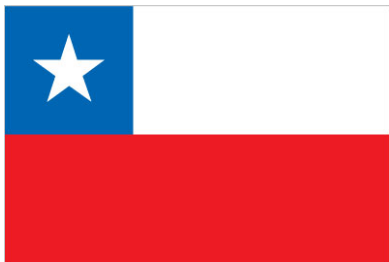


Chile

Republic of Chile



Key Facts



OAS Membership Date: 30 April 1948

Head of State / Head of Government: President Sebastian Pinera Echenique

Capital city: Santiago (note - Valparaiso is the seat of the national legislature*)

Population: 17,925,262

Language(s): Spanish (official) (99.5%), English (10.2%), indigenous (1%), other (2.3%), unspecified (0.2%)

Religions: Roman Catholic (66.7%), Evangelical or Protestant (16.4%), Jehovah's Witness (1%), other (3.4%), none (11.5%), unspecified (1.1%)

Ethnic Groups: white and non-indigenous (88.9%), Mapuche (9%), Aymara (0.7%), other indigenous groups (1%), unspecified (0.2%)

Currency: Chilean Peso (CLP)

Gross domestic product (PPP): \$452.1 billion (2017 est.)

Gross domestic product (per capita): \$24,600 (2017 est.)

Population Below the Poverty Line: 14.4%

Unemployment Rate: 6.7% (March 2019)

Legal System: civil law system influenced by several Western European civil legal systems; judicial review of legislative acts by Constitutional Tribunal

Political system: Chile is a presidential republic. The President is both the head of government and the chief of state, and the Cabinet is appointed by the President. The President is elected through an absolute majority vote in two rounds if necessary for a single four-year term. The bicameral legislature is comprised of the Senate (upper house) and the Chamber of Deputies (lower house). As of 2017, the Senate contains 43 seats, but is set to increase to 50 in 2021. Members of the Senate are directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation vote. Senators serve single eight-year terms, with half of the membership renewed every four years. The Chamber of Deputies is comprised of 155 seats, and are elected in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation vote to serve four-year terms. Chile has three high judicial bodies: the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, and the Elections Qualifying Court. The Supreme Court has a president and twenty members, the Constitutional Court consists of ten members, and the Elections Qualifying Court is comprised of five members. The Supreme Court president and judges are appointed by the president of the republic and ratified by the Senate from a list compiled by the court itself. Service on the court is for life with mandatory retirement at age 70. The Constitutional Court works quite differently. Three of its members are appointed by the Supreme Court, 3 by the president of Chile, 2 by the Chamber of Deputies, and 2 by the Senate. Members of the Constitutional Court serve 9-year terms with partial membership replacement every 3 years. The Elections Qualifying Court, on the other hand, are appointed through a lottery system in which one member is appointed by the president or former vice president of the Senate, 1 by the former vice president or vice president of the Chamber of Deputies, 2 by the Supreme Court, and 1 by the Appellate Court of Valparaiso. These judges are appointed for four-year terms.

Economy: Chile operates a market-oriented economy known for its foreign trade and characterized by strong, stable financial institutions (it has the strongest bond rating in all of South America). Its export sector makes up approximately 1/3 of its entire economy, with 60% of its exports being commodities. Copper is Chile's top exporter and accounts for 20% of the government's revenue. Despite a slight contraction in Chile's economy in 2009, its economy grew from 2003-2013 almost 5% annually. However, with a decrease in copper prices, Chile's economy has been slowing and barely scratching 2% growth annually. Chile has further committed to trade liberalization since a return to democratization, having a total of 26 trade agreements and covering 60 countries. The Chilean government has been known to adopt a countercyclical fiscal policy by accumulating surpluses in sovereign wealth funds during rises in copper prices and allows deficit spending in times of low copper prices and growth. Chile used these sovereign wealth funds, usually kept outside the country and away from the Central Bank, to help bounce back from the 2009 global financial recession.

Diplomatic Relations

Relations to the OAS: Chile, being one of the founding members of the Organization of American States, plays a significant role in the OAS and in following its goals and purposes. One of the main reasons for the founding of the OAS, to promote free and fair elections and a strengthening of the democratic process across the Western Hemisphere, is an issue Chile takes seriously, considering the country was governed by authoritarian regimes for much of the late 20th century. Chile's current commissioner on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Antonio Urrejola Noguera, was elected in 2017 and will serve at his post until 2021. Chile is also a borrowing member of the Inter-American Development Bank, the goal being to support economic development, social development, and regional integration by lending to American governments, government agencies, and State corporations. Given Chile's strong financial institutions and robust economy, Chile does a great service to developing and underdeveloped regions of the Americas in attempting to provide assistance through the development bank. Chile also accepts rulings of the Inter-American Court on Human Rights, which was set up in order to enforce and interpret the provisions of the American Declaration on Human Rights.

Relations to Venezuela: While Venezuela has an embassy in Santiago and Chile has one in Caracas, tensions have been rising between the two South American states. In 2016, Venezuela accused Chile of interventionism and meddling in Venezuelan affairs after it requested information on a Chilean-Venezuelan citizen who was arrested in Venezuela. While Venezuelan authorities arrested the individual on the premise of extortion and money laundering, the citizen's family claims he was arrested for recording an anti-Maduro protest. Chile immediately denounced Venezuela's claims that it was being interventionist, and stated it was concerned about the individual's right to due process and human rights. While they had their disagreements, President Pinera of Chile declared a period of mourning following the passing of Venezuela's late Hugo Chavez. While the two leaders were able to keep bilateral relations on an even keel, the right-wing of Chile's government vehemently rejected showing sympathy for Chavez. Since the protests have increased against the Maduro regime world leaders from many Western nations have refused to recognize Maduro as a legitimate democratically elected president, millions of Venezuelans have fled the country to escape the violence. While neighboring Colombia has received a bulk of these refugees, Chile has shared the burden of the crisis as well.