain it. Brum and De Rosa (2020) simulated the effect of one doubling of TUS and AFAM-PE paid in two installments, and the delivery of the emergency food basket valued at UYU 1,200. They concluded that, on average, this augmenting of monthly transfers implemented as a result of the crisis was around UYU 1,622 per household (UYU 400 per person), which represents 4% of the income of the households receiving the new benefits. As a result, these measures helped limit an increase in poverty by around 20%. However, many of the new households that fall into poverty do not receive transfers outside of unemployment insurance, so the growth in the number of poor people potentially implies a change in poverty composition (Brum and De Rosa, 2020).

## — Other measures for vulnerable populations

Since the beginning of the pandemic, public events were suspended, and artists could not perform for several months. As a response to this, in July 2020, the government established a subsidy for workers in the arts industry who were not covered by the unemployment insurance and who were not receiving any income from fees or contracts (Ministerial decree No. 072, 7 July).<sup>23</sup> This subsidy equaled UYU 6,779 per month for June and July. The Covid-19 Solidarity Fund covered the total cost of this subsidy.

Also, the Ministry of Economy and Finance (*Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas*, MEF) transferred UYU 1 billion to the Ministry of Social Development for the extension of opening hours of homeless shelters and to strengthen the plans of the National Food Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Alimentación*, INDA), among other measures. In particular, homeless people with health conditions and those aged 65 or over were taken to special shelters; some homeless individuals were assigned to live temporarily in hotels.

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20 AFAM-PE were created in Law 18,227 as a cash transfer for vulnerable families with children and adolescents, conditional on educational attendance and medical checks for children and adolescents. They cover almost 400,000 people.

21 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC. COVID-2019 Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean: measures by country. <https://cepalstat-prod.cepal.org/forms/covid-countrysheet/index.html?country=URY&theme=4>

22 Presidency of the Republic: <https://www.presidencia.gub.uy/comunicacion/comunicacionnoticias/tarjeta-uruguay-social-asignacion-familiar-duplicacion>. According to press releases from the MIDES, the government devoted more than UYU 1.8 billion to doubling TUS and AFAM-PE for three months. Also, another UYU 1.8 billion were devoted to the delivery of emergency food baskets. It is estimated that these measures directly or indirectly impacted more than 940,000 vulnerable people.

23 This benefit was intended for artists who were in need or in economically vulnerable situations. This list was extended and communicated by the Uruguayan Society of Actors (*Sociedad Uruguaya de Actores*, SUA), the Uruguayan Association of Musicians (*Asociación Uruguaya de Músicos*, AUDEM), Uruguayan Dance Association (*Asociación de Danza del Uruguay*, ADDU), Union of Musicians and Annexes (*Unión de Músicos y anexos*, AGREMYARTE) and the Uruguayan Society of Interpreters Artists (*Sociedad Uruguaya de Intérpretes*, SUDEI).

## — Deferment of mortgage payments, taxes, and social security contributions

Due to the difficult situation that some small businesses were suffering, the BPS implemented a special regime of payment deferment for those companies without salaried workers, including companies under the single-tax and social single-tax regimes.<sup>24</sup>

Also, due dates for paying taxes and other obligations were postponed. Local governments postponed the due date for paying several municipal taxes. Similarly, in April and May 2020, the Uruguayan Mortgage Bank (*Banco Hipotecario del Uruguay*, BHU) reduced monthly mortgage loan payments by 50% for all its customers with mortgage loans.<sup>25</sup> The remaining 50% of the payment for both months will be due after the loan's last installments are paid, with no additional interest cost. In June and July 2020, the Bank reduced by 25% the payments corresponding to those months for all customers with mortgage loans. Again, the remaining mortgage payments due to the reduction will be due after the payment of the loan's last installments, with no added interest.

In the same vein, the National Housing Agency (*Agencia Nacional de Vivienda*, ANV) in agreement with the Ministry of Housing, Territorial Planning, and Environment (*Ministerio de Vivienda, Ordenamiento Territorial y Medio Ambiente*, MVOTMA) and the MEF promoted a series of measures to reduce the financial burden for families and cooperative members in government housing programs. Late or missed payments corresponding to April and May did not generate fines or surcharges for 60 days. Those who paid the installment on time or those who made the payment through salary withholding had a 10% discount added to the one already granted. All payment agreements that expired on 29 February, 2020 were extended for 60 days and subsidies for all MVOTMA portfolios that expired on 30 March were extended for 60 days.

Regarding housing cooperatives, interest payments on construction loans were suspended on 1 April for 60 days, and this suspension could be extended for an additional 30 days if necessary. Cooperatives whose certificate of occupancy expired and had applied to MVOTMA for a renewal before 13 March were able to submit new applications and modify or renew subsidies. The submission of requests for subsidy modifications was automatically authorized.<sup>26</sup>

## — Measures related to health and education services

Uruguay already had full health coverage before the coronavirus crisis.<sup>27</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, the government extended the national health insurance coverage for formal workers who were dismissed from their jobs and provided the same benefit to their dependents.

During the second weekend of March, education services were suspended indefinitely at all levels (primary, secondary, tertiary). Rural schools reopened on 22 April, and urban ones started to reopen—although with children attending only a few days a week—gradually after 1 June. Schools in Montevideo were the last ones to reopen, on 29 June.

In Uruguay, around 250,000 children eat lunch at public schools. With the closure of schools, the government continued to provide food services to children from families in need (approximately 43,000 children were receiving lunch).

Also, access to distance learning and virtual education was possible for most children at the primary level. All those attending public schools have a personal laptop, provided by the Ceibal Plan (*Plan Ceibal*, Uruguay's

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24 A single-tax is paid in single-tax systems to replace all national taxes, except for import taxes and contributions to the social security system. This implies a simplification of the tax procedures for the state and taxed workers, and a reduction in the amounts contributed. BPS single-tax contributors have increased steadily since 2006 (Amarante and Perazzo, 2013).

25 It extended the expiration date of these installments to 30 April and 31 May.

26 This was the case even when the authorization of modification was granted in the last three months if any member of the nuclear family was fired or received unemployment insurance after 13 March. Once the health emergency ends, the beneficiary of the subsidy will have ninety days to document the nuclear family's economic situation so that the government can evaluate the validity of the modification of the benefit.

27 The creation of the *Sistema Nacional Integrado de Salud* (National Integrated Health System, SNIS) in 2008 contributed to the universalization of health coverage through a civil society sector and a public sector.

“One Laptop Per Child” policy). However, the ability to access distance learning was significantly stratified by economic level.

Finally, the University of the Republic (*Universidad de la República*, UDELAR) created a debit card to buy food for students who were attending its dining facilities. It also created Laptop Scholarships for socioeconomically disadvantaged students to purchase computers to attend virtual classes.

## Other basic services

For several months, the National Telecommunication Administration (*Administración Nacional de Telecomunicaciones*, ANTEL) provided 50 GB of internet data free for those households that subscribe to the Households Universal Plan (*Plan Universal Hogares*), which is the most basic internet service for residential customers. This service is included in the phone service, at no extra charges.

## CONCLUSION

Compared to the rest of the Latin American countries, Uruguay was in a relatively advantaged social position before the Covid-19 crisis appeared. With a high level of worker contributions to the social security system, around 70% of the population was eligible for the protection afforded by social security (Blofield and Filgueira, 2020). Also, the proportion of the population that was economically vulnerable was lower than in most countries, and there were a group of policies already in place when the health emergency was declared.

Most of the government’s response to the social effects of the Covid-19 crisis built on these policies, reformulating some of their parameters and expanding their coverage. In this sense, Uruguay’s response was more conservative than that deployed in other countries in the region (CEPAL, 2020a). In fact, most measures were adopted by executive decrees and by extending existing programs rather than by passing new laws. Also, the strength of the social protection system can partially explain why, compared to other countries in the region, Uruguay invested relatively few resources in combating the social effects of the Covid-19 crisis.

The government seems to have adhered to the structural division of the social protection architecture: it covered formal workers by making unemployment insurance more flexible and assisted families that are not covered by the social security system by providing cash transfers to the most vulnerable. However, these efforts have not been equal in magnitude. Also, there remains a portion of the population not being reached by any of these policies.

As the months passed, most political discussion about the government’s social response has focused on the provision of non-contributory transfers to the most vulnerable. The opposition (FA) has considered the measures insufficient and has even proposed the creation of a basic emergency income to minimize the effects of the crisis.<sup>28</sup>

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28 See <https://www.m24.com.uy/frente-amplio-propuso-renta-basica-para-300-000-hogares-mientras-que-prestaciones-del-gobierno-con-monto-similar-alcanzan-a-13-000-familias/> and <https://radiouruguay.uy/olesker-el-gobierno-fue-receptivo-a-la-propuesta-de-renta-basica-transitoria/>

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**APPENDIX 1: SOCIAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 BY POLICY AREA  
(URUGUAY, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020)**

	Policy Area	Pensions	Healthcare	Long-term care and disability	Labor market	Education
(1)	Have there been any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
(4)	Have subnational governments enacted any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	No
	Policy Area	Family benefits	Housing	Social assistance	Other*	
(1)	Have there been any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	Yes	Yes	
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	
(4)	Have subnational governments enacted any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	

\* Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection, e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection.

## APPENDIX 2: SOCIAL POLICY LEGISLATION IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (URUGUAY, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020)

Note: This appendix covers all major national social policy legislation published between 1 January 2020 and 30 September 2020.

Law 1		
(1)	Number of law	15.180. Resolutions: 143/020, 163/020, 440/020, 576/020, 1024/020, 2182/020 (plus one that is not numbered)
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Ley de Seguro de Desempleo
(3)	Name of law (English)	Unemployment Insurance
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	No Information Available
(5)	Date of law's enactment	20 August 1981
(6)	Date of law's publication	07 September 1981
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Yes
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	This law regulates unemployment insurance for formal workers. The Covid-19 pandemic motivated a revision of this program, it has increased its flexibility, allowing its use during some days (instead of an entire month) or half days. Seven different ministerial resolutions were published with revisions to the content and duration of the benefit. Dates of the resolutions were: 18 March (143/020), 20 March (163/020), 3 April (w/o no.), 15 May (440/020), 10 June (576/020), 21 July (1024/020), 15 September (2182/020)
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No

Law 1: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Law 15.180 regulates unemployment insurance for formal workers. The Covid-19 pandemic motivated a revision of this program that has increased its flexibility, allowing its use during some days (instead of an entire month) or half days. Seven ministerial resolutions established these modifications, successively expanding the coverage of the benefit until 31 December 2020.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	The coverage is extended until 31 December 2020.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Ministerial resolutions were published periodically, adjusting the deadlines. The last one sets 28 February 2021.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Until 28 February 2021
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	28 February 2021
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The resolutions establish a partial unemployment insurance that formal workers can use if they suffered a reduction in days/hours of work.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No

Law 1: Component 1		
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	UYU 5.805 billion
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UYU 858
(32)	Source of cost estimation	News report
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	There is no information available on the total cost assumed by the state regarding the unemployment insurance. However, some informal estimations based on press releases have estimated that the incremental total cost assumed by the state in comparison to the same period 2019 is approximately UYU 5.805 billion (USD 135 million)
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 2		
(1)	Number of law	17, 866
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Creación del Ministerio de Desarrollo Social
(3)	Name of law (English)	Creation of the Ministry of Social Development
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	No Information Available
(5)	Date of law's enactment	18 March 2005
(6)	Date of law's publication	21 March 2005
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Not Applicable
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	This law creates the Ministry of Social Development that implements cash and food transfer programs for the most vulnerable people. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, different ministerial resolutions established modifications of these programs to counter the crisis's impact: doubling of food stamps through <i>Tarjeta Uruguay Social</i> (cash transfer to buy food and hygiene products) for people living in extremely vulnerable conditions and implementation of emergency food baskets.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 2: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Click to enter your text. This law creates the Ministry of Social Development that implements cash and food transfer programs for the most vulnerable people. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, different ministerial resolutions established modifications of these programs to counter the crisis's impact: doubling of food stamps through <i>Tarjeta Uruguay Social</i> (cash transfer to buy food and hygiene products) for people living in extremely vulnerable conditions and implementation of emergency food baskets.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable



Law 2: Component 1		
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Fix-term
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Three months' double benefit paid in two installments.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	This resolution established a doubling of food stamps through <i>Tarjeta Uruguay Social</i> (cash transfer to buy food and hygiene products) for people living in extremely vulnerable conditions.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Not Applicable
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	UYU 867 million
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UYU 858
(32)	Source of cost estimation	News report
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The doubling of TUS has cost UYU 289 million each time. Up to now the doubling occurred three times so the total was UYU 867 million.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 3		
(1)	Number of law	18.227
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Asignaciones Familiares
(3)	Name of law (English)	Cash transfer: Family Allowance
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	No Information Available
(5)	Date of law's enactment	12 December 2007
(6)	Date of law's publication	22 December 2007
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Yes
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	This law created a new family allowance system, called Equity Plan (AF-AM-PE), that consisted of a cash transfer to families that have children and adolescents in their care and live in extreme vulnerability conditions and for those who live in residential care centers, managed by the National Institute of Children and Adolescents (INAU). The Covid-19 pandemic was a motivation to double the cash transfer payment three times, paid in installments each.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	N/A

Law 3: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The Covid-19 pandemic was a motivation to double the payment of the cash transfer AFAM-PE three times that were paid in two installments each. The reform component was established by a ministerial resolution.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Fix-term
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Three months, paid in two installments each
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The Covid-19 pandemic was a motivation to double the payment of the cash transfer AFAM-PE three times that were paid in two installments each.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Not Applicable
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	UYU 999 million.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UYU 858
(32)	Source of cost estimation	News report
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The doubling of AFAM-PE has cost UYU 333 million each time. Up to now the doubling occurred three times so the total was UYU 999 million.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 4		
(1)	Number of law	19.874
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Creación del Fondo Solidario Covid-19
(3)	Name of law (English)	Creation of Solidarity Fund Covid-19
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	01. Apr. 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	08. Apr. 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	16. Apr. 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Yes
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	It is a collection policy to counter some social aspects. The Fund was created to exclusively cover all expenditures related to: 1) all state activities aimed at protecting the population against the national health emergency. 2) The expenditures that the Ministry of Public Health and other public health providers must meet, directly or through aid and transfers to private providers. 3) The prevention, mitigation, care and rehabilitation activities of the National Emergency System, within state of health emergency declared by the Executive Power. 4) The payment of sickness insurance and unemployment insurance benefits provided by the Social Security Bank (BPS), due to the health emergency caused by COVID-19 since 13 March 2020. 5) The fall in the collection of the BPS revenue due to the reduction in economic activity.

Law 4		
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 4: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Other (Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection (e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection))
(14)	Brief description of reform component	It is a collection policy to counter some social aspects. The Fund was created to exclusively cover all expenditures related to: 1) all state activities aimed at protecting the population against the national health emergency. 2) The expenditures that the Ministry of Public Health and other public health providers must meet, directly or through aid and transfers to private providers. 3) The prevention, mitigation, care and rehabilitation activities of the National Emergency System, within state of health emergency declared by the Executive Power. 4) The payment of sickness insurance and unemployment insurance benefits provided by the Social Security Bank (BPS), due to the health emergency caused by COVID-19 since 13 March 2020. 5) The fall in the collection of the BPS revenue due to the reduction in economic activity.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Not Applicable
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	No Information Available
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	No Information Available
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UYU 858
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The Coronavirus Fund was created to exclusively cover expenses from: i) any state activity aimed at protecting the population against the national health emergency; ii) the expenditures that the Ministry of Public Health and other public health providers must make directly or through aid and transfers to private providers, iii) prevention, mitigation, care and rehabilitation activities of the National Emergency System, within the framework of the state of health emergency; iv) the payment of Sickness Insurance and Unemployment Insurance benefits provided by the Social Security Bank, and the shortfall in the revenue of the Social Security Bank due to the reduction in the economic activity. There is no information available on the total costs assumed by the Fund.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 5		
(1)	Number of law	Decree 072/2020
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Creación de subsidio mensual con destino a artistas nacionales
(3)	Name of law (English)	Creation of a monthly subsidy for national artists
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	Not Applicable
(5)	Date of law's enactment	07 July 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	07 July 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Yes
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	It is a ministerial decree that creates a national subsidy for national artists of UYU 6,779 for two months June and July 2020. As public events were suspended artists could not perform for several months. The benefit is for those artists who are in need or in economic vulnerability, established and communicated by: the Uruguayan Society of Actors (SUA), the Uruguayan Association of Musicians (AUDEM), Uruguayan Dance Association (ADDU), Union of Musicians and Annexes (AGREMYARTE) and the Uruguayan Society of Interpreters Artists (SUDEI).
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 5: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component	It is a ministerial decree that creates a national subsidy for national artists of UYU 6,779 for two months June and July 2020. As public events were suspended artists could not perform for several months. The benefit is for those artists who are in need or in economic vulnerability, established and communicated by: the Uruguayan Society of Actors (SUA), the Uruguayan Association of Musicians (AUDEM), Uruguayan Dance Association (ADDU), Union of Musicians and Annexes (AGREMYARTE) and the Uruguayan Society of Interpreters Artists (SUDEI).
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Two
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Subsidy of UYU 6,779 for two months June and July 2020.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	UYU 40,6 million
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable

Law 5: Component 1		
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UYU 858
(32)	Source of cost estimation	News report
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	It is estimated that 3,000 people were selected for the subsidy and receive UYU 6,779 twice.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 6		
(1)	Number of law	Decree 217/2020
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Extensión extraordinaria del amparo de seguro nacional de salud para los trabajadores cesados en la actividad que generaba dicha cobertura
(3)	Name of law (English)	Extraordinary extension of the national health insurance coverage for workers who were dismissed from the activity that allowed that coverage.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	Not Applicable
(5)	Date of law's enactment	04 August 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	12 August 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	It is a ministerial decree that extended the coverage of the national health insurance for those workers who were dismissed from the activity that allowed that coverage, with the exception of those dismissed due to misconduct or those that have reached the end of unemployment benefits between 1 August and 31 October 2020, which will cease if the beneficiaries obtain the same protection by themselves or through another generator, attributing the same right to their dependents.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 6: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Healthcare
(14)	Brief description of reform component	It is a ministerial decree that extended the coverage of the national health insurance for those workers who were dismissed from the activity that allowed that coverage, with the exception of those dismissed due to misconduct or those that have reached the end of unemployment benefits between 1 August and 31 October 2020, which will cease if the beneficiaries obtain the same protection by themselves or through another generator, attributing the same right to their dependents.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Three
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The extension is for three months from the month immediately following the loss of the right to coverage within the period between 1 August and 31 October 2020.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Three

Law 6: Component 1		
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Not Applicable
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	No Information Available
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UYU 858
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	No Information Available
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree