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# Brazil Rousseff's support up on economy, Lula-poll

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## Lula-backed Rousseff jumps to 27.8 pct from 21.7 pct

Rousseff benefits from economy, Lula association

Opposition candidate Serra leads with 33.2 pct

By Natuza Nery

BRASILIA, Feb 1 (Reuters) - President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's chosen candidate in Brazil's Oct. 3 election narrowed the gap on the opposition front-runner largely because of a strong economic recovery, an opinion poll showed on Monday.

Dilma Rousseff, Lula's chief of staff and the likely candidate for the ruling Workers' Party, jumped to 28 percent of voter intention from 22 percent in November, according to a survey by the Sensus polling firm. If elected, she would be Brazil's first woman president.

Sao Paulo state Governor Jose Serra of the opposition PSDB party had 33 percent, compared with 32 percent in November, the poll found.

"As a government candidate, Dilma benefits from the country's economic growth," Ricardo Guedes, Sensus director, told a news conference in the capital, Brasilia.

Latin America's largest economy bounced back from a brief recession in the second quarter of last year and is expected to grow by 5.35 percent this year, a survey of leading financial institutions published by the central bank on Monday said.

Neither of the two leading candidates in the Oct. 3 election differs substantially with Lula's economic policy, which includes a free-floating currency, inflation targets and a primary budget surplus to service public debt.

Some analysts say Rousseff could strengthen state-owned companies more than Serra.

A successor Brazil's first working-class president will take office Jan. 1.

Lula, the most popular president in Brazil's recent history, is barred by law from running for a third consecutive term. The approval rating of the charismatic former union leader jumped to 82 percent from 79 percent in November, the poll showed.

Lula, who took office in January 2003, has overseen the greatest burst of economic growth in Brazil in three decades.

Some of his popularity, said Guedes, has rubbed off on Rousseff, who has accompanied Lula on numerous public works inaugurations in recent weeks.

## TWO-HORSE RACE

A former leftist guerrilla fighter, Rousseff made most ground in the poll at the expense of another center-left contender, former Ceara state Governor Ciro Gomes, whose support dropped to 12 percent support from 18 percent.

Former Environment Minister Marina Silva, who is expected to run for the Green Party and vie with Rousseff for votes from leftists and women, gained marginally, rising to 7 percent from 6 percent.

"The election is becoming polarized," said Guedes, reinforcing wide-spread expectations of a two-horse race between Serra and Rousseff.

If neither candidate wins more than 50 percent of the vote in a first round, the two best-placed will face a run-off election on Oct.31.

In a one-on-one test, the poll showed Serra leading Rousseff 44 to 37 percent, compared with 47 to 28 percent in November.

The poll surveyed 2,000 people from Jan. 25-29 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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(Reporting by Natuza Nery; Writing by [Raymond Colitt](#); Editing by Alan Elsner)