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IF TWITTER WERE AN OPINION POLL... PETRO WOULD WIN ON SUNDAY

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IF TWITTER WERE AN OPINION POLL... PETRO WOULD WIN ON SUNDAY

Authors: Juan Luis Suárez | Retweeting networks show two clear favorites for the second round: Petro and Yadira Lizama Mué | Duque.

SUMMARY

If Twitter were an opinion poll, the winners in Sunday’s Presidential Election (first round) in Colombia would be, in this order: Gustavo Petro, followed by Iván Duque, Sergio Fajardo, Germán Vargas Lleras, and Humberto de la Calle.

DATA FACTS ►

From May 1 to May 21
we gathered:
2,545,152 tweets from
202,743 users.

We have used, as a proxy of potential votes, the number of users who have retweeted tweets by each of the candidates. Retweeting is important because it shows a strong link between users and their leaders, and retweeting a message is usually perceived as an endorsement of the opinion contained in the original tweet. The more retweets and users retweeting your messages, the better. The volume of retweets shows the strength and size of a candidate’s following.

From May 1 to May 21, Petro’s messages have enjoyed the endorsement of 19,895 users, whereas Duque’s have reached 14,237 – a difference of almost 5,000 between the two favorites to make it to the second round. It is true Duque has had more retweets than Petro (83,196 vs 74,823), indicating that some of Duque’s more loyal followers retweet him frequently, but given the principle of “one citizen, one vote”, we consider the total volume of retweeting users to be more indicative. Fajardo and Vargas Lleras follow considerably behind, and De la Calle’s numbers confirm he has not been a viable candidate for several weeks.

RETWEETS ►

In round brackets, the % that represents from the total of retweeters and retweets respectively. The percentages do not add to 100% because some users retweet more than one candidate.

CANDIDATES	NUMBER OF USERS	NUMBER OF RETWEETS
Gustavo Petro	19,895 (40%)	74,823 (33%)
Iván Duque	14,237 (29%)	83,196 (37%)
Sergio Fajardo	8,843 (18%)	25,379 (11%)
Germán Vargas	6,053 (12%)	31,888 (14%)
Humberto de la Calle	4,304 (9%)	9,806 (5%)

Table 1. Number of retweeters and retweets related to each candidate.

These results are quite similar to those from February (see [Data Points Issue 3](#)), when Petro led in the number of retweeting users (13,716) over Duque (9,199) and Fajardo (7,090). The only appreciable change is Vargas Lleras has surpassed De la Calle for fourth place over the past few weeks. Petro’s campaign even remains the best in terms of growth – that is, how much his base of retweeting users has grown over the past three months. He has added 6,179 retweeting users, to 5,038 for Duque.

CANDIDATES	RETWEETERS IN FEBRUARY	RETWEETERS IN MAY	DIFFERENTIAL
Gustavo Petro	13,716	19,895	+6,179
Iván Duque	9,199	14,237	+5,038
Sergio Fajardo	7,090	8,843	+1,753
Germán Vargas	1,622	6,053	+1,831
Humberto de la Calle	4,222	4,304	+2,682

Table 2. Number of users that retweet each candidate during February and May.

FAJARDO NEEDS AN EXTRA MONTH OF CAMPAIGNING...

RATIO ►

The ratio is the relation between endorsements (retweets + likes) and comments in a tweet. People tend to argue when they don't like the tweet, otherwise they retweet or hit the like button.

We have also looked into the overall degree of support behind each of the candidates. In this case, we add the number of retweets and the number of reactions (comments or replies) to get an overall measure. The result is the same: Petro leads Duque (78,103 vs 39,455) by a wide margin, and both are followed at some distance by Vargas Lleras (27,360), De la Calle (16,397), and Fajardo (9,252).

An important element of this overall measure is the ratio between retweets and comments. A retweet is considered a direct endorsement, but a tweet triggering many comments normally consists of negative comments. All candidates have positive ratios, but here, the winner is Fajardo with 18:1, whereas Duque and Petro are neck-and-neck at 8:1, and Vargas Lleras and De la Calle also tie, but at a lower 4:1.

Fajardo is perceived the best on Twitter, but his base is still so small this positivity will not compensate for his inability to widen the number of citizens to whom his campaign appeals. With one more month, he would have maybe changed his strategy a bit, or a larger percentage of the population would have potentially grown tired of the populism and extremism by the two favorites, and the tide would have turned. It is difficult to admit such a change will happen in the next three days.

HIGHEST RATIO ►

Fajardo's tweets are perceived as the most positive, according to the ratio measure. He received 18 endorsements (retweets and/or likes) per comment.

CANDIDATES	REACTIONS	ENDORSEMENTS (RETWEETS+ LIKES)	COMMENTS	RATIO
Gustavo Petro	674,740	596,637	78,103	8:1
Germán Vargas	337,431	297,976	39,455	8:1
Iván Duque	135,735	108,375	27,360	4:1
Humberto de la Calle	87,224	70,827	16,397	4:1
Sergio Fajardo	171,756	162,504	9,252	18:1

Table 3. Total reactions to each candidate during May. From it, the endorsements, comments and its relation.

WHAT IS NEXT?

The graphic below shows the network of retweets by the different candidates. It also shows the areas of intersection between those loyal followers – that is, the groups who can go to one or the other candidate (Figure 1).

NETWORK OF
RETWEETERS ►

The more retweets and users retweeting the candidates messages, the better.

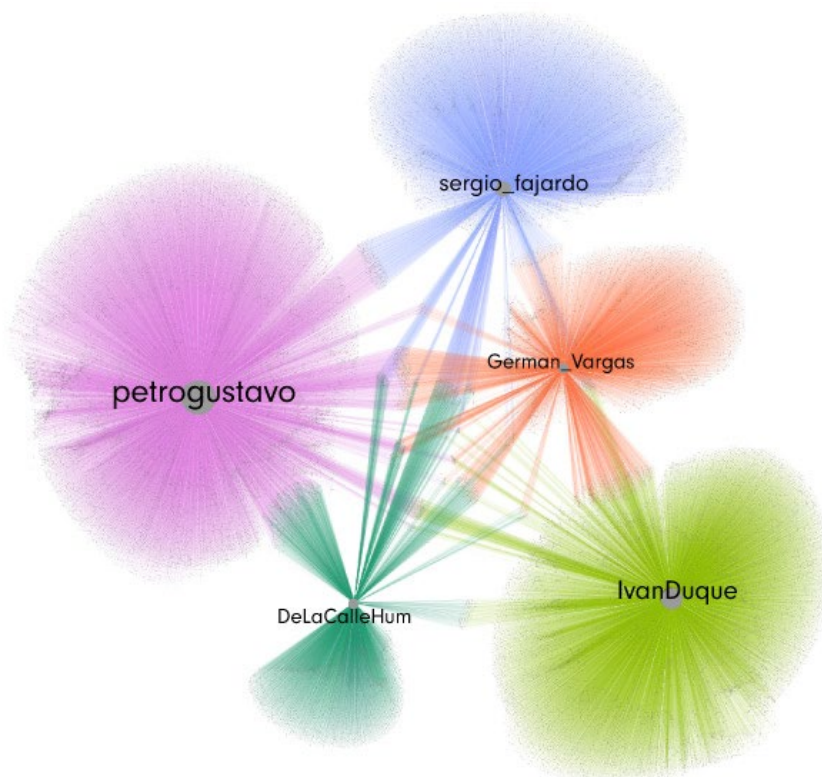


Figure 1. Network of users that retweeted during May. The candidates' clusters are clear.

If we start talking about the second round – and considering Petro and Duque would win the first round – Fajardo's would bring 5.3% of his retweeters to Petro and 1.4% to Duque. Vargas Lleras' loyalists would split almost equally between Duque (11.8%) and Petro (9.7%). De la Calle's followers would go mostly to Petro (23.9%), with just a few to Duque (3.7%). In all cases, we are talking about small numbers of users who sit in between candidates, so they are not definitive at all. An analysis of the network of retweeters for the two winners in mid-June will offer a clearer picture about how voters have moved between rounds, and who will likely be the next President of Colombia.

But, only if Twitter were an opinion poll.

METHODOLOGY

We downloaded tweets using the Twitter's streaming API with the following query:

"IvanDuque, petrogustavo, sergio_fajardo, DeLaCalleHum, German_Vargas"

www.cultureplex.ca

EDITION

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Emilio Calderón

DESIGN

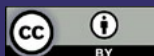
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