

Leon-Himmelstine, Carmen et al.

Research Report

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion analysis in Latin America: Chile 2025

ODI Global Report

Provided in Cooperation with:

ODI Global, London

Suggested Citation: Leon-Himmelstine, Carmen et al. (2025) : Gender equality, disability and social inclusion analysis in Latin America: Chile 2025, ODI Global Report, ODI Global, London, <https://odi.org/en/publications/gender-equality-disability-and-social-inclusion-analysis-in-latin-america-chile-2025/>

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Report

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion analysis in Latin America: Chile 2025



ODI Global

Carmen Leon-Himmelstine, Sophia D'Angelo, Ján Michalko, Emilie Tant, Paola Pereznieto and Daniel Orrego Cabanillas

October 2025



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This report has been funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). However, the views expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect the UK Government's official policies.

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Online ISSN: 2052-7209

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How to cite: Leon-Himmelstine, C., D'Angelo, S., Michalko, J., Tant, E., Perezniето, P., Orrego Cabanillas, D. (2025) *Gender equality, disability and social inclusion analysis in Latin America: Chile 2025*. Country Report. London: ODI Global.

Front cover image: Mass protest in Puerto Montt, Chile (2019)

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Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to all the key informants that agreed to offer their time and insights during the key informant interviews (conducted in 2024-2025), without whom this research would not have been possible. The authors also gratefully acknowledge the feedback, support and assistance provided by colleagues at FCDO throughout the different stages of this research project: Valentina Garfias, Georgia Watson and Faye Minshall.

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About this report

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has commissioned ODI Global to conduct a gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) analysis in Latin America, with a view to inform FCDO's efforts to support women, girls and other minority groups across the region. Focuses on four countries: Uruguay, Chile, Guatemala and Panama, the analysis provides the latest high-quality evidence on the state of a number of GEDSI dimensions at national levels. The research also spotlights a range of salient issues including: gender-based violence, women's participation in politics, women's economic autonomy, feminist foreign policy, LGBTQ+ rights, children in alternative care, online violence and bioeconomy. For each country, the analysis provides:

- an overview of up-to-date data on gender equality, disability and social inclusion
- an analytical 'deep dive' into two/three topics of national relevance
- recommendations for relevant stakeholders to support national-level action and/or collaborate with potential international partners.

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Acronyms

ADF	Alliance for Defending Freedom
AUC	Acuerdo Unión Civil
CASEN	Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (National Socio-economic Characterisation Survey)
CSO	civil society organisation
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
FFP	feminist foreign policy
GDI	Gender Development Index
GBV	gender-based violence
GII	Gender Inequality Index
IACHR	Inter-American Court of Human Rights
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Chile (National Statistics Institute)
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LGBTQI+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and other non-normative sexual orientations and identities
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoW&GE	Ministry of Women and Gender Equity
NEET	not in education, employment or training
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OAS	Organization of American States
OCA	Organismo Colaborador Acreditado (Accredited Partner Organisation)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P/FTA	preferential and free trade agreement
PNfV	Political Network for Family Values
PRN	Partido Republicano Nacional
PSC	Partido Social Cristiano
SENAME	Servicio Nacional de Menores (National Service for Minors)
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Key terms

Alternative care: A component of a child protection system that refers to the different types (or alternative) forms of care provided for children without parental care or at risk of being without parental care. There are different types of alternative care, including informal and formal, and it can be provided for short- and long-term periods (UNICEF Lao, 2023).

Anti-gender actors: A subset of gender-restrictive actors motivated broadly by defence of the ‘natural family’ (conceived as based on heterosexual marriage) and a social order based on patriarchal gender norms (D’Angelo et al., 2024).

Child protection system: A system of certain formal and informal structures, functions and capacities that has been assembled to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. A child protection system is generally agreed to be comprised of the following components: human resources, finance, laws and policies, governance, monitoring and data collection as well as protection and response services and care management. It also includes different actors – children, families, communities, those working at sub-national or national level and those working internationally (UNICEF, 2013).

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE): This ‘gives young people accurate, age-appropriate information about sexuality and their sexual and reproductive health, which is critical for their health and survival (WHO, 2023). It seeks to *‘empower young people to prevent unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. It also encourages more equitable and healthy relationships, as well as reducing gender-based violence, bullying and discrimination’* for all young people, regardless of their gender identity or sexuality (UNESCO et al., 2018).

Estallido social: Literally translated as ‘social explosion’, the *estallido social* refers to the social uprisings, protests and manifestations enacted by the Chilean public in 2019. These were seen as a response to economic and social inequality, including gender equality and the rights of women and LBGTQI+ groups.

Feminist foreign policy: A type of ethical foreign policy (Robinson, 2021). While there is no universally agreed definition, many countries and civil society organisations subscribe to principles and objectives summarised by the FFP Collaborative (Feminist Foreign Policy Collaborative), including: commitment to peace and gender equality, promoting human rights, dismantling systems of oppression such as colonialism, patriarchy and racism, and recognising civil society as key actors in international relations (Thompson et al., 2023). While many countries may fall short in achieving these objectives, feminist principles can serve as aspirational ambitions and accountability mechanisms for all governments seeking to address gender inequities (Michalko, 2023).

Gender ideology: A term coined by anti-gender actors to refer to feminist and queer theories of gender as a social construct (D’Angelo et al., 2024). The term – often used as a catch-all phrase to undermine gender-inclusive policies – can be traced back to strong reactions by conservative

religious groups to the incorporation of the term 'gender' in official documents at the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 (Martínez et al., 2021; Vivaldi, 2024).

Gender-neutral or inclusive language: In Spanish and other languages in which nouns are gendered and verbs or adjectives must agree with the subject of a phrase, feminist and LGBTQI+ movements have driven a shift towards gender-neutral or inclusive language both in everyday speech and in more official contexts, such as in government policy and in educational settings (D'Angelo et al., 2024). Gender-neutral or inclusive language was originally developed by feminists to make women and girls visible in languages where the default terms are masculine (ibid.). In Chile, the Government published a guide on gender-inclusive language with the purpose of *'democratising language and giving social visibility to the genders ... [while] avoiding masculine generalisations for situations or activities where both women and men appear'* (Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes, y el Patrimonio, 2022: 4).

Intersectionality: Growing from the work of black feminist scholars and activists, intersectionality argues that individual identities such as gender, race, sexuality and others overlap and intersect and reflect macro-level forms of oppression and privilege, such as sexism, racism and heteronormativity.

Trafficking: As per Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol (United Nations, 2000), human trafficking refers to: (a) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;... (b) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered 'trafficking in persons' even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article; (c) 'Child' shall mean any person under 18 years of age'.

1 Introduction and methodology

Like other countries in the region, Chile appears to be undergoing a transformation in areas related to gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI), questioning patriarchy and the models that sustain and perpetuate inequalities between men, women, and sexually and gender diverse individuals. These transformations have been driven by progressive government policies and social movements such as the student, feminist, and LGBTQI+ movements. Several of the legal commitments that Chile has adopted have been preceded by demands from these movements. For instance, sexual and gender minority groups played a crucial role in the approval of equal marriage in 2021, as did feminist organisations in 2017 on Law 21.030, which decriminalised abortion on three grounds.

1.1 About this report

This report provides updated data and analysis on key GEDSI indicators including poverty, education, health, economic empowerment, gender-based violence (GBV), among others. It shows data differences (where available) by key GEDSI populations (women, Indigenous groups, people with disabilities, migrants) and disaggregated by regions (where disaggregated data is available). It also synthesises evidence on three topics of relevance to Chilean efforts to achieve GEDSI outcomes: feminist foreign policy (FFP); anti-gender backlash (with a focus on LGBTQI+); and children in care.

Data sources span secondary quantitative and qualitative literature including global and government statistics, journal articles and grey literature. Analysis on the three topics is complemented by 20 key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders from a variety of

institutions such as: government agencies, international organisations active on GEDSI topics (including United Nations (UN) agencies), civil society organisations (CSOs), embassies and relevant research institutes (see Annex 1). This report does not aim to provide an in-depth analysis of the Chilean GEDSI statistical landscape or the three topics of interest, but it does offer key insights that would enable relevant stakeholders to guide their efforts to achieve GEDSI outcomes.

1.2 Legacy of the dictatorship and advancements towards GEDSI

Chile's history of dictatorship and democratic transition is a starting point to understand its progress, transformations (or lack of) and continuities in relation to GEDSI. The military regime of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990) left a lasting imprint on the country, with the 1980 Constitution enshrining conservative values that have continued to shape the political discourse around gender and sexuality. This Constitution, drafted without democratic participation and still used today, does not recognise LGBTQI+ rights and emphasises the role of the traditional family (Vivaldi, 2024). Despite including a statement that men and women are equal before the law (Article 19, No. 2), it does not adequately address gender discrimination or provide robust protections for women's rights, leaving room for interpretation and potential gaps in implementation (Lambert and Scribner, 2021).

In October 2020, Chileans voted for elected delegates to write a new constitution. Since then, two draft constitutions have been proposed for public vote, both of which have been rejected. Chile's 'No' vote in its second referendum on the constitution ends the rewriting process –

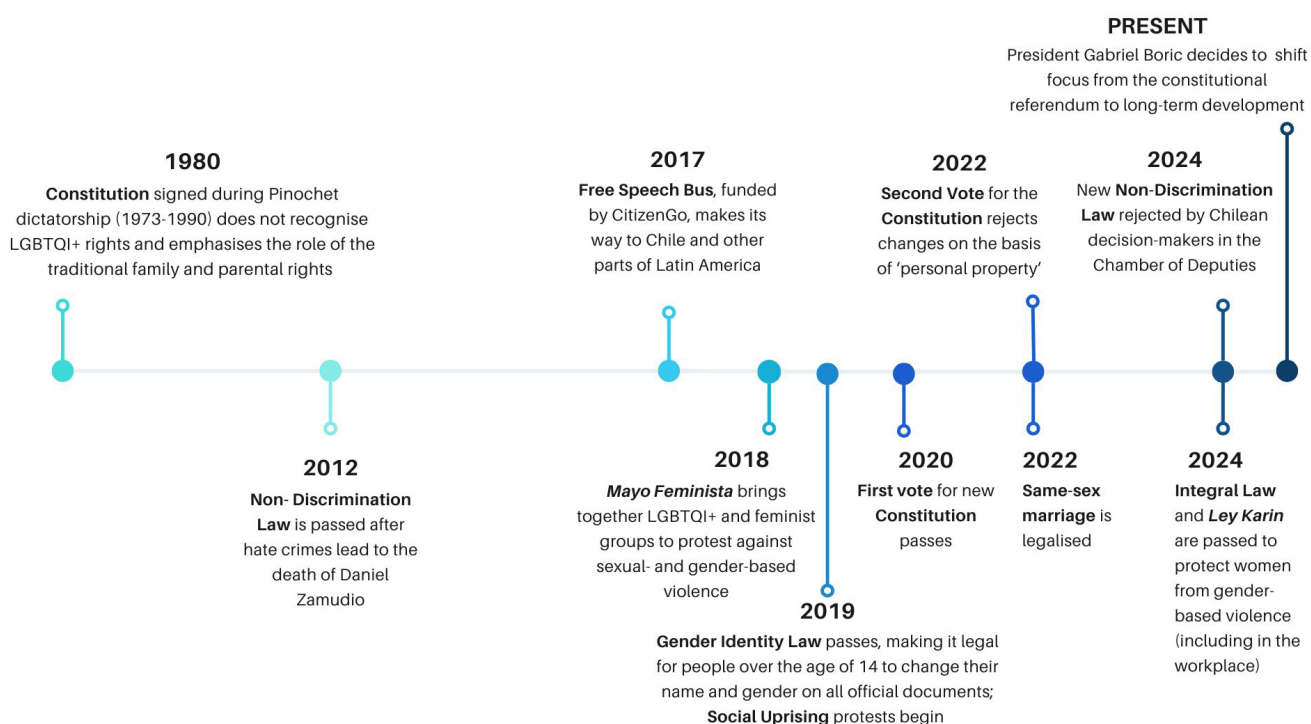
the Government is not planning to restart the constitutional reform process – and highlights ongoing political polarisation among the Chilean population (ibid.).

Other important events over the last 15 years have influenced public policy advancements around GEDSI (see Figure 1). In 2012, the Anti-Discrimination Law was passed following the tragic murder of Daniel Zamudio, a 24-year-old homosexual man who was attacked by a group of neo-Nazis in San Borja Park in Santiago. The passage of the Civil Union Agreement (Acuerdo Unión Civil, AUC) in 2015 granted legal recognition to same-sex couples. In 2018, the ‘Mayo Feminista’ (‘Feminist May’; a large-scale feminist movement) demanded reproductive rights, the ending of gender violence, equal pay and broader societal changes to address patriarchal structures. Further, the Gender Identity Law, enacted in 2018, allows transgender individuals

over the age of 14 to legally change their name and gender marker without the need for medical interventions. In 2022, after years of advocacy by LGBTQI+ groups, same-sex marriage was legalised. In January 2024, the Government enacted the so-called Karin Law against workplace harassment (in honour of Karin Bolaños, a worker who tragically took her own life after falling victim to harassment at work). In 2024, Chile saw the enactment of the Comprehensive Law to Combat Violence Against Women, also known as the ‘Integral Law’, which aims to address and prevent all forms of GBV.

Chile has, however, also experienced backlash from certain conservative actors (such as parent advocacy groups, politicians and religious groups) who oppose the demands put forward by feminist and LGBTQI+ movements (Bonet i Martí, 2022; Vidal Velis et al., 2024). These groups oppose ‘gender ideology’ – a term used by anti-gender

Figure 1 Key moments in relation to GEDSI policy advancements and rights



Source: Authors

actors as a catch-all phrase to undermine gender-inclusive policies (Zúñiga, 2021; Morán Faúndes, 2023).

In Chile, this ‘anti-gender’ movement has had considerable political impact since 2017, when conservative sectors introduced the ‘Freedom Bus’.¹ This controversial bus painted with anti-gender identity slogans, has travelled through the streets of major Chilean cities touting messages such as ‘*If you are born a man, you are a man, If you are a woman, you will remain a woman*’ and ‘#ConMisHijosNoTeMetas’ (‘#Don’tMeddleWithMyChildren’). It has also had the support of various churches (e.g. Evangelical, Catholic) and political figures (see Section 3.2 for more detail), and highlights parents’ right to decide on their child’s education, as articulated in the Chilean constitution (Vidal Velis et al., 2024). As of January 2025, the Chilean-based #ConMisHijosNoTeMetas group had 73,000 followers on Facebook. The movement has been able to gain such a large group of followers by tailoring its messages strategically to different audiences, including to those who hold a more moderate position (Martínez et al., 2021).

1.3 Towards a more gender equal and inclusive society

Socioeconomic inequality presents a challenge to achieving GEDSI goals. The Gini index shows that

Chile ranks as one of the most unequal countries among the members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (World Bank, 2024a).² The fact that Chile’s Gini coefficient has remained closer to those of low- and middle-income countries shows that, while the level of wealth has increased, mechanisms have not been put in place to distribute income more equally (Cid et al., 2021).

Different social groups such as students, the main trade union, feminist groups and groups advocating for dignified accommodation have been expressing their anger at high levels of inequality and the cost of living (BBC News, 2019; Kynsilehto, 2024). The 2019 social uprisings in Chile – commonly known as the *estallido social* (‘social explosion’), triggered by a metro fare increase, quickly escalated into nationwide protests against deep-rooted social and economic inequalities. The increasing number of public protests over time illustrates the multiple prevailing social and economic inequalities after the return to democracy (Lecaros et al., 2023; Kynsilehto, 2024). In particular, young people with higher education express a feeling of betrayal in relation to the social and economic promises of the democratic period, as well as anger at the profound inequalities built into Chile’s social and economic system (Lecaros et al., 2023).

¹ In 2017, the #FreedomBus (#BusDeLaLibertad) campaign, funded by CitizenGo a Spanish right-wing advocacy organization toured Chile as part of a broader effort to spread anti-transgender rhetoric across Latin America, Europe, and the US (Murray, 2022). This campaign gained significant media attention and helped to galvanize conservative opposition to gender identity policies, ahead of the launch of Jose Antonio’s Kast first presidential campaign (Stutzin and Troncoso, 2019; Murray, 2022).

² The Gini coefficient ranges between 0 in the case of ‘perfect equality’ (that is, each share of the population gets the same share of income), and 1 in the case of ‘perfect inequality’ (that is, all income goes to the individual with the highest income) (World Bank, 2024a). Chile’s Gini index in 2022 was 43, placing it as the 4th most unequal country among OECD members (just after Colombia, Costa Rica and Turkey) (World Bank, 2024a).

2 GEDSI statistical profile

To situate the research findings in Chapter 3 in the broader Chilean context, this chapter presents data on key GEDSI indicators in Chile, including data that provides comparisons with the wider

Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region where available. Table 1 provides a summary of results: yellow cells highlight the most favourable outcome in relation to each indicator.³

Table 1 Chile GEDSI indicators compared to the wider Latin America and Caribbean region

Index/indicator	Chile	Region	Source
GEDSI indices			
Gender Inequality Index	0.190	0.386	UNDP (2022b)
Women Peace and Security Index	0.736	0.626	GIWPS (2023)
Social Institutions and Gender Index	27.2	20.9	OECD (2023a)
Gender Development Index	0.973	0.991	UNDP (2022b)
Poverty			
Population without own income, by sex and quintiles (2022) (%)	Total 13.6 Women 17.6 Men 10.1	Total 18.6 Women 26.2 Men 10.1	CEPALSTAT (2022)
Education			
Upper secondary school completion (%) (Chile 2022; LAC 2023)	Urban female 93.7% Urban male 90.9% Rural female 91.5% Rural male 86.9%	Urban female 76.2% Urban male 70.5% Rural female 57.5% Rural male 51.2%	CEPALSTAT (2023)
Population with at least some secondary education (% ages 25 and older) (2022)	Female 82% Male 84%	Female 64% Male 64%	UNDP (2022b)
Share of youth not in education, employment or training (% of youth population) (2023)	Female 17% Male 14%	Female 25% Male 13%	World Bank (2025)
Health			
Maternal mortality ratio (estimate per 100,000 live births of women aged 15–49) (2023)	10	77	World Bank (2024b)
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15–19) (2023)	6.5	51	World Bank (2024b)

³ The indicators presented tend not to be intersectional or only one-dimensional. Multiple methods have been proposed to conduct an intersectional statistical analysis, including conventional methods such as cross-tabulation analyses that stratify measures of central tendency by intersectional groups or regression models (Bauer et al., 2021). It is beyond the scope of this study to provide such analysis, but data on vulnerable groups, where available, is provided in the following sections.

Table 2 Chile GEDSI indicators compared to the wider Latin America and Caribbean region continued

Index/indicator	Chile	Region	Source
Health continued			
Percentage of adolescent girls aged 15–19 who are mothers (Chile 2017; LAC 2020)	7.2%	10%	ECLAC (2024a)
Percentage of sexually active population using modern methods of contraception (women of reproductive age 15–49)	61%	55%	Health Information Platform for the Americas (2024)
Unmet need for family planning: any method (women 15–49 married or in a union) (2024)	7.5%	Data unavailable	UN (2024)
Economic empowerment			
Labour force participation (+15 and older) (2024)	Female 52% Male 71%	Female 51% Male 75%	World Bank (2024b)
Percentage of the population agreeing or strongly agreeing that ‘ <i>when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women</i> ’ (2022)	35%	15%	OECD (2023b)
Percentage of the population agreeing or strongly agreeing that ‘ <i>men make better business executives than women do</i> ’ (2022)	29%	18%	(OECD, 2023b)
Gender gap in management positions (% of managers, men and women) (2022)	Female 30% Male 70%	Female 39% Male 62%	(OECD, 2023b)
Gender gap in top management positions (% of firms with a man or a woman as top manager) (2022)	Female 4% Male 96%	Female 18% Male 82%	(OECD, 2023b)
Youth unemployment (% of labour force 15–24) (2023)	Female 24% Male 20%	Female 16% Male 12%	(World Bank, 2024c)
Unpaid care and domestic work			
% of the population agreeing or strongly agreeing that ‘ <i>when a mother works for pay, the children suffer</i> ’ (2022)	54%	39%	(OECD, 2023b)
Men’s and women’s average time spent (in hours) on unpaid domestic and care work in a 24-hour period (2022)	Female 5.3 Male 2.4	Female 4 Male 2	(OECD, 2023b)
Women’s political representation			
% of members of national parliament, men and women (2022)	Female 35% Male 65%	Female 34% Male 65%	(OECD, 2023b)
% of women in ministerial positions (2022)	58%	30%	(World Bank, 2025)

Table 2 Chile GEDSI indicators compared to the wider Latin America and Caribbean region continued

Index/indicator	Chile	Region	Source
Gender-based violence			
% of women subjected to physical and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months (ages 15-49) (2018)	6%	8%	(World Bank, 2025)
% of men and women who report not feeling safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live (2022)	Female 62% Male 48%	Female 49% Male 35%	(OECD, 2023b)
% of boys and girls aged 15-19 years who have been or are still married, divorced, widowed or in an informal union (2022)	Female 6% Male 3%	Female 10% Male 3%	(OECD, 2023b)
Women's deaths at the hands of their intimate partner or former partner (absolute number / rate) (2023)	35 / Rate (per 10,000 women) 0.4	3,897 / Rate (per 100,000 women) N/A	(ECLAC, 2024b)

As Table 1 shows, Chile ranks comparatively well on different gender indexes when compared to global outcomes, although lower than the average for the region on some indicators. The following sections discuss these patterns and the reasons for them in more detail.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) measures gender inequalities in three areas (reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity), with a higher value representing a less gender-equitable society. Chile has a GII value of 0.190, which is lower than the regional average (0.386) – i.e. Chile is ranked as more gender equal than the average for the rest of the region. Chile's GII is also lower than the global GII value of 0.462, as of 2022 data (UNDP, 2022b).

The Women Peace and Security Index ranks countries based on 13 indicators under three dimensions: women's inclusion, justice and security. Countries score between 0 and 1, with 0 denoting the worst performance and 1 (or 100) denoting the best. Chile's score is 0.736; better placed than the LAC regional score of 0.626 (GIWPS, 2023).

On the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), Chile has a value of 27.2 (most recent data from 2023), which means that there is comparatively 'low' gender discrimination.⁴ Discrimination is rated 'very low' for the categories 'discrimination in the family' (8) and 'restricted civil liberties' (7). Discrimination is rated low for 'restricted physical integrity' (23) and very high for 'restricted access to productive and financial resources' (61) (OECD,

4 The SIGI uses 25 variables to measure discrimination in social institutions. These variables are grouped into four dimensions: discrimination in the family, restricted physical integrity, restricted access to productive and financial resources, and restricted civil liberties. The SIGI scale ranges from 0 to 100, with 0 being the best outcome and 100 being the worst. Countries are classified into five groups according to their SIGI score: (1) very low level of discrimination (SIGI < 20); (2) low level of discrimination (20 < SIGI < 30); (3) medium level of discrimination (30 < SIGI < 40); (4) high level of discrimination (40 < SIGI < 50); and (5) very high level of discrimination (SIGI > 50) (OECD, 2023a).

2023a). As can be seen in Table 1, although Chile has an overall ‘low’ score in relation to gender discrimination, this score is higher than the regional average. This is because Chile’s score on the ‘restricted access to productive and financial resources’ dimension is much higher compared to the regional average (60.6 and 22.4, respectively) (ibid.). As will be discussed in Section 2.5 on ‘Economic empowerment’, this is due to gender gaps that are detrimental to women, such as gaps in top management positions or patterns of labour market participation.

A similar trend is observed in the Gender Development Index (GDI).⁵ The GDI is designed such that the closer a country’s GDI value is to 1, the more gender equal it is. Among developing regions, the gender gap in human development is narrowest in the LAC region (UNDP, 2022a). Chile’s GDI value is 0.973, compared to the LAC regional average of 0.991, as of 2022 data. This places Chile in category 2 (5 being the worst and 1 being the best in terms of gender equality) (UNDP, 2022a). Chile’s GDI value is lower than the LAC region due to large disparities between women and men in estimated gross national income per capita (\$18,612 and \$30,337, respectively), reflecting women’s lower command over economic resources.

The following sections present the results of key GEDSI indicators per topic. Data is disaggregated by region where available.

2.1 Vulnerable populations

According to the latest population census, Chile’s has a population of 18,480,432. The census indicates that Chile’s society is ageing. For example, data from the National Statistics Institute of Chile (Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Chile, INE) shows that the proportion of people aged 65+ increased from 8.1% in 2012 to 14% in 2024. In contrast, the youth population (those below 15 years old) decreased from 25.7% to 17.7% during the same time period (INE, 2025a). This section presents an overview of vulnerable groups, including Indigenous and Afrodescendent peoples, people with disabilities and migrants. Data on the LGBTQI+ population will be presented in Section 3.2.

Indigenous groups

Chile recognises nine Indigenous Chilean groups: Mapuche, Aymara, Rapa Nui, Lican Antai, Quechua, Colla, Diaguita, Kawésqar and Yagán, or Yamana. According to Chile’s population census of 2024, Indigenous people represented 11.5% of the population. Most of the country’s Indigenous people identified themselves as Mapuche (77%), Aymara (8.5%) and Diaguita (7%) (INE, 2025b).

The Indigenous population is distributed throughout the country, but is concentrated in the Metropolitan Region (26%), La Araucanía (16%), Los Lagos (11%) and Biobío (7%) (INE, 2025c). The largest number of people identified as Mapuche, in absolute terms, can be found in the Metropolitan Region (491,213 people) (ibid.), where they account for 7.4% of the population

5 The GDI, coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: health (measured by female and male life expectancy at birth), education (measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and mean years for adults aged 25 years and older); and command over economic resources (measured by female and male estimated gross national income per capita). The income component of the GDI is a proxy to command over economic resources (UNDP, 2022a).

(INE, 2025b). The regions with the largest Mapuche population are La Araucanía (33%), Aysén (27%), Los Lagos (26%), Los Ríos (24%) and Biobío (9%) (INE, 2018).

Afrodescendant groups

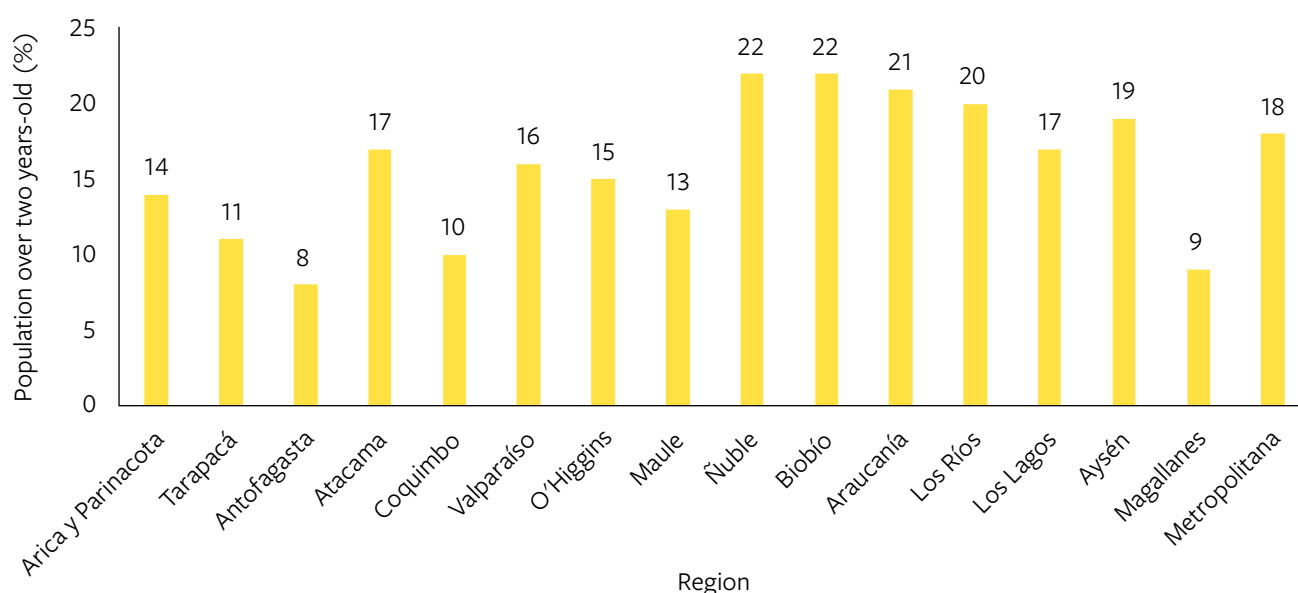
According to Chile's population census of 2024, Afrodescendant people represented 0.9% of the population, equivalent to 174,190 people. Most identified themselves as Afrodescendant (53.7%), Afrochilean (22.5%), Black (Negro/a) (8%), and From the Chilean Afro-descendant Tribal People (Del Pueblo Tribal Afrodescendiente Chileno) (7.9%) (INE, 2025d). The largest number of people identified as Afrodescendant was found in the Metropolitan Region (45%), Arica y Parinacota (7.4%), Valparaíso (6.72%), Antofagasta (5.6%), and Biobío (5.2%) (INE, 2025b).

People with disabilities

According to the latest population census, 11.1% of the estimated population aged five years and above in Chile had a disability in 2024; 5.2% reported having a physical disability (inability to walk), 5.8% a visual disability, 2.8% a mental disability and 2.3% a listening disability. The regions of Ñuble (15.3%), La Araucanía (13.3%) and Maule (13.1%) have the highest proportion of people with disabilities aged five and above (INE, 2025b).

Figure 2 shows the regional prevalence of disability⁶ in the population aged two years and above according to the latest national study on disability. As can be seen, the Metropolitan, Ñuble, Biobío and Araucanía regions have regional prevalence rates significantly higher than the national prevalence of 17% (Servicio Nacional de la Discapacidad, 2023).

Figure 2 Population aged two years and over by disability and region (%) (2022)



Source: Authors, using data from Servicio Nacional de la Discapacidad (2023)

⁶ A person with a disability is considered to be anyone who, in relation to their physical, mental, intellectual, sensory or other health conditions, experiences restrictions in their full and active participation in society when interacting with various contextual, attitudinal and environmental barriers (Servicio Nacional de la Discapacidad, 2023).

The same data suggests that 14.7% of the population aged 2–17 lived with a disability in 2022: 5% with mild to moderate disabilities and 10% with severe disabilities. The data also showed that 17.6% of the adult population lived with a disability: 6% with mild or moderate disability and 11% with severe disability. Adult women had a greater prevalence of mild disabilities compared to men (7% and 5%, respectively) as well as more severe disabilities (15% and 8%, respectively) (Servicio Nacional de la Discapacidad, 2023).

Migrants

International migration

Between 2002 and 2022, the proportion of migrants as a share of Chile's total population increased almost ninefold: from 1.3% to 8.8% (INE, 2025e). According to the latest population census, with data collected between March and July 2024, there were 1,608,650 foreign nationals in Chile, with the largest numbers coming from Venezuela (41%), Peru (14%), Colombia (12%), Bolivia (10%) and Haiti (5%) (INE, 2025e). The majority of the migrant population in 2023 were aged 30 to 39 years, with the highest proportion (17%) in the 30-to-34-year age group. Children and adolescents represented 16% of the total estimated population (Servicio Nacional de Migraciones, 2024).

Most of the migrants living in Chile have arrived within the past five years. Specifically, 33.4% arrived between 2017 and 2019, 22.9% between 2020 and 2022, and 11.8% between 2023 and 2024. An earlier wave of migration between the early 1990s and 2016 accounts for 29.6% of the current migrant population, while only 2.2% arrived before the 1990s (INE, 2025e).

Data for 2023 suggest a total of 336,984 foreign nationals were in an irregular migration situation (i.e. without official permission or

legal authorization to stay in the country), corresponding to 18% of migrants. Of this population, 186,276 (55%) were men. The migrants in an irregular situation are mainly Venezuelan (75%), followed by Bolivians (9%) and Colombians (5%) (Servicio Nacional de Migraciones, 2024).

The Tarapacá Region hosts the highest proportion of migrants (23.2% of the total migrant population), followed by Antofagasta (19.7%), Arica y Parinacota (14.9%) and the Metropolitan Region (13.1%) (INE, 2025e). The nationality of the migrants often influence the region in which they reside. Most Venezuelan migrants, for example, live in Biobío (64% of the total migrant population in that region), Maule (56.5%) and Los Lagos (55%), while most Bolivian migrants live in Tarapacá (51%), Antofagasta (40%) and Arica y Parinacota (39%) (INE, 2025e).

Biobío has seen the greatest increase in migrants since 2022 (25%), followed by Coquimbo (24%). Data from 2018 and 2023 shows that the migrant population of Biobío practically doubled, with a relative growth of 96%, followed by Los Lagos (86%) (INE, 2025e). While there is no clear causation for the increase of population in Biobío, it is likely to be due to availability of job opportunities in the region. For instance, a survey by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) with the Venezuelan population shows that most adults (80%) were working and 96% reported having no intentions to leave the region in the year following the survey (OIM, 2023).

Internal migration

According to the latest population census, 927,598 people migrated internally (changing their region or commune of residence in five years before the census). The latest census shows the migration balance of the regions, calculated on the basis of the total number of people arriving minus the

total number of people leaving. The regions with a negative internal migration balance (more people leaving than arriving) are the Metropolitan Region (-218,317), Antofagasta (-31,614), and Tarapacá (-11,914). Conversely, the regions with a positive internal migration balance (more people arriving than leaving) are Valparaíso (44,480), La Araucanía (42,842) and Maule (39,688) (INE, 2025e).

2.2 Poverty

Table 2 summarises poverty rates among different groups considered to be priorities for social policy, according to area, sex, ethnicity and place of birth, using information from Chile's 2022

National Socioeconomic Characterisation Survey (Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional; CASEN)⁷ (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, 2024).

Poverty has decreased in recent years, from 21.7% in 2011 to 6.5% in 2022.⁸ Poverty has also decreased among both men and women, although it remains higher among women. For example, in 2009, the poverty rate for men and women was 23.9% and 25.7%, respectively. In 2022, the total poverty rate for men and women was 6.1% and 6.9%, respectively. Between age groups, in 2022 the highest poverty rates were observed in the group of people under 18 years of age, with statistically

Table 2 overty rates by priority groups (%) (2022)

Groups	Poverty rate (%)	Difference (percentage points)
Total	6.5	
Rural	9.9	3.9 (*)
Urban	6.1	
Women	6.9	0.8 (*)
Men	6.1	
Belonging to Indigenous communities	8.8	2.6 (*)
Not belonging to Indigenous communities	6.2	
Born outside Chile	11.1	5.0 (*)
Born in Chile	6.1	

* Statistically significant differences at 95%

Source: Informe de Desarrollo Social 2023 (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, 2024)

- 7 This section is based on data from CASEN (2022). In July 2025, the Ministry of Social Development and Family made it known that the delivery of the results of the CASEN 2024 would be postponed until 2026, after the release of this report.
- 8 The poverty line is the minimum monthly income below which households are classified as poor. The value of the poverty and extreme poverty lines is calculated monthly by the Ministry of Social Development and Family (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia) and depends on the cost of the basic food basket. In January 2022, the poverty and extreme poverty lines were CLP\$188,338 (US\$195) per person and CLP\$125,559 (US\$130) per person, respectively. When classifying households as poor, per capita income per household is replaced by income per person. Thus, a household is poor if its income per person is below the value of the poverty line per person. For example, a household of three people (the average household in Chile) with an income of less than CLP\$467,889 (US\$486) is considered poor (CEPAL, 2023).

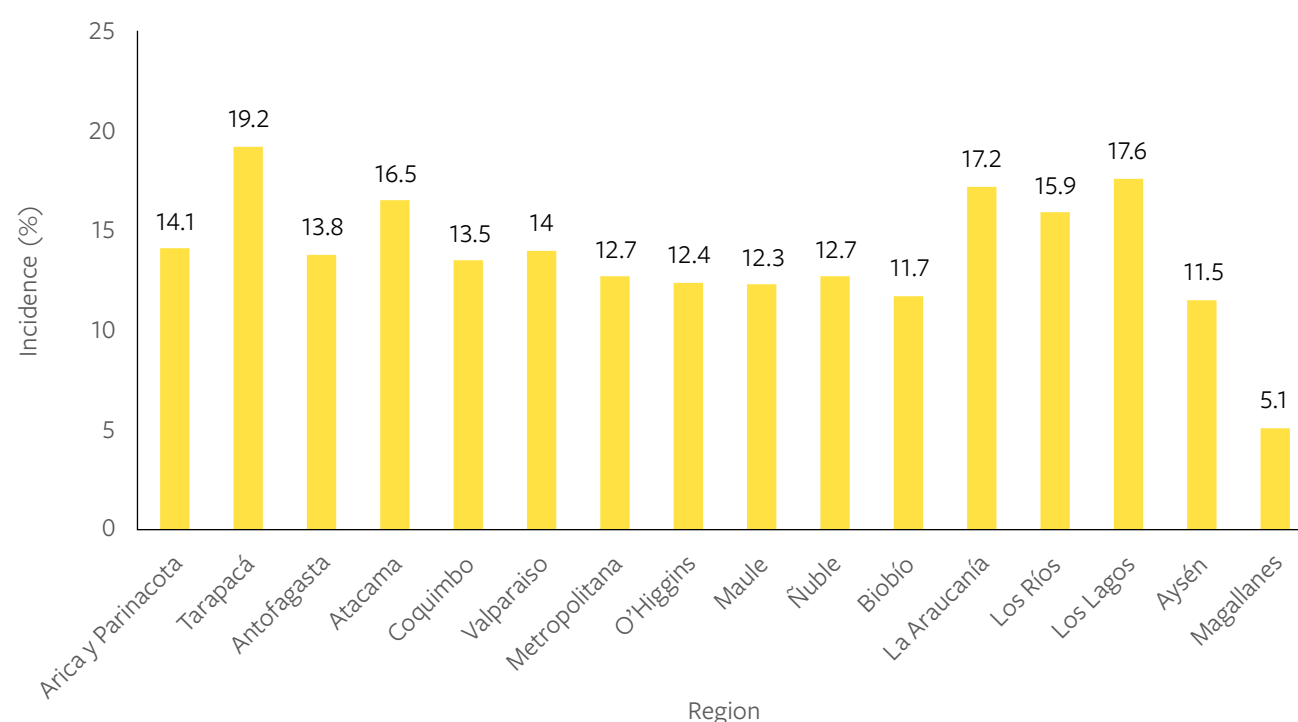
significant differences compared to other groups. The poverty rate for the 0–3 age group reached 12.2%, while for the 4–17 age group it was 10.1%. Poverty rates decrease with age, as can be seen in the poverty rates for groups aged 30–40, 45–59 and 60+ years (6%, 5.5% and 3.1%, respectively) (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, 2024).

Multidimensional poverty

The current measure of multidimensional poverty does not show a significant variation between the

years 2015 and 2017: 16% and 16.3%.⁹ However, in 2022 it decreased to 13.5%. At regional level, the highest rates of multidimensional poverty in 2022 were observed in the regions of Tarapacá, Los Lagos, La Araucanía, Biobío and Atacama, with differences that are statistically significant with respect to the national estimate (13.5%) (see Figure 3). The lowest incidence of multidimensional poverty was observed in the Magallanes region, at 5.1% (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, 2024).

Figure 3 Incidence of multidimensional poverty in the population by region (%) (2022)



Source: Informe de Desarrollo Social 2023 (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, 2024a)

⁹ Multidimensional poverty measurement considers five dimensions (1) education; (2) health; (3) work and social security; (4) housing and environment; and (5) networks and social cohesion. Each dimension is composed of three relevant indicators that allow the characterisation of deprivations and their dynamics within households. A household is considered to be in a situation of multidimensional poverty if it is deficient on 22.5% or more evaluation indicators (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, 2024).

Indigenous households

The gap between indigenous groups and the rest of the population has also narrowed over the years but remains significant. In 2009, the poverty rate among the Indigenous population was 38.2%, compared to 23.8% for the rest of the population. By 2022, it had fallen to 8.8% and 6.2%, respectively. Indigenous households experienced higher levels of multidimensional poverty between 2015 and 2022 (25% and 20%) compared to non-Indigenous households (15.3% and 12.8%) (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, 2024).

People with disabilities

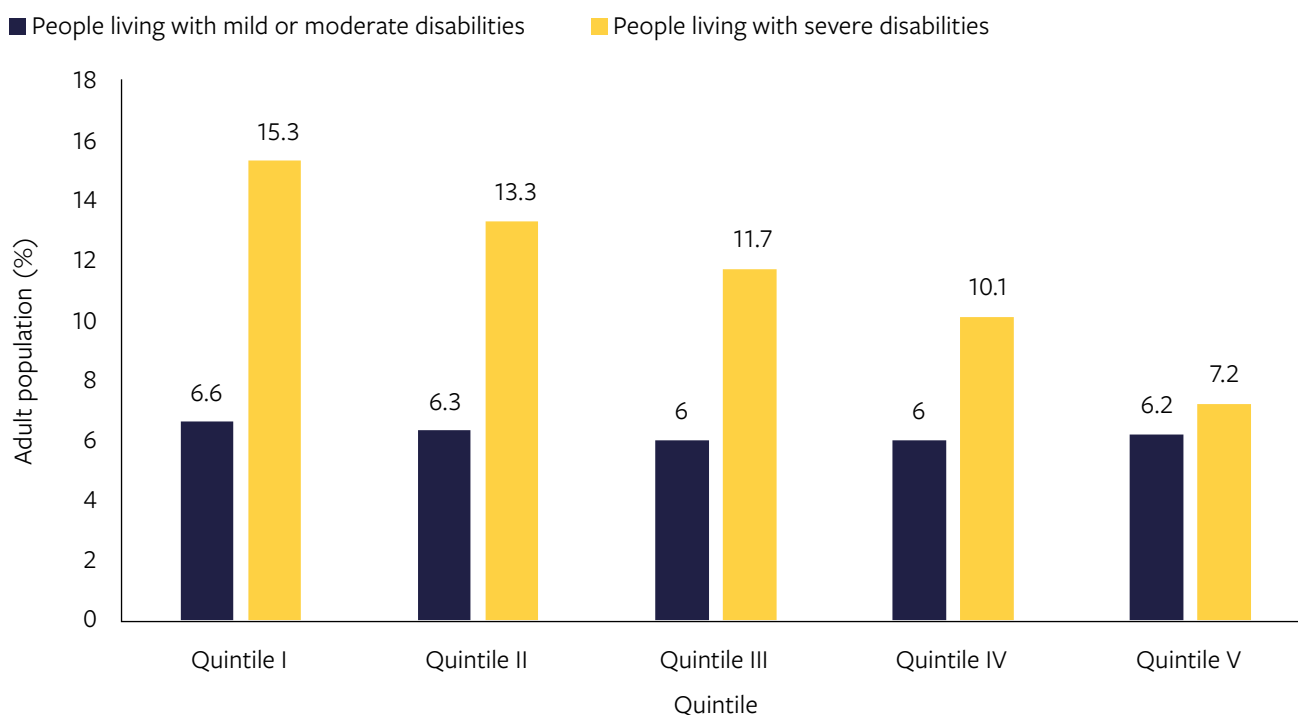
Poverty levels are higher among people with disabilities in the lower income quintiles. As Figure 4 shows, the prevalence of disability

in the adult population is higher in the lower income quintiles and decreases for higher income quintiles. The same trend is evident in the prevalence of severe disability (Servicio Nacional de la Discapacidad, 2023).

Migrant households

When analysing the levels of multidimensional poverty according to the place of birth of the head of household, migrant households showed a higher incidence of multidimensional poverty between 2015 and 2022 (15.3% and 22.5%) than Chilean-born households during the same period (16% and 12.5%). These figures show that in the gap between both types of households increased in 2022, reaching a statistically significant difference of 10 percentage points (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, 2024).

Figure 4 Prevalence of disability among the adult population, by independent income quintile (%) (2022)



Source: Authors, based on data from the Servicio Nacional de la Discapacidad (2023)

2.3 Education

Access to education and enrolment rates

On average, men and women aged 18 years or older in Chile have had 12 years of schooling (INE, 2025b), and the country has made progress in overcoming inequality between men and women in access to education. Outside higher education, there are no substantial differences in the enrolment of male and female students, with the school population being 51.5% male and 48.4% female (Ministerio de Educacion, 2024). According to the GDI of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the expected years of schooling for females are 17.1 years compared to 16.5 years for males (UNDP, 2022a).

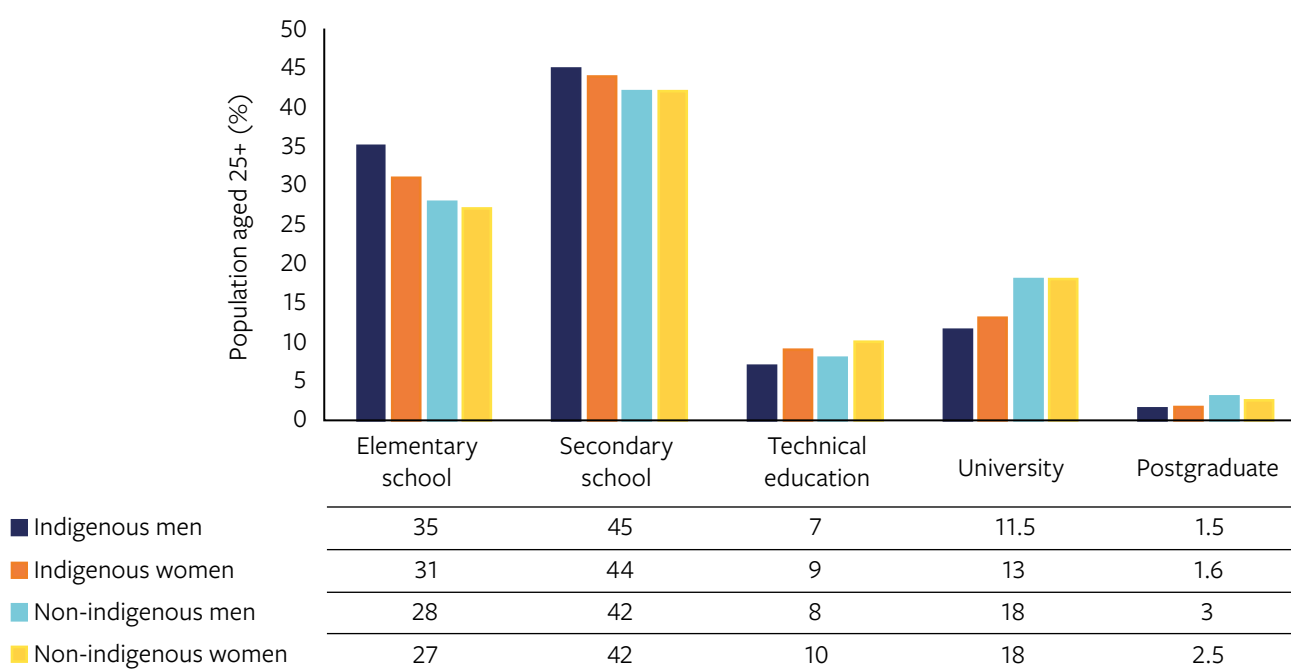
Nevertheless, the Chilean education system reflects the profound social and educational inequality of the country. National learning

measurement tests consistently show that students from a higher socioeconomic class who attend private schools score higher than those from a lower socioeconomic class in all assessments at elementary and secondary levels (Agencia de Calidad de la Educacion, 2024). The following sections outline data for different vulnerable groups.

Indigenous groups

The latest population census showed that Chile's Indigenous population (aged 18 years or older) has had an average schooling of 11.4 years, compared to an average of 12.2 years from its non-Indigenous population (INE, 2025c). Figure 5 shows the levels of education completed by the Indigenous population compared to the non-Indigenous population based on data from the population census of 2017 (INE, 2018). As can be seen, Indigenous women and men completed lower levels of education compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.

Figure 5 Population aged 25+ by ethnicity, sex and highest educational level completed (%) (2017)



Source: Authors' elaboration based on population census on indigenous peoples in Chile (INE, 2018)

The proportion of Indigenous women and men with a technical education was 9% and 7%, respectively, compared to 10% and 9% for their non-Indigenous counterparts. At university level, there was a difference of 5 percentage points to the detriment of Indigenous women and of 6 percentage points to the detriment of Indigenous men. The same occurred with postgraduate studies, but the difference was smaller (INE, 2018).

People with disabilities

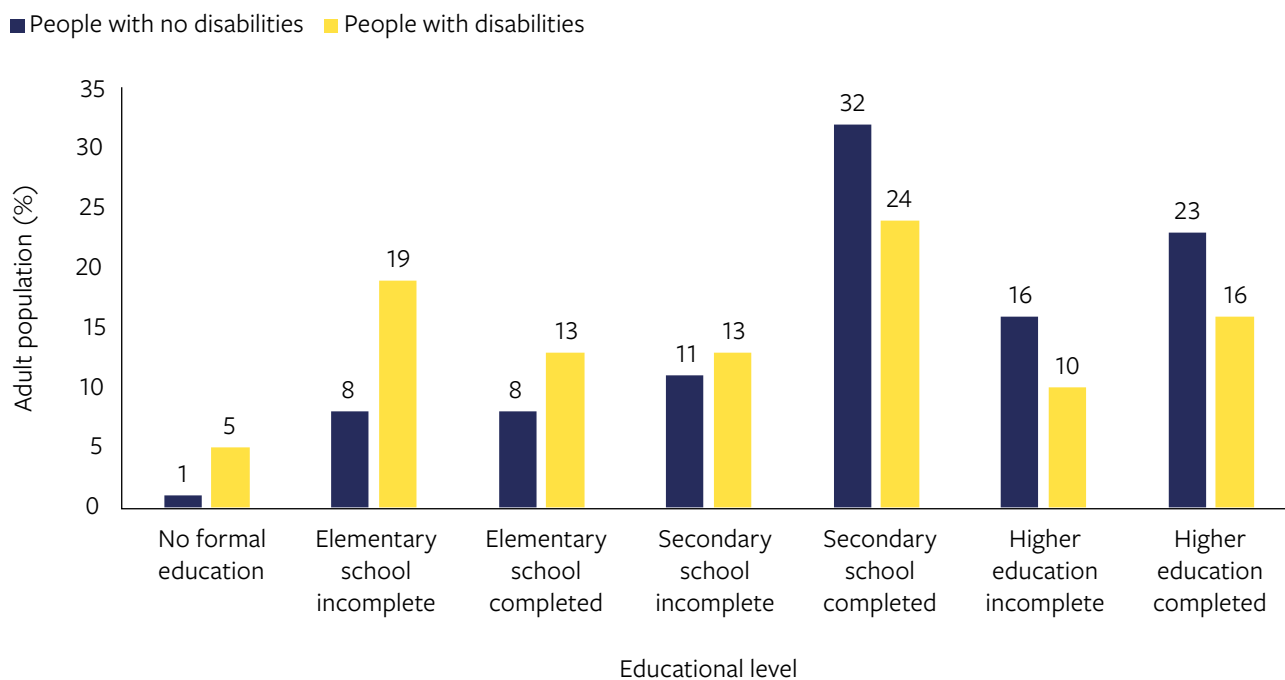
People with disabilities in Chile (aged 18 years or older) have had an average of 8.9 years of education (INE, 2025b). While this rises to an average of 10 years of schooling for those with mild to moderate disabilities, it is below the 12 years of schooling, on average, among the population living with no disabilities in 2022

(Servicio Nacional de la Discapacidad, 2023). Data on levels of education shows that most adults with disabilities have completed elementary and secondary school (see Figure 6).

Migrants

The average length of schooling for the international immigrant population (aged 18 years or older) is 12.9 years, compared to an average for the Chilean-born population of 12 years, according to the latest population census of 2024 (INE, 2025f). Regarding access to education, a study by the Jesuit Service for Migrants, based on data from the 2020 CASEN survey, observed no major differences between migrant and Chilean children in the 4–18 age group: 88% of migrant and 89% of Chilean children accessed virtual and/or in-person classes in the Chilean school system. Greater gaps

Figure 6 Adult population by educational level, according to disability status (%) (2022)



Source: Third National Study of Disability (III Estudio Nacional de la Discapacidad) 2022 (Servicio Nacional de la Discapacidad, 2023)

between Chileans and migrants are found in higher education: 54% of Chilean youth aged 19-24 were enrolled at higher education in 2020 compared to 25% of their migrant peers. The reasons behind this trend included the need to work among migrant youth: 50% of migrant youth aged 19-24 were working compared to 28% of the Chilean group of the same age. Another reason was related to migrant youth not having a permanent residence permit or having difficulties in validating their education when they had not completed all of their secondary education in the country, factors that made it difficult to access scholarships as well as free higher education (ibid.).

2.4 Health

Gender gaps in health indicators have narrowed in Chile over the last decades, with some favouring women and girls. Life expectancy has been increasing steadily since 2010 and is higher for women than men. Both female and male life expectancies in Chile (around 83 and 79 years, respectively, in 2024) are higher than the LAC average (80 and 75) (Health Information Platform for the Americas, 2024).

The use of modern methods of contraception also appears to be higher than elsewhere in the LAC region (61% and 55% respectively), despite Chile's traditional policies on sexual and reproductive health (Health Information Platform for the Americas, 2024). Compared to other countries in the region, adolescent fertility rates are relatively lower in Chile (5.6 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 compared to around 35 in LAC

on average in 2024) (Health Information Platform for the Americas, 2024). The adolescent fertility rate among girls aged 15-19 year has decreased from 14.6% in 1992 to 2% in 2025 years) (INE, 2025e). The regions with the highest percentage of women aged 15-19 with children are Tarapacá (4.1%), Antofagasta (2.9%), Arica and Parinacota (2.8%) and Atacama (2.7%) (ibid.).

Chile has made efforts to decrease teen pregnancy through a variety of initiatives, laws and policies to ensure that adolescents receive information, guidance and access to contraception.¹⁰ One example is the 'Friendly Spaces in Primary Health Care' in bars, public gathering places and squares around the country, where adolescents aged 10-19 can access sex education and birth control and speak with healthcare providers (PAHO, 2018). Other factors related to reducing teen pregnancy include the reduction of poverty and an increase in years of education of women (Maddaleno Herrera et al., 2022).

Maternal and infant mortality rates in Chile are low by regional standards. Between 2000 and 2020, infant mortality in Chile fell from 8.9 to 5.6 per 1,000 live births, which represented a reduction of 37.1% (PAHO, 2024). The maternal mortality rate in 2020 was estimated at 15 per 100,000 live births, a reduction of 53.8% since 2000. However, the percentage of low birth weight (less than 2.5 kg) increased from 5.3% to 6.7% between 2000 and 2020 (ibid.). Factors like increasing maternal age, higher prevalence of preterm births and potential socioeconomic influences are considered contributors to the

10 It is relevant to highlight Law 20.418 (2010), which sets norms on information and services for fertility regulation, including access to emergency contraception for adolescents younger than 14 years (including notification to parents after) (Art. 2), the right to confidentiality (Art. 3), and the explicit responsibility of the state of Chile in guaranteeing these rights (Art. 4). Other important legal advances include Law 21.030, which permits abortion under three causes, the modification of norms to regulate fertility (2017), and the Strategy on Sexual and Reproductive Health (2018) (Maddaleno Herrera et al., 2022).

increase in low birth weight; this trend is also observed in certain regions like Antofagasta due to its high altitude impacting a large part of the population (Rodríguez et al., 2017; Llorca-Jaña and Morales-Campos, 2025).

Despite these positive indicators, Chile has important GEDSI health challenges. Some evidence suggests that Chile's restrictive abortion laws have had negative effects on guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health rights (particularly access to healthcare) and on the mental health of midwives involved in providing abortion services.¹¹

Regarding access to healthcare, one study with women who sought and were denied legal abortions observed deep-rooted and persistent abortion stigma in the participants' experiences, as well as in hospital systems, and individual providers unwilling to comply with the new law, obstructing and denying eligible people legal healthcare (Suárez-Baquero et al., 2024). Another study highlighted the negative role of the conscientious objection legal modality (*'objeción de conciencia'*), used by health staff to abstain from intervening in voluntary pregnancy termination procedures.¹² According to data from the Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Salud), those who use this right most frequently in at least one case are obstetricians (46%), followed by anaesthesiologists (21%), paramedical technicians (13%) and non-medical professionals (13%) (Corporación Humanas, 2023). These high levels of objection could hinder

women's access and push them to undergo unsafe abortion (Suárez-Baquero et al., 2024).

In a study with midwives who had provided lawful induced abortion care, the participants highlighted conscientious objectors as the most significant barrier to providing quality abortion care (Carvajal et al., 2024). Midwives in the same study reported that the main challenge when providing induced abortion care was related to the emotional labour it involved (e.g. feeling morally distressed and/or emotionally burdened), with a lack of access to mental health support (ibid.).

Chile shows high rates of mental health problems and overweight and obesity, especially among women. It is one of the countries in Latin America with the highest reported prevalence of mental illnesses, reaching 23.2% of the entire population (Arredondo Piña and Núñez Venegas, 2022).

Some sources show that mental ill-health affects more women than men. For instance, a study looking at life expectancy free of depressive symptoms by gender among people aged 20 and above – based on three waves of the National Survey of Health (Encuesta Nacional de Salud) between 2003 and 2016 – identified a gender gap in favour of men of 10 percentage points or more at almost all ages and periods (Moreno et al., 2024). Similarly, according to the 10th round of the 'thermometer of mental health in Chile', the proportion of women reporting high levels of

11 Law 21.030, which regulates the decriminalisation of voluntary termination of pregnancy on three grounds, issued in September 2017, recognises and protects the right of women and girls to decide on a pregnancy when they find themselves in one of the serious and exceptional situations provided for by said regulations (life-threatening, lethal non-viability and rape), as well as their right to access healthcare and other benefits, including a support programme (Corporación Humanas, 2023).

12 According to the health code, conscientious objection to abortion can be informed by moral, philosophical, ethical, religious or personal beliefs. Conscientious objection to abortion in the Chilean law has three main characteristics: it is restricted to the staff and their work conducted in maternity theatres, each clause can be objected to separately, and private institutions can object to providing abortion care (except when the life of the woman is at risk) (Carvajal et al., 2024).

loneliness was greater than that of men (21.4% and 14.4%, respectively), as of November 2024. The results from the same survey showed a higher rate of women reporting they suspect or experience mental health issues (19.4%) compared to men (14%) – a gap of 5.4%. The same survey showed that the prevalence of anxiety symptoms in women was approximately two times that of men (32% and 15%, respectively) (Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, 2025).

In addition, 2022 data indicates that the level of overweight and obesity among Chilean women and men reached 79% and 78.5%, above all other Latin American countries (Health Information Platform for the Americas, 2024). This could be related to unhealthy eating behaviours, a poor diet and a sedentary lifestyle (Pérez, 2024). However, among women, other factors include difficulties juggling paid and unpaid care and domestic work, lower participation in sporting activities, and poor mental health, especially stress (ibid.).

2.5 Economic empowerment

Labour force participation

Labour force participation rates in Chile are slightly lower than regional averages, especially when considering Chile's level of income. Its labour force participation rate (the percentage of the total population aged 15 and above in work) in 2023 was 61.5%, compared to the regional average of 63.4% (World Bank, 2023). Data from January to March 2025 indicates that the labour force participation rate was 52.9% for women and 72.3% for men (INE, 2025g). Data on the employment of people with disabilities showed that 55% of people with mild

to moderate disabilities and 32% of people with severe disabilities participate in the labour market (Servicio Nacional de la Discapacidad, 2023).

Different factors appear to be associated with women's lower labour force participation compared to men (see also 'Unpaid care and domestic work'). Family structure seems to be a key factor related to the traditional division of labour in the household. For instance, on average, across OECD countries, 71% of mothers were employed in 2021 compared to 60% in Chile (OECD, 2024). Nevertheless, Chilean single mothers with at least one child aged 0–14 were at least 10 percentage points more likely to be employed than those in partnerships (68% and 53%, respectively) (OECD, 2024).¹³ Labour force participation lags behind among low-income women in particular. The labour force participation rate of women in urban areas aged 15 years and over in 2022 was 55.2% among non-poor women compared to 37.7% among poor women. Women in rural areas are even more disadvantaged, with labour force participation rates of 37% among the non-poor compared to 25% among poor women (ECLAC, 2024a).

Women's lower labour force participation compared to men could also be explained by gender norms that position women in the domestic sphere compared to men (see also 'Unpaid care and domestic work'). For instance, the proportion of the Chilean population agreeing or strongly agreeing that 'when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women' is 35%, compared to 15% in the LAC region overall, based on 2022 data from the World Values Survey (OECD, 2023b).

13 These are estimates based on data from Chile's CASEN. The latest results of CASEN 2022 were inaccessible on the site of the Ministry of Social Development and Family at the time the research team attempted to retrieve the data.

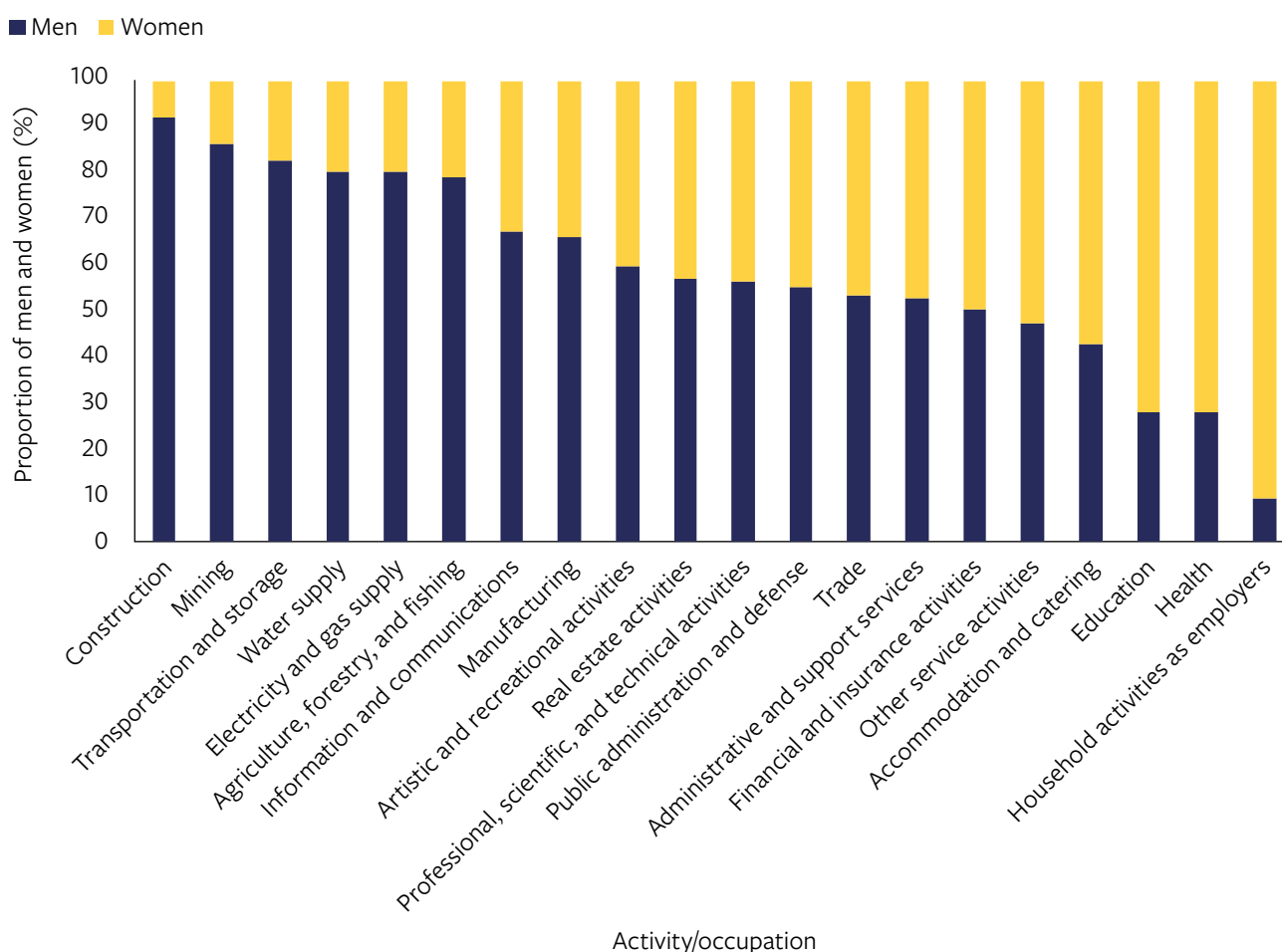
Quality of employment

Women tend to be concentrated in certain occupations and sectors. As Figure 7 shows, a larger share of women is engaged in paid domestic work (90%), health activities (72%), education (72%) and accommodation and catering (52.6%); men are more present in activities and occupations related to construction (91.9%), mining (86.4%), transportation and storage (82.7%) and water supply (80.3%) (ChileMujeres, 2024).

Looking at informal work data, Chile's informal employment rate in 2023 was 27%, compared to the LAC regional rate of 51% (ILO, 2024). The prevalence of informal work among men and women in 2025 (January–March) was 24.8% and 27.1%, respectively (INE, 2025g).

Looking at earnings, in 2022 women made around 20% less than men in monthly wages, compared to 33% less in 2010 (INE, 2024). The gender pay gap was wider than the national level in the regions of Antofagasta (40%), Magallanes (32%) and Tarapacá (31%) (ibid.).

Figure 7 Share of women and men by activity/occupation (%) (2023)



Source: ChileMujeres (2024) with data from INE's National Employment Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Empleo)

Unemployment and NEET

In 2024, Chile's unemployment rate (percentage of total labour force) was 9%, compared to 6.2% in Latin America (World Bank, 2024d). By 2025 (January-March), the unemployment rate had fallen slightly to 8.7% (INE, 2025h). The unemployment rate for women was 9.5% of the total female labour force from January to March 2025, compared to 8.1% among men (ibid.). Women are also disproportionately represented among the not in education, employment or training (NEET) population. Indeed, 16.7% of women aged 15–24 were in this situation in 2023, compared to only 14% among men in the same age group (World Bank, 2024c).

Women in leadership positions

Statistical data from various sources show that gender norms persist regarding perceptions of women's ability to lead. For instance, results from the 2022 World Values Survey show that the proportion of the Chilean population agreeing or strongly agreeing that '*men make better business executives than women do*' is higher in Chile (29%) than the LAC region (18%) (OECD, 2023b). The gender gap in management positions

also favours men (70%) over women (30%), with the same survey observing that 96% of top management positions are held by men. The gender gap on this indicator is wider in Chile than in the Latin American region, where 81% of top management positions are held by men (ibid.).

2.6 Unpaid care and domestic work

Responsibility for household tasks and caregiving is arguably the most pervasive and acute form of inequality in the family sphere. Table 3 shows key data on indicators related to unpaid care and domestic work, comparing women and men. Although not shown in the table, different sources show that Chile's indicators related to unpaid care and domestic work are worse compared to the LAC region (OECD, 2021, 2023a; ECLAC, 2024a).

Attitudinal data reveals that gender norms tend to uphold this division of labour. For instance, the percentage of the population agreeing or strongly agreeing that '*when a mother works for pay, the children suffer*' is higher in Chile (54.3%) compared to the LAC region (39.3%), according to 2022 data from the World Values Survey (OECD, 2023b).

Table 3 Key indicators on unpaid care and domestic work

Indicator	Women and girls	Men and boys	Source
Time spent on unpaid care and domestic work (hours per day)	5.3	2.4	OECD (2023b)
Time spent by women and girls 10+ on unpaid care and domestic work (%)	22.1	9.9	UN Women (2024)
Time spent on paid and unpaid work of the population aged 15+ (average hours per week)	Paid work: 19.8 Unpaid work: 42.4	Paid work 34.6 Unpaid work 19.4	ECLAC (2024a)
Unpaid work time by own income and sex (average hours per week)	Female with own income: 42.5 Female without own income: 56.1	Male with own income: 21.1 Male without income: 21.1	ECLAC (2024a)

Another factor contributing to an unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work relates to childcare policies. For instance, according to Article 203 of the Labour Code, employers with more than 20 female workers must provide childcare assistance to children under the age of two (Dirección del Trabajo, 2021). This obligation discourages employers from hiring women formally beyond the threshold and leaves women working for smaller or non-complying employers uncovered (OECD, 2021). Some programmes that support the childcare needs of poor and vulnerable families (e.g. ‘Chile Grows with You’ and the 4–7 Programme) have restricted coverage or are limited to a small number of municipalities. Families not covered by government programmes can opt for (either formal or informal) private daily care, or care provided by another family member.

Parental leave policies could also explain family decisions about the division of paid and unpaid work between partners. Although Chile has generous parental leave policies compared to the rest of the LAC region, the leave system is not flexible and lacks coverage.¹⁴ Six weeks of maternity leave have to be taken prenatally, and mothers and fathers cannot take parental leave concurrently. Informal workers who are not affiliated with the system cannot benefit. Dedicated paternity leave at childbirth in Chile only amounts to five working days, though it can be extended using part of the parental leave. These five days are slightly above the regional average, but far below the average for the OECD. Once back at work, parents have limited

options to ease the time-crunch of simultaneously working and taking care of children. At 45 hours for full-time and 30 hours for part-time work, maximum work hours are above the standard work week of 40 hours common to many OECD countries. Few Chileans benefit from flexible work options (OECD, 2021). However, Chile adopted Law 21.645 in January 2024. This establishes the right to remote work for all workers who care for minors under 14 years of age, a person with a disability or a person in a situation of severe or moderate dependency (BCN, 2024).

2.7 Women’s political representation

In recent years, women’s political participation in Chile has increased, allowing them to participate in decision-making processes. As can be observed in Table 4, the proportion of seats held in the country’s national Parliament by women has increased substantially since 2010, from 14% to 35% (ECLAC, 2024a; UN Women, 2024). This increase is due to the approval of Law 20.840, which establishes that at least 40% of candidates standing for Parliament must be women and that at least 10% of state funding contributed to each political party must be used to promote their political participation (BCN, 2015). Chile has the highest proportion of women’s participation in ministerial cabinets in the region (58%). This is a considerable increase compared to the previous presidential period, when the participation of men and women in ministerial cabinets was 73% and 27%, respectively (ECLAC, 2024a).

14 The leave available to parents in Chile exceeds the regional average. It involves paid maternity leave of 18 weeks, which exceeds the minimum defined by the 2000 International Labour Organization Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection and fulfils the recommendation of International Labour Organization Recommendation No. 191. In addition, Chile is one of the few countries in Latin America to offer 12 weeks of parental leave. Half of this parental leave is reserved for mothers, while the other half can be taken by fathers as well. Part-time parental leave of 18 weeks at 50% of net pay is also an option (OECD, 2021).

Table 4 Women's participation at various levels of the different branches of government

Indicator	Chile	LAC
Women's participation in ministerial cabinets during the most recent term of office	58.0%	28.7%
Women in the national legislative body (2024)	35.5%	35.8%
Elected mayors who are women (2021)	17.1%	15.4%
Elected city council members who are female (2021)	33.3%	32.7%
Elected seats held by women in deliberative bodies of local government (2023)	33.6%	27.2%

Source: ECLAC (2024a)

Despite recent political reforms, the literature indicates some of the challenges and barriers that women face in participating in decision-making processes at political levels (Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 2019; BCN, 2023).¹⁵ Female politicians who took part in a study of 30 female politicians from various political sectors of the left and centre-left observed that they were often judged by their personality or their dress code rather than by their political positions (Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 2019). They also avoided media and social networks as they observed that they reproduced gender stereotypes. Some avoided running as political candidates because they did not feel prepared or had not previously held public or political leadership roles. Other barriers associated with running for political candidacies included family responsibilities, exclusion from decision-making spaces within their own parties and the dynamics of competition rather than collaboration between female candidates (ibid.).

Other factors that limit women's participation in politics include gender norms and stereotypes, GBV in politics (including harassment, discrimination and physical violence) and lack of access to political training (BCN, 2023).

2.8 Gender-based violence

Femicides

In 2023, at least 3,897 women were victims of femicide or feminicide in the LAC region.¹⁶ This translates to at least 11 women murdered every day for a gender-related reason (ECLAC, 2024b). This number shows that 30 years after legal and policy efforts in the region, such as the 1995 Beijing Declaration of Action and Platform, the 1994 Belém do Pará Convention and legal advances in individual countries, femicide is still present and is the extreme expression of harmful patriarchal norms and violent patterns.

¹⁵ In recent years, two important political reforms were implemented to promote women's political participation: (1) the electoral system was modified to require political parties to include 40% of women on their lists of parliamentary candidates and (2) political parties are now required to allocate 10% of the resources they receive from the state to the promotion and political participation of women (Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 2019).

¹⁶ The term used (femicide, feminicide or homicide aggravated by gender-related reasons) differs according to the national legislation of the country.

Despite this alarming situation, Chile has taken important legal and policy actions to address femicides.¹⁷ Similarly, data shows that Chile has the second lowest rate of femicide in the LAC region (0.4 cases per 100,000 women), just after Haiti (0.2 cases per 100,000 women), compared to countries where rates are higher (e.g. Honduras with 7.2 cases per 100,000 women) (ECLAC, 2024b). Most gender-related killings of Chilean women (83%) occur in the context of a relationship with a current or former intimate partner. Data related to the nationality of victims shows that Chile shows that the highest percentages of femicides or feminicides are reported among foreign women (26.2%) (ECLAC, 2024a).

Levels of violence against women

Data collected in 2024 from the Fifth Survey of Violence against Women in the Field of Intrafamily Violence and in Other Spaces (IV Encuesta de Violencia contra la Mujer en el Ámbito de Violencia Intrafamiliar y en Otros Espacios) shows that 20% of women aged 15–65 years reported that they had been subject to psychological, physical and/or sexual violence in the previous 12 months.¹⁸ This proportion is lower than it was in 2020, but slightly higher than data from 2012 (21% and 18%, respectively) (Gobierno de Chile, 2024a). The proportion of women aged 15–65 years who reported having suffered from psychological, physical and/or sexual violence at

any point in their lives decreased considerably between 2020 and 2024 (from 41% to 33%), although the data on this indicator has not varied much since 2012 (33%) (ibid.).¹⁹

Table 5 shows the latest indicators for each type of violence from 2017 to 2024 among women who have suffered from some type of GBV during their lives. As can be observed, most types of violence decreased between 2017 and 2024, apart from violence in the workplace and violence in the educational space.

The increase in workspace violence can be explained by a higher participation of women in the workforce accompanied by an increase in reporting. Workplace violence against Chilean women is common and can be expressed through patriarchal attitudes and behaviours (e.g. harassment, hostility towards highly qualified women), sexual harassment and discrimination associated with the use of maternity rights (e.g. threats of dismissal and of limiting promotions in the workplace for those who become pregnant and have children) (Díaz Berr et al., 2017; PNUD Chile, 2024).

Regarding violence in the education space, the increase can also be related to increased numbers of complaints. A study identified 25,248 complaints (in elementary and secondary levels) made to the Superintendency of Education from 2017 to March 2022; 53% were made by young women.

17 In Chile, Law 21.675 of 2024 established measures to prevent, punish and eradicate GBV against women. This legal measure will enable a comprehensive case management system so that all agencies working in the areas of prevention, care and reparation for violence against women can access the same information and take effective, coordinated action to also avoid re-victimisation. Chile also updated its public health policy on GBV in 2021 (ECLAC, 2024b).

18 The sample includes women aged 15 years and older living in urban areas of the 16 regions of the country, and women aged 15 years and older living in rural areas of Biobío, La Araucanía, Los Ríos and Los Lagos. For the urban sample of 15–65 years, the sample obtained was 7,100 cases; for the rural sample of 15–65 years, the sample obtained was 2,464 cases (Gobierno de Chile, 2024a).

19 The indicator refers to whether respondents have suffered any type of violence during their life, including childhood (Gobierno de Chile, 2024a).

Table 5 Women with or without a partner (15–65 years) who report having suffered from some type of gender-based violence during their life (%) (2024)

Type of violence	Year		
	2017	2020	2024
Physical, psychological and sexual	38.2	41.4	33.4
Physical	16.3	15.5	10.9
Psychological	35.9	38.3	28.6
Sexual	Data unavailable	9.4	8.7
In public spaces	25	46.9	41.4
In work spaces	9.6	17.8	18.3
In educational spaces	14.7	18.9	22.8

Source: Authors, based on data from the Fifth Survey of Violence against Women in the Field of Intrafamily Violence and in Other Spaces (Gobierno de Chile, 2024a)

Most complaints related to ‘mistreatment of students’ or bullying (80%), followed by ‘discrimination’ (10%), ‘behaviour and/or situations with sexual connotations’ (7.5%) and ‘mistreatment of an adult in the educational community’ (3.3%) (Asociación de Municipalidades de Chile, 2024). Some studies identify that violence at school increased after 2022 when schools reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic (Asociación de Municipalidades de Chile, 2024; El Mostrador, 2024), but there were also more cases of cyberbullying (threats or attacks through social networks). In 2023, the Superintendency of Education established that complaints related to cyberbullying accounted for 18% of all complaints of maltreatment among students (El Mostrador, 2024).

Looking at regional data, the same survey showed that in the Tarapacá region there were statistically significant increases between 2020 and 2024 in two of the three types of violence: physical violence (from 6% to 15%) and sexual violence (from 5% to 13%). The Los Lagos and Magallanes

regions show a significant increase between 2020 and 2024 in the proportion of women who reported having suffered psychological violence, rising from 14.8% to 20.4% and from 12.9% to 19.4%, respectively. Likewise, the Metropolitan Region shows a significant increase in the proportion of women who suffered sexual violence between 2020 and 2024, from 2.3% to 3.9% (Gobierno de Chile, 2024a).

Digital violence

The 2023 Virtual Citizen Consultation on Digital Violence (Consulta Ciudadana Virtual sobre Violencia Digital) – involving 1,626 respondents mostly between 36 and 60 years old – found that 36% of respondents reported having experienced digital violence at some point while 64% had not (Subsecretaría del Interior, 2023). Among those who had experienced digital violence, only 17% had reported it; those who did not report it (83%) said they did not do so because they did not know where to report it (28%) and because the reporting process was very complicated (27%). People who

had experienced digital violence at some point indicated the form of violence they experienced as harassment (38%), publication of insults and slander that affected their reputation (33%), threats (30%) and receiving unsolicited sexual images (27%); data was not disaggregated by age groups (ibid.).

Most respondents agreed that the groups most exposed to digital violence are children and adolescents (88%), LGBTQI+ people (65%), women (65%) and migrants (29%). According to the survey, this is because these groups have historically suffered violence and discrimination as a result of cultural elements and the lack of information and education among citizens, which means that this type of violence and discrimination increases in digital spaces (ibid.).

Regarding experiences of digital violence as a result of being an activist on gender and/ or LGBTQI+ issues, only 22% of respondents identified themselves as activists. Among them, 44% reported that they had experienced digital violence for being a person interested in politics and/or for being an activist on these issues. The main types of violence experienced were fake news and/or misinformation (55%) and those related to questioning the person's intellectual capacity (48%) (ibid.).

Complaints filed for gender-based violence

Chile's Prosecutor's Office, with data from the Prosecutor Support System, registered 182,159 crimes related to domestic violence (reported and registered cases classified as domestic violence plus crimes corresponding to femicide, parricide or habitual abuse) between January and December 2024. During the same period, the Prosecutor's Office registered 187,269 cases as 'terminated' (all cases completed or suspended in that time period regardless of the date of receipt) (Fiscalía

de Chile, 2025). Most reported crimes were related to injuries (33%), threats (31%) and habitual abuse (18%). Most 'terminated' cases corresponded to the same types of crime: injuries (36%), threats (32%) and habitual abuse (15%). Regarding the resolution of the cases, the majority of these established a 'non-judicial solution' (53%), followed by a 'judicial solution' (46%) (ibid.).

According to Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) data (although less recent) the number of complaints filed for GBV fell between 2017 and 2019: complaints of psychological violence fell from 22.8% to 19%; complaints of physical violence fell from 36.5% to 29% and complaints of sexual violence fell from 23% to 16.3% (ECLAC, 2024b).

Results from the Fifth Survey of Violence against Women in the Field of Intrafamily Violence and in Other Spaces give insights regarding the reasons victims of GBV do not file a formal complaint and how these vary according to the type of violence. For instance, among women who suffered from psychological violence during the last 12 months, 34% did not report it because *'it was not serious and I did not consider it necessary'* (Gobierno de Chile, 2024a). These results can be related to fear of reprisal, economic inequalities that make it difficult to leave an abusive situation or the acceptance of gender norms that underpin gender inequalities and violence against women and, as such, some of these women might tend to normalise violence.

Another key reason victims of GBV give for not filing a complaint – particularly those who have experienced intimate partner violence – is that they believe doing so is useless or because they have reported it before and nothing happened. For instance, among women who had suffered physical violence and did not report it, it was observed that one of the main reasons for not reporting was

'I don't think reporting is useful or I had reported before and nothing happened', a reason that shows a significant increase of 8.5 percentage points from 2020 to 2024 (11.1% to 19.6%, respectively). The second main reason, *'I was embarrassed to tell my situation'*, decreased between 2020 and 2024 from 15.8% to 13.9% (Gobierno de Chile, 2024a). Another key reason for not filing a complaint is not knowing the existing laws. This is particularly the case with sexual violence, where 18% of victims did not report it because they did not know they could. This reason increased from 2020, when the proportion was 12%.

2.9 Evidence gaps

Data on some labour market indicators was missing, such as physical and sexual harassment in the workplace, as was data on women's access to assets (including land), and gender and the environment. Data on Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities is missing in certain areas, such as health, economic empowerment, unpaid care and domestic work, and GBV. For instance, there are data gaps related to the ethnicity/race and disability status of victims of femicide and those subjected to different types of violence.

3 Thematic insights

Following the overview of key GEDSI indicators in Chapter 2, this chapter examines three topics: feminist foreign policy, anti-gender backlash against LGBTQI+ rights, and children in alternative care.

3.1 Feminist foreign policy

Origins and comparisons with other FFP countries

Chile's feminist foreign policy (FFP) was formally launched in 2023 and is the external element of President Gabriel Boric's commitment to run a feminist government (Quitian Sierra, 2024). Unlike many other countries around the world with FFPs, Chile's joint commitment to feminism in domestic and foreign policy is rare and aspirational.²⁰ Its origins are tied to the election of Boric's coalition Government, which emerged out of the social uprising of 2019 (*estallido*) (KII Academic 1). However, these demands are also an outcome of a much longer history of feminist mobilisation against socioeconomic injustices, including before and during the 'Mayo Feminista' in 2018 (Cruz, 2023). Finally, Chile's FFP is also a product of the political changes (and continuities) of the post-Pinochet democratic era. These changes included the efforts of former presidents, such as Michelle Bachelet, to transform the foreign policy apparatus and mainstream gender equality in domestic and foreign policy (Erlandsen et al., 2022; López Giral and Henríquez Uzal, 2023; Piscopo et al., 2024).

Chile's FFP outlines eight priority areas, including the promotion of democracy and human rights, tackling climate change, and the promotion of a comprehensive care system (MFA, 2023). This is manifested, for example, in its ratification of the Escazú Agreement (Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean) and in Chile being the first country to undertake an assessment and consultation on the implementation of the Agreement (ECLAC, 2024c). At the Escazú conference in May 2024, Chile and Mexico led a request for ECLAC, as the secretariat of the Escazú Agreement, to create a guide for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective into its implementation, aiming to ensure that gender is taken into account in environmental issues (KII UN Agency 1; KII Foreign Gov 2). The mainstreaming of gender in the Agreement has been approved by the Chilean Congress. More generally, Chile's stronger leadership efforts since announcing its FFP have been noted as 'extremely important' by those in the region (KII UN Agency 1).

The FFP priorities reflect many areas of interest to civil society in Chile and the wider region, despite the fact that FFP in Chile has been predominantly a government-led initiative, rather than the result of bottom-up demand from the grassroots. Although feminist civil society played a key role in establishing the feminist aspirations of the Boric

²⁰ There are currently 16 governments that have at some point expressed their interest in some type of FFP worldwide. These include countries like Canada, which has limited its policy to development cooperation; Sweden, which has since formally rescinded its policy; and Mexico, which was the first Latin American country with a FFP, yet lacks any formal and detailed policy document. For more information see Thompson et al. (2023) and Ridge et al. (2024).

Government (KII Gov 3), civil society was not fully included in the articulation of the FFP according to some interviewees.

The adoption of FFPs worldwide is often dismissed as a merely symbolic branding exercise by various governments. Jennifer Thomson (2022) suggests that some countries, which she describes as ‘middle powers’, adopt FFPs to enhance their global standing as good global actors in the liberal world. What’s more, some governments have been accused by civil society actors of ‘pink washing’ their image with a feminist label (Berger, 2024). This is especially the case if governments lack cohesion between domestic and foreign policy commitments or fail to adopt gender equality across all aspects of the foreign policy arena, such as trade and defence. However, Chile’s joint commitment in both domestic and foreign policy and the Government’s continued push for the implementation of the FFP demonstrate a commitment beyond a mere branding exercise. Yet, the Government’s commitment to FFP’s implementation and the impact of the policy will only be possible to assess fully in the future, once enough time has passed since its adoption for the outcomes to take effect.

The implementation of the FFP in Chile is best demonstrated by the adoption of the 2024–2025 FFP plan of action, which gives the policy a specific meaning. Described as a crucial milestone by some interviewees (KIIs Foreign Gov 1 and 2), the action plan details concrete steps across six arenas, ranging from the internal operations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores) to bilateral relations and multilateral spaces. The plan should enable better monitoring and accountability and is an important and positive step towards ensuring that FFP is not neglected amid competing policy priorities. As one interviewee from an embassy in Chile said:

The step that Chile took is a tremendously positive step... it also helps a lot at an international level to visualise the topic, themes that at the moment are experiencing certain setbacks, so therefore positioning themselves internationally with a feminist foreign policy serves to anchor these issues. (KII Foreign Gov 1)

Many other FFP countries, such as Luxembourg, Mexico and Slovenia, have not adopted formal FFP documents or implementation action plans. In such instances, there is a risk that FFP becomes a mere promotional branding declaration, rather than a meaningful policy (Sepúlveda et al., 2023). The adoption of the plan by the MFA, the assessment report of its implementation and other steps discussed in the following sections over the last two years indicate, therefore, the Government’s commitment to FFP and the potential to see Chile as a role model for other countries (Mesa, 2023).

Chile’s FFP should also be recognised for its contribution to decolonising FFP, which has for many years been perceived by activists and policy-makers as a western endeavour, steeped in coloniality (Hastrup et al., 2023; KII UN Agency 1). The first explicitly ‘feminist’ foreign policy was launched by the Swedish minister Wallström in 2014, and for nearly a decade, FFPs have lacked legitimacy as viable policies in the Global South. This is because many FFP governments in Europe and Canada focused predominantly on addressing gender inequalities in their engagements with countries of the Global South, especially via development collaboration, while speaking out less frequently and publicly about countries in the Global North. However, over the last five years, Chile, and other Latin American countries, like Colombia and Mexico, and for some time also Argentina (prior to the Javier Milei presidency), have become the drivers of FFP. The Latin America

FFPs, in their diversity are, therefore, key examples that FFP are not solely western undertakings but can be meaningfully contextualised and localised (Sepúlveda et al., 2023).

Adopting FFP can be understood as a state/government setting ambitious goals and a set of commitments to gender equality and justice for itself (Michalko, 2023). A declaration of FFP is, therefore, a process of joining a group of like-minded, yet diverse, states that strive for an aspirational vision of equality. This cannot be achieved overnight and no FFP state to date has been able to achieve all of the desired markers, not least because there is no unified understanding of what these markers ought to be. Therefore, it is important to adopt appropriate timelines and expectations to assess the impact of any FFP.

Similarly, many practices and policies in support of gender equality can be achieved without being labelled as feminist. Many scholars and practitioners propose alternative conceptualisations of feminist foreign policies, such as transformative, ethical, inclusive or equitable (KII Academic 2). Countries such as Ireland and Norway, for example, do not label their foreign policies as feminist. However, they abide by commitments to gender equality and transformative approaches to inequities (Aggestam et al., 2018). Based on these various country approaches to promoting gender equality, adopting an explicit FFP can sometimes mean strengthening existing gender equality activities rather than radical shifts or the introduction of new policies. Both of these approaches – continuities and new initiatives – can be seen in the case of Chile.

Research for this report found only two formal evaluations of Chile's FFP conducted to date. The first is a 2025 study by the Institute of International Studies at the University of Chile

that is currently unpublished but was presented to the MFA earlier this year (KII Former Gov 1). The second is the Government's own assessment of the implementation of the FFP plan of action, published in March 2025 (MFA, 2025a).

The relatively short time that has passed since the adoption of FFP in 2023 means that substantial knowledge gaps remain about its impact and implementation. Further studies and independent evaluations are needed for a full assessment of the impact that FFP has had in Chile and abroad. However, studies by civil society, think tanks, and scholars such as Daniela Sepúlveda at Nueva Political Exterior or Evyn Papworth at the International Peace Institute, combined with KIIs for this analysis, enable the identification of preliminary insights in response to the following three key research questions:

- What impact has the adoption of Chile's FFP had at the international level?
- What impact has the adoption of FFP had on government policies and practices at national levels?
- Has the adoption of FFP caused new FFP-specific backlash domestically?

As FFP covers a large set of issues and initiatives, it is outside of the scope of this analysis to cover the impact of all of them. Trade, however, is one key policy arena where Chile has been established as a leader and where substantial academic work has been conducted. This is discussed in more detail in Box 1 on inclusive trade. Other examples regarding, for instance, the Turquoise Foreign Policy on environmental protection, the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, and the prevention of GBV and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are not discussed due to limited scope. As a result of the thematic focus of this report, the consulted government stakeholders

were only in the MFA and the Ministry of Women and Gender Equity (MoW&GE) (Ministerio de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género).

Impacts of Chile's feminist foreign policy on its international standing and relations

Reputation boost and global leadership

Chile has been lauded and recognised as a leading voice for and about FFP. It has organised many joint initiatives of FFP countries and feminist-inspired governments that pursue gender equality in and through their foreign affairs (KII UN Agency 1), both through symbolic/representative actions as well as policy measures.²¹ These include, for example, support for women nominees in various committees in multilateral organisations and the sponsorship of UN General Assembly resolutions. The Resolution for an International Day of Care and Support, which was co-presented by Chile and Spain and adopted in 2023, for instance, established 29 October as a day to raise awareness of the importance of care and its contribution to achieving sustainable development (UN Women et al., 2024). Raising the profile and importance of care was praised by one of the interviewees as an area where Chile is doing well (KII UN Agency 1). Other examples include Chile's chairing of the FFP+ group with Germany in 2023 (Papworth, 2024; Sepúlveda et al., 2024) and its promotion of resolutions for gender equality within the Organization of American States (OAS) (MFA, 2025a). As one of the interviewees said, *'Chile not only declares its feminist position but is very consistent in international forums'* and, therefore, brings visibility to gender equality issues (KII UN Agency 1).

These efforts are of vital importance, because many anti-gender political actors, including in various UN bodies, are seeking to dismantle global multilateral institutions, democratic norms and international human rights law (Holmes, 2024). These well-financed and networked actors use the fabricated myth that feminism is a western colonial imposition to undermine feminist activism and advancement of gender equality and human rights (Khan et al., 2023b). Therefore, the leadership of Chile and other countries in Latin America is essential to dispel such false narratives.

Chile's membership of the FFP+ group has not only benefited the multilateral space, but strengthened existing collaborations, especially within the regional block (KII Academic 1; KII UN Agency 1). For example, Chile has collaborated with Mexico at the UN Human Rights Council to bring gender-focused resolutions forward and thus defend gender-inclusive language in the council's resolutions. This has created a natural group of 'go-to' allies with whom to collaborate (KII Gov 1). At the same time, this also brought visibility to Chile. As one of the interviewees highlights, Chile has become known as a champion of gender equality:

Feminist foreign policy has been one [of the] key factors for which Chile is recognised today at a regional level, and I would also say at a multilateral level. (KII Foreign Gov 1)

Others have highlighted that Chile's FFP has garnered much interest internationally and resulted in invitations for government representatives to share experiences with other

21 This collective of countries has also formally associated as FFP+ at the UN, issuing its first common statement in 2023 (FFP+ Group, 2023). As of February 2024, the members included Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Israel, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Rwanda, Spain and Tunisia.

countries, providing further visibility and impetus for gender equality efforts. This is manifested, for example, in the Strengthening Feminist Foreign Policy and Feminist Institutional Cooperation Community of Practice, which spans the ministries of foreign affairs of Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Germany and ECLAC and aims to strengthen their capacities to implement FFPs (KII UN Agency 1).

None of the interviewees raised any negative consequences that the adoption of FFP might have caused, such as a worsening of bilateral relationships with governments that can be seen as hostile or resistant to topics such as human rights. This was largely credited to the pragmatic approach that the Government has adopted to implementing its FFP (KII Academic 1; KII Gov 2), and what one diplomat described as down to Chile's 'skilful', 'careful', and 'constructive and respectful' diplomacy (KII Foreign Gov 1).

As one former member of the Government put it, government officials would not directly bring up feminism when sitting down with Saudi Arabia, for example (KII Former Gov 1). Yet, at the same time, they would find approaches to ensure gender equality and feminist policy objectives are discussed through appropriate means that resonate with their policy counterparts. For example, the trade agreement with UAE uses the language of women's empowerment instead of gender equality (see Box 1). One interviewee noted that there have been tensions with other blocks of states in multilateral contexts. However, these are said to go beyond the faultline of FFP

countries on one hand and the rest of the world on the other; instead, they involve broader or different coalitions of states.

Even within the FFP+ grouping, however, there are important divergences on foreign policy issues. This includes, for example, diverging views on Israel's deadly violence against the Palestinians (Stamm, 2024; Zibechi, 2024). The Chilean Government, together with Mexico, referred Israel to the International Criminal Court in 2024, and also joined the South African case at the International Court of Justice, which accused Israel of violating the Genocide Convention (AP News, 2024; Madry, 2024). Germany, on the other hand, has persistently defended Israel, for example, through its votes at the UN, while other countries, such as France and the Netherlands have changed their approach to become more critical of Israel over time. The diverse approaches of FFP+ countries to the violence in Palestine demonstrates that there is no one unified definition of FFP nor a set of policies that is followed.

FFP has, therefore, been an opportunity for the Chilean Government to set its own feminist policies and priorities for gender equality and beyond. While many of the policies align with the FFP approaches of other governments, differences can be seen especially across Global North–South divides. For example, intersectionality has been a prominent thematic commitment of the FFPs of Chile and Colombia, while featuring less prominently, if at all, in European FFPs (Sepúlveda et al., 2023; Burni and Espinoza Madrid, 2024).²²

22 Intersectional approaches in FFPs recognise the structural inequalities, including racism, colonialism, ableism and other systems of power, that are entangled with gender. Some countries focus on the impact of these systems on individuals and groups of people, mentioning, for example, the need to empower all women in their diversity, especially vulnerable and marginalised women. Other countries, especially in the Global South, however, also recognise the impact of these systems on global relations of power and their structural nature beyond the state boundaries. Civil society and academics in particular highlight that FFPs often fall short on transforming power relations that systematically disadvantage women in the Global South (Guerrina et al., 2023; Nylund et al., 2023).

Policy strengthening and established track record on gender equality

Chile's reputation as a champion of FFP and gender equality builds on and strengthens its historical, post-dictatorship-era commitment to promoting equality, democracy, human rights and multilateralism. In this regard, FFP did not necessarily change the course and priorities that have been in place already, but validated and strengthened the commitments to gender

equality, which has been an essential step in the context of anti-gender backlash and resistance (KII Academic 2; KII Gov 2; KII UN Agency 1).

This continuity is well demonstrated in the case of international trade, where Chile has been a global leader in the use of gender chapters in negotiations of preferential and free trade agreements (P/FTAs) for decades (see Box 1 for details on inclusive trade).

Box 1 Pioneering inclusive trade and gender chapters

‘FFP has given the chance to give gender and trade a further push.’ (KII Foreign Gov 1)

Chile is recognised as a global leader on the issue of gender and trade, as attested by the award received by the Government from the World Trade Organization in 2024 (MFA, 2024b). While the majority of the agreements since the 1990s have been bilateral, Chile has also increasingly engaged with or entered regional and global trade or economic alliances centring gender equality, such as the Pacific Alliance, the Inclusive Trade Action Group (with Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and New Zealand) and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement with New Zealand, Singapore and South Korea (Güezmes García and Romero Castelán, 2023; MFA, 2025a).ⁱ

The introduction of feminist foreign policy (FFP) represented the continuation of Chile's commitment to gender-sensitive trade, which is overseen by the Inclusive Trade Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). FFP thus re-emphasises the commitment to the promotion of women entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises, but it also increasingly seeks to include Indigenous people in trade benefits.

The impact of the free trade agreement (FTA) gender chapters to date – both abroad and domestically – is hard to assess and the overall assessment presented in this box is, therefore, a mixed one. Additional research is needed to consider whether Chilean trade agreements also benefit women and other marginalised groups in partner countries and, therefore, assess whether changes to trade policy are necessary to align with the FFP objectives.

Box 1 Pioneering inclusive trade and gender chapters continued

The literature identifies three areas through which gender and trade chapters are considered. First is the macro-economic level in which the policies are embedded. These fall within the neoliberal economic tradition, which has been part of Chilean politics since the Pinochet dictatorship. According to Dorotea López (2023), a leading Chilean trade scholar, this macro-economic paradigm needs to become more progressive, meaning that it needs to consider issues such as taxation, pensions and even social norms that negatively impact women's economic rights to ensure that Chile's trade relations benefit all women and achieve greater gender equality in the country.

Second, scholars of gender and trade in Chile (Flores España and López, 2023; Borges et al., 2024; Macdonald, 2024) argue that trade and economic agreements tend to benefit sectors that are dominated by men and have not reached women in rural areas in particular, as the majority of exports are in minerals and agricultural products. The Government's own assessment of women exporters shows that only 3% of export companies in the service sector are led by women and that women-led businesses are outnumbered by men two-to-one across all exports (Subsecretaría de Relaciones Económicas Internacionales, 2023). However, the number of women-led export companies has been constantly growing since 2021 (MFA, 2025a: 65).

A study by Camila Ester (2023) further shows, for example, that limited knowledge about trade agreements among women exporters restricts their ability to benefit from the Government's efforts. In other words, women's inclusion into unequal systems does not transform the structural gender inequalities (Hannah et al., 2022). In 2024, the MFA ran several workshops and information sessions to increase women's awareness of how to benefit from international trade and address some of these gaps (MFA, 2025a).

Third, gender chapters may have limited impact because of the lack of enforcement mechanisms. Unlike other legally binding instruments, these chapters represent more opportunities for discussion and considerations (Sepúlveda, 2024). Therefore, some scholars suggest that gender provisions in P/FTAs may not be the most effective strategies to improve gender equality (Macdonald, 2024).

While gender chapters in trade agreements have enjoyed long-term political support, including within the MFA, the inclusive trade policy is closely intertwined with domestic neoliberal economic policies and structural barriers (Flores España and López, 2023). These have been rejected by considerable segments of the population, as demonstrated by the social uprisings and the constitutional review process. These events point to the persistent socioeconomic inequalities in the country and people's dissatisfaction with the status quo (Lecaros et al., 2023).

Box 1 Pioneering inclusive trade and gender chapters continued

Some examples of the most recent preferential or free trade agreements include the modernisation of the agreement with the European Union (EU). The inclusion of the gender chapter with the EU is praised as, historically, these chapters were absent in EU agreements. For example, it strengthens the coordination and monitoring of women's rights and also commits to improving training and skills development so that women can benefit from trade relations (Hernández, 2022). Therefore, this could be seen as Chile's successful implementation of a pragmatic feminist leadership.

On the other hand, the EU agreement was negotiated before the launch of the FFP during the Piñera presidency and has been critiqued by some Chilean groups, as well political actors in Europe, for its potentially negative consequences for marginalised communities, and Indigenous women in particular (Montenegro Koenig, 2024). This is because extractive industries for minerals, such as lithium, feature prominently in Chile's exports and are demanded in the European markets. Extractivism can have negative social, economic and environmental impacts on communities while driving the profits of larger corporations. Others, however, such as the Christian Democrats/Conservative parties in the European Parliament, have welcomed the agreement (EPP Group, 2024), which currently awaits ratification.

While some of the formulations within Chile's trade agreements tend to be replicated and shared (Fröhlich, 2023), there are some notable differences as seen, for example, in its agreements with Mexico, as another FFP country, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). While the former agreement adopts more explicitly feminist language, the latter is framed around women's inclusion. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a gender chapter in the agreement with the UAE is an important step towards a discussion on gender equality that would not have been possible without Chile's strong commitment to inclusive trade.

i For a full and up-to-date list of bilateral agreements, such as those with Canada, Uruguay and others, please refer to the website of the Undersecretariat of International Economic Relations (www.subrei.gob.cl/landings/beneficios#).

Impacts at the institutional level within Chile

Institutional changes at Ministry of Foreign Affairs

One of the key areas of change highlighted by the interviewees is the internal operations of the MFA. For example, the MFA worked with

UNDP to achieve the Gender Equality Seal, which supports public institutions to mainstream gender equality (MFA, 2025b). One example of its internal transformation relates to ambassadorial appointments. Prior to the adoption of FFP in 2021, women represented only 12% of the country's ambassadors (Green et al., 2023). While there has been a steady increase of women ambassadors

since the 1990s, when there were none, since 2022 the number has grown much faster both among career diplomats from the foreign service and among the Government's political appointees, which represent two main pathways to diplomatic postings. The Government doubled the number of women who were political appointees to ambassadorial posts (KII Former Gov 1) and currently nearly a third of ambassadors are women, which is a 'clear signal' that has been perceived bilaterally and externally (KIIs Foreign Gov 1 and 2).

As a result of these efforts, Chile currently ranks 30th out of 153 countries in the Women in Diplomacy Index, with 23%. As such, it is still behind the parity of Canada and also behind other FFP states such as Colombia and Mexico, with 30% and 27%, respectively (Chehab, 2024). While there is no comprehensive assessment of the types of ambassadorial appointments, Chile has been appointing more women to politically important and prestigious postings, which include, for example, Gloria Navarrete (to Belgium and the European Union) and Ximena Fuentes (to the UK) (KII Foreign Gov 2). Women among political appointees include Paula Narváez (Chile's Permanent Representative to the UN), Claudia Fuentes Julio (Chile's Permanent Representative to the UN Office in Geneva) and Beatriz Sánchez (to Mexico) (MFA, 2025a: 18).

As a former government representative highlighted, women have for many years been unable to rise to the highest diplomatic ranks, being stuck at lower ranks. This was partially a result of outdated promotion policies, which negatively impact women with caring responsibilities or with children and which reflect the male-dominated culture and social norms in the Ministry (Muñoz Oliva and Sepúlveda Soto, 2021; Escobar and Cook, 2022).

Other changes highlighted by the interviewees were new training and skills developments for ministerial staff. In 2024, for example, consular staff around the world were trained on responding to women victims/survivors of GBV (MFA, 2024a; KII Gov 2) and further changes to consular policy were implemented to mainstream gender and diversity considerations (MFA, 2025a). Organisational changes also included new meeting structures across various teams of the MFA and across government, especially with the MoW&GE, with the intention of making the issue of gender equality 'transversal', or, in other words, to mainstream it across government institutions, and to better coordinate initiatives (KII CSO 2; MFA, 2025a).

The collaboration between MoW&GE and the MFA has been crucial for the implementation of FFP, especially through MoW&GE's External Affairs Division, which also leads delegations to multilateral organisations and actively participates in multilateral negotiations. According to a government representative, MoW&GE was heavily involved in the design of FFP and provided much of the content for the policy (KII Gov 3). It continues to be consulted frequently on policy issues such as addressing women trafficking in the Latin American region. Some examples of successful cross-ministerial collaboration include the country's review of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 2024 (KII Gov 3). However, this collaboration has been described as evolving and a product of much learning, as the two institutions have different organisational cultures and experiences with feminist organising. As will be discussed in the next section, this includes, for example, different approaches to engaging feminist civil society.

The most recent institutional change at the time of writing has been the creation of the Gender Affairs Division within the MFA, through a legal amendment that regulates the Ministry's organisation (BCN, 2025). This change, implemented from August 2025, has been described by one academic as a key way to institutionalise FFP (MFA, 2025a). A division within the public administration structure of Chile enables dedicated funding for the implementation of FFP, which has been lacking. The Division also aims to safeguard gender equality within the work of the Ministry, should future government policy priorities and directions change (KII Academic 2; KII UN agency 1). According to one interviewee from the Government, sharing of lessons on the effectiveness of this approach with other governments would be beneficial, as there is currently limited evidence of how to promote institutional changes for FFP. One rare evaluation – covering Sweden's FFP – suggests that a key institutional challenge with implementing FFP is the inconsistent provision of training and lack of clear instructions in some departments and teams from their management on how FFP should be incorporated into their work (Towns et al., 2023).

Engagement with civil society and feminist activism

Since the adoption of FFP, new consultation meetings with CSOs were also instituted by the MFA (KII GOV 1). However, it has been widely acknowledged that engagement with civil society remains insufficient, especially outside of the more professionalised non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (KII CSO 1; KII Academic 1; KII Former Gov 1).

Most feminist CSOs, with the exception of some specialist subgroups working on foreign relations, are not aware of the Government's FFP activities and successes in international relations. One NGO representative attributed this to the lack of communication from the MFA, while others explained that historically, ministerial staff did not

perceive Chilean civil society as key stakeholders for their work, as is the case with most MFAs around the world (Lequesne, 2020). Instead, the MFA focused predominantly on inter-state relations:

The thing about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is, they don't think they have to work with civil society because we're dedicated to international relations. The most we have to do is when we're in the UN, we have to listen and talk to civil society there. But we don't work with civil society because foreign policy is a state policy. (KII Former Gov 1)

It is due to the lack of civil society's awareness about FFP – and especially its transversal nature – that the interviewees suggested that there is limited use of FFP to enhance the gender equality agenda domestically. While there is the potential for civil society to hold the Chilean Government accountable for addressing gender equality issues such as GBV and SRHR at home (KII Academic 1), there is no reported use of FFP commitments to tackle these issues.

As discussed in Box 1 on inclusive trade, the gendered impact of trade agreements is more known and consequently subject to more critical engagement between civil society and the MFA. For example, due to the exclusion of Mapuche and other Indigenous women from the benefits of trade agreements on one hand and the potential harms and risks these agreements can cause on the other, civil society engagement with P/FTAs debates is more robust.

Interviewees from civil society also suggested that FFP did not enhance their international collaborations and networks (KII CSO 1 and 2). Feminists across Latin America have a strong history of regional collaborations and networking, as well as the use of human rights bodies and

international law (Deciancio and Loza, 2023; KII Academic 1). These networks and practices continue to be maintained and result in joint demands and advocacy vis-à-vis their governments.

While Chile's MoW&GE has launched new ways of bringing Chilean feminists into international engagements by including them on missions and delegations, similar practices do not seem to exist through the MFA. This could explain why Chile's adoption of FFP does not appear to have enhanced civil society's global activism. It must be recognised that many other FFP governments, including Mexico, have not substantially engaged civil society in their FFP activities. This was demonstrated at the ministerial conference on FFP in Mexico City in 2024, where civil society felt excluded and held a separate side event (Arceta, 2024). Further research and evidence are needed to fully assess the potential inroads to strengthen the feminist CSO engagements with FFP and various ministries, and in this way enhance the domestic benefits of FFP.

Resistance to change inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MFAs are not properly conceived as gender neutral institutions whose numbers of men, women, and non-binary people vary over time. Gender must be understood as an integral part of the very fabric of MFAs, of their norms, rules, identities, and practices. (Niklasson and Towns, 2022: 346)

Many interviewees described the institutional transformation of the MFA, including the practices of promoting women diplomats, as challenging due to resistance of some MFA staff members. Changes in the Ministry were met with opposition, especially in the Undersecretariat for Policy (Subsecretaría de Relaciones Exteriores) (Espinoza, 2022; KII

Academic 2). According to one interviewee, in the case of the Undersecretariat of International Economic Relations (Subsecretaría de Relaciones Económicas Internacionales), the historical experience with gender chapters set a precedent for gender equality, which made the resistance in the undersecretariat less prominent. However, feminist policies outside of the gender and trade theme were not fully understood and were even misunderstood by some MFA staff, driving the resistance to its institutionalisation.

In their comparison of Swedish and Chilean FFP adoption, Thomson and Wehner (2025) argue that feminist entrepreneurs within ministries are essential for the successful adoption of FFP. This label was applied to former Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonia Urrejola, who preceded the current Minister Alberto van Klaveren, as well as to the current undersecretaries. However, feminist entrepreneurship can also be seen in the staff of MoW&GE in their approach to working with MFA and enhancing FFP (KII Gov 2). While some respondents (KII Academic 2) suggested that the changes of Foreign Affairs Ministers did not disrupt the implementation of FFP because Minister van Klaveren is also committed to FFP, the cabinet reshuffle in 2023, following the failed constitutional referendum, shows the impact that domestic politics can have on the institutionalisation of FFP. The constitutional referendum, which had significant implications for the discussions of gender parity in the country (Sazo, 2023) demonstrated wider societal polarisation over issues such as abortion and socioeconomic divides (Sazo, 2023; Vivaldi, 2024).

Wider societal debates largely ignore FFP, which does not feature heavily within civil society discourses and policy advocacy. As a result, it has been ignored by anti-gender actors – including conservative political parties – and has

not animated mainstream politics (KII Former Gov 1) or civil society (KII CSO 1; KII Academic 2). Similarly, while there may be some scrutiny of FFP within the legislature, it was not referenced as a challenge or form of resistance. Other topics seem to be more central to civil society, such as security and pension reform.

There are clear linkages between FFP and domestic issues such as security and immigration. For example, Chile's engagement in peace initiatives or promotion of human rights across the region can contribute towards addressing the drivers of migration. However, as the Government does not communicate these connections, it shelters FFP from backlash. At the same time, one interviewee highlighted that it is a lost opportunity to mainstream and strengthen FFP, especially among the general public. Should the Government better demonstrate how FFP matters to the everyday policy interests of the general public, people's support might increase and subsequently so might the sustainability of FFP across changes of government (KII Academic 2).

Due to the relatively low importance of FFP in public debates, all respondents suggested that FFP in some form could survive the change of government following the 2025 elections, with the exception of the potential success of far-right political parties. Most interviewees believed that far-right political actors would dismantle the FFP infrastructure and commitments; however, moderate/centrist right parties might maintain it, if not in name, then in practice. The question of whether the FFP name or brand should and could be given up for the sake of preserving commitments to gender equality and other policy orientations is a central concern and debate of the entire FFP civil society, political and academic communities (Michalko, 2023).

Backlash or resistance to FFP has been mostly noted within the context of the MFA. As has been alluded to, the Ministry is often described as a male-dominated and very conservative institution where cultural change has been hard to achieve, as is the case for many MFAs around the world (Lequesne, 2020; Niklasson and Towns, 2022). The divided opinions on FFP, however, are not only along gender lines. As a former government representative shared, some of the opposition comes also from women, and as the unpublished study by University of Chile (2025) reveals, the divides are also generational. Younger staff members of the MFA have higher level of awareness about the concept of gender equality, and they align themselves with its importance in the spirit of FFP, while older generations perceive it as a government agenda (ibid.: 27).

Other tensions were also reported along socioeconomic class, where most diplomats and MFA staff are from the same elite social networks, with personal ties through schools and families (KII Academic 2). As FFP has meant changes to power structures and the representation of minority groups within the MFA, there has been resistance from some MFA staff to FFP as a whole.

Focusing on increasing the understanding of FFP and knowledge on gender equality among MFA staff is, therefore, one of the most pressing areas of action for the institutionalisation of FFP. As one of the government representatives explained, collaboration with other countries could help ensure that FFP *'becomes a state policy and not only a government policy and continues even if the name is changed'* and that the commitment to gender equality in foreign affairs is better safeguarded (KII Gov 2).

3.2 Anti-gender backlash

Structural discrimination on the basis of gender and sexuality persists in Chile. In 2023 alone, over 1,500 cases of abuse against LGBTQI+ individuals were reported and homophobic and transphobic messages online increased by 123% compared to the previous year (Movilh, 2024a). More than 60% of all LGBTQI+ individuals in Chile report having been victims of hate crimes or abuse at least once in their life (Subsecretaría de Prevención del Delito, 2021); 65% have been verbally attacked at least once in the past five years due to their sexual orientation, identity or gender expression; and 25% have suffered at least one physical attack in their life for the same reason (Fundación Iguales, 2021). Indeed, the majority of cases go unreported due to fear of stigma and lack of confidence in state institutions (ibid.).

Societal attitudes, influenced by conservative political and religious entities such as the Catholic Church and Evangelical movements, continue to pose barriers to the acceptance and full inclusion of LGBTQI+ individuals. While younger generations and urban populations exhibit greater acceptance, conservative segments – particularly in rural areas and among the older generations – continue to resist non-heteronormativity and non-cisgender expressions (Rojas, 2024; KIIs CSO 6 and 7; KII Academic 3). Chile's legal framework, while progressive compared to its regional counterparts, lacks explicit constitutional protection for LGBTQI+ individuals (Hidalgo, 2022).

From the Anti-Discrimination Law of 2012 to the Gender Identity Law of 2019, and the Marriage Equality Law of 2022, LGBTQI+ advocates have contributed to key advances in protecting the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals in Chile in recent

years (see Figure 1 for a more comprehensive timeline). But each key moment advancing LGBTQI+ rights has been met with opposition from conservative anti-gender actors. The LGBTQI+ rights agenda has experienced waves of progress (KII Academic 3). Yet these have been met by conflicting waves of neoconservatism (Faúndes, 2023). Indeed, the back-to-back rejections during the 2023 constitutional referendum were a prime example of the polarisation between conservative and progressive actors. More recently, LGBTQI+ activist groups referred to 2023 as *'the least prosperous and most hostile year in the National Congress for LGBTQI+ rights'* (Movilh, 2024a).

Anti-gender movements are not unique to Chile. Rather, they reflect broader global trends of backlash against gender and sexual diversity, often orchestrated by well-connected international networks with transnational funding and strategic mobilisation (Khan et al., 2023a). Globally, anti-gender movements have gained momentum, often as a reaction to the successes of feminist and LGBTQI+ movements, which challenge traditional gender norms (Goetz and Mayer, 2024). These movements operate through multiple channels, including political lobbying, misinformation and disinformation campaigns, and leveraging cultural and religious institutions to influence public opinion and policy (D'Angelo et al., 2024).

This section further explores the roles of key stakeholders and their strategies and tactics in resisting or defending the rights of LGBTQI+ communities in Chile. Although anti-gender actors have actively resisted public policies advancing the rights of women and other marginalised groups, this section pays special attention to the LGBTQI+ community.

The section answers three sets of research questions:

- Who are the stakeholders opposed to LGBTQI+ rights? What are their sources of support, e.g. social and political networks? How are they linked with networks outside the country? What are their motivations and objectives?
- How do anti-gender actors and organisations exert influence over LGBTQI+ rights and existing policies/laws supporting the LGBTQI+ population?
- What strategies do local LGBTQI+ rights groups use to resist anti-gender actors? How are they connected to the global movement and what international support do they need?

Stakeholders opposed to LGBTQI+ rights

Anti-gender actors in Chile are composed of a diverse coalition of conservative religious, political, civil society and parents' groups, all of which have connections to international conservative networks.

Religious groups

The Catholic Church and Evangelical groups have been at the forefront of the opposition to LGBTQI+ rights in Chile. The Chilean Catholic Church has historically been a powerful influence in Chilean politics, playing a particularly influential role during Chile's democratic transition (Ojeda and Astudillo 2023; Goetz and Mayer, 2024).

The church's opposition to LGBTQI+ rights can be traced back to the early 1990s, when the Cardinal of Santiago, Carlos Oviedo, used the expression 'moral crisis' to describe changes in sexual and gender norms (Ojeda and Astudillo, 2023). In the early 2000s, the Catholic Church stripped a lesbian teacher of her certification and demanded that only heterosexual teachers deliver religious courses

and in 2012, an Episcopal Cardinal condemned homosexuality, calling it immoral and referring to homosexuals as '*especialmente delinquent or dangerous*' (Movilh, 2007, 2012; Vera, 2021). Though specific to Chilean churches, these actions often reflect global trends, and can be traced back to the Vatican, which, in the early 1990s first articulated the concept of 'gender ideology' and, in 2019, condemned 'gender ideology' in schools in a paper titled 'He created them man and woman' (Verdú, 2019; Murray, 2022).

More recently, over the past two decades, Evangelical churches of various denominations – from Pentecostal to Adventist groups – have garnered political influence, forming alliances with conservative political actors to push anti-gender policies (Guzmán et al., 2010; Rojas, 2024). Together, Evangelical and Catholic groups have wielded significant influence over public opinion and policy-making, through interfaith alliances and partnerships with conservative lawmakers, think tanks, CSOs and the private sector, many of whom are discussed in the following sections (Weld, 2020; Goetz and Mayer, 2024; KII CSO 4, 5 and 7).

As one interviewee noted, all anti-gender actors – including those who claim to be secular – are tied to these religious groups and often act as the '*arms of the church*' (KII Academic 3). Again, while these networks appear to be domestic, they are often reflective of international trends. Interfaith alliances have formed to resist the rights of the LGBTQI+ community, and gender inclusion more broadly, in places as diverse as Bulgaria, Ghana, Peru and the United States (US) (Wilcox, 2020; Martínez et al., 2021).

Political groups

The political group most mentioned by interviewees is the Partido Republicano Nacional (PRN), described as an extreme-right group led by

key anti-gender figures, such as José Antonio Kast. In May 2023, the Republican Party won 23 of 50 seats in the Constitutional Council tasked with the second drafting of a new constitution, giving them not only the majority but also veto power (Ipas and Empower, 2022). The party played a key role in the 2023 constitutional referendum, not only by publicly spreading disinformation that led to the first rejection of the newly proposed constitution, but also in drafting a second more conservative constitution that would deny LGBTQI+ rights (see Box 2).

Even prior to this, the PRN openly advocated against gender progressive policies, including abortion, same-sex marriage, sexuality education and inclusive school policies. In 2021, for example, two PRN congressmen presented a public order that the Ministers of Finance and Health reveal details of all fiscal resources allocated to gender identity and sexual diversity health programmes (Barrientos Delgado et al., 2022). They also requested that all universities disclose information related to the courses, centres and academics involved in teaching anything related to gender, sexualities or feminists (Vivaldi, 2024). Though the direct effects of these efforts are unclear, they laid the foundation for current debates regarding government funding.

More recently, in November 2024, Congressional members of the PRN, together with other conservative members of the Renovación Nacional, Unión Demócrata Independiente, and Partido Social Cristiano, presented a report conducted by Congress's Special Investigative Committee (Comisión Investigadora Especial), which argued for stopping all funding for the

Programa de Acompañamiento de Identidad de Género (Gender Identity Accompaniment Programme) and Grow with Pride (Crece con Orgullo) and for reforming the Gender Identity Law's protection of minors (González, 2024). The Congressional Chamber is reviewing this report; if accepted, it may lead to critical physical and mental health risks for LGBTQI+ adolescents (Buitrago, 2024; Movilh, 2024b).

The PRN has gained prominence in Chilean news and internationally, particularly under the leadership of José Antonio Kast. Kast, who has run for president twice and lost both times, has openly opposed LGBTQI+ rights, framing them as an imposition of 'foreign ideologies' and a threat to Chilean cultural values, a discourse commonly used globally by anti-gender actors (Verdugo Silva, 2020; Murray, 2022).²³ Indeed, his presidential programme had strong links with other ultra-right and conservative Christian transnational movements, such as those associated with Bolsonaro in Brazil, Vox in Spain and Trump in the US (Rodríguez, 2024). Two interviewees compared the rhetoric of Kast and his party with that of the US Republican Party (KII CSO 4 and 5). Others described the negative ripple effects seen in Chile as a result of President Trump's recent executive orders, including the banning of non-binary genders, or backlash towards gender-affirming care (KII Academic 3; KIIs CSO 4 and 6). The UK-commissioned Cass review of evidence on gender-affirming healthcare for minors was also perceived as detrimental to Chile's healthcare policy debates (KII Academic 3) (see more below).

23 The discourse around 'foreign imposition' is rarely connected to a specific country but is rather used to imply an imposition of western (i.e. US or UK-centric) values, or to refer to international organisms such as the UN and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), both of whom undermine national sovereignty.

Kast is also the current president of a far-right international organisation, Political Network for Values (PNfV). PNfV differs from other international anti-gender groups due to the prominent role of politicians, who are not just guests but key figures in the group (Graff and Korolczuk, 2022).²⁴ Most of its funding comes from conservative US, Mexican and Spanish organisations, including the Alliance for Defending Freedom (ADF) International, the Madrid-based anti-rights group CitizenGo and Red de Acción Ética Política, a Mexican group that promotes legislation against equal marriage and abortion

(Dip, 2023; Ipas and Empower, 2023). The network organises annual regional, transatlantic or international meetings called ‘summits’, signalling its attempt to compete with the status of the UN (Graff and Korolczuk, 2022). For example, in 2023 the network held a summit at the UN headquarters in New York, which was attended by over 200 people from 40 countries, many of whom are incumbent politicians (Dip, 2023). These relationships with other international anti-gender leaders have positioned Kast strategically for a potential third presidential campaign in 2025 (Ipas and Empower, 2022).

Box 2 The role of Partido Republicano Nacional in resisting LGBTQI+ demands during Chile’s 2023 constitutional referendum

During Chile’s constitutional referendum, the first proposed constitution was drafted mostly by delegates aligned with the leftist political movement, resulting in a progressive text focused on social and economic rights, the environment and gender equality, including LGBTQI+ rights (Motamedi, 2023). In September 2022, this draft was rejected, with only 39% of voters in favour.

At the time, Chile was grappling with rising inflation and still recovering from COVID-19. The Republican Party and other conservative groups used this opportunity to work against the proposed text, claiming it would, among other things, undermine ‘property rights’ (Motamedi, 2023; KII Academic 3). Anti-gender groups’ use of social media to spread misinformation contributed to its eventual rejection (*rechazo*) (Corrêa, 2022). After winning the majority in the Constitutional Council, José Antonio Kast and his PRN party drafted the second proposed constitution. In December 2024, however, this was also rejected by Chilean voters, this time because it was seen as too conservative.

24 The advisory board includes the Hungarian Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs Katalin Novák as well as parliamentarians from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Kenya, Lithuania, Peru, Spain and Slovakia. The Board of Directors includes Sharon Slater (President of Family Watch International), Benjamin Bull (Executive Director of Advocacy at First Liberty) and Brian Brown (listed as President of the National Organization for Marriage). Three other members represent European countries: two politicians (Katalin Novák and Jaime Mayor Oreja, listed as Former Minister of Home Affairs in Spain) and Ignacio Arsuaga (President of CitizenGo) (Graff and Korolczuk, 2022).

Box 2 The role of Partido Republicano Nacional in resisting LGBTQI+ demands during Chile's 2023 constitutional referendum continued

Given these two failed attempts, the current President, Gabriel Boric, stated that there would not be another vote during his presidency, and that he would focus on long-term development instead (Motamedi, 2023). This marked a victory for anti-gender actors, silencing discussions of a potential constitutional referendum. In a political context where ongoing efforts for LGBTQI+ rights in Chile are often reliant on executive power (Schulenberg, 2019), it is exactly this silence of the president and other left or centre actors that worries some of the interviewees. As an interviewee for this study said:

The consequences of this failure [the rechazo] is that our alliances from the left stop talking about feminism. They stopped taking about LGBTQI+ rights. They stop talking about these issues, and so even with the progressive Government of Gabriel Boric we haven't made any advances. (KII CSO 5)

Over the past five years, Chile has witnessed the emergence of various far-right political parties, each playing a role in anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI+ rights discourse in the country. Former leaders of the PRN, such as Johannes Kaiser and Rojo Edwards, have in recent years created their own political movements, leading to the development of the Partido Nacional Libertario and the Partido Social Cristiano (PSC). The combination of these three far-right political parties has increased the influence of the anti-gender ideas and agenda. The PSC, for example, consider itself 'pro-life' within its pillars, and Johannes Kaiser has increasingly mainstreamed his opposition to gender transition hormone treatment in minors in his campaign, gaining influence in both the polls and the media. Interviewees also mentioned the Partido Nacional Libertario and the PSC, the latter of which, despite its small size, has earned votes in the House of Representatives and is beginning to have an influence in Congress (KIIs CSO 4 and 5).

Several additional political groups have played a role in shaping anti-gender discourse in Chile. The Unión Demócrata Independiente is closely linked with ADF International, a US-based ultraconservative Christian legal advocacy group funding much of the PNfV that has fought to curtail the rights of LGBTQI+ people and to expand Christian values within public schools and government institutions (Ramírez, 2019; Khan et al., 2023a). Unión Demócrata Independiente and the Renovación Nacional, both right-leaning parties, together with the Partido Demócrata Cristiano, a centre-left party, opposed the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation and civil unions of same-sex couples (Díez, 2015). Several interviewees also expressed doubts over parties to the left or centre-left, suggesting that they have not been taking on an active leadership role in LGBTQI+ issues and describing their support as ad hoc or fragmented (KIIs CSO 5, 6 and 7; KII Academic 3).

Civil society, including parent groups

Parent-led organisations and civil society groups such as Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas (Don't Mess With My Kids) have mobilised conservative communities to resist LGBTQI+ inclusion in education and public policies. These groups often weaponise children, arguing that LGBTQI+ inclusion policies in education and health seek to sexualise children or rob them of their innocence (Martínez et al., 2021). While they seem to be grassroots causes, they are linked to international networks and funding flows (Ronconi et al., 2023). In 2022, for example, Law 21.430 was passed, guaranteeing the holistic protection of the rights of children and adolescents, including the right to non-discrimination based on gender and sexuality. Backlash from parent-led groups and the Chilean NGO Comunidad y Justicia led the Chilean Constitutional Court to review the law.

With lobbying and financial support from ADF International, an ultraconservative US legal advocacy organisation, the Constitutional Court of Chile declared three of the articles

unconstitutional, arguing that they infringed upon parents' rights to choose their children's education (ADF International, 2021; Ronconi et al., 2023). Comunidad y Justicia and ADF International have both also been active anti-gender players in lobbying against gender-affirmative healthcare for minors, often arguing against hormone blockers in order to protect children (Sánchez Silva, 2024) (see Box 3 for more on Comunidad y Justicia).

ADF International has funded lobbying efforts and formed alliances with Chilean higher education institutions and CSOs, such as Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Universidad de los Andes de Chile, Comunidad y Justicia and Fundación Jaime Guzmán, of which José Antonio Kast was the director, before moving on to create his own think tank with similar ideas, called Ideas Republicanas (Ramírez, 2019). These organisations participate as speakers in congressional commissions when bills related to LGBTQI+ rights are discussed (Khan et al., 2023a).

Box 3 Comunidad y Justicia resists gender inclusion in adolescent education to protect parental rights

The Chilean non-governmental organisation Comunidad y Justicia has been an active anti-gender actor since 2012, often defending the rights of parents to decide on the education of their child (Stutzin and Troncoso, 2019). In 2014, for example, it presented an appeal together with Evangelical churches to stop the distribution of the book *Nicolás has 2 dads*, with the Court of Appeal ruling against this measure. At the same time, they tried to obstruct the 2019 Gender Identity Law and filed a complaint for the crime of prevarication against a judge who authorised the change of name and legal sex of a minor in 2017 (ibid.). One interviewee described Comunidad y Justicia as a key anti-gender actor that forms relationships with certain think tanks – such as Instituto de Estudios en la Sociedad – or groups associated with the right, and with religious and Catholic ties (KII CSO 5).

Motivations and objectives of anti-gender actors

Anti-gender actors target issues such as gender identity, same-sex marriage and gender-affirming

healthcare, especially for adolescents, claiming that they threaten the heteronormative family and traditional values. Table 6 summarises the key areas of LGBTQI+ inclusive public policy that anti-gender actors target.

Table 6 Examples of LGBTQI+ inclusive public policy areas targeted by anti-gender actors

Sector	Topics targeted by anti-gender actors	Example
Cross-cutting	LGBTQI+ constitutional rights	During the 2021–2022 Constitutional Convention, anti-gender actors, especially from the PRN, launched digital campaigns to discredit the proposed constitution that included explicit protection of LGBTQI+ rights (Barrientos et al., 2022).
	Non-discrimination laws	In 2024, conservative legislators in the Chamber of Deputies rejected proposed reforms for strengthening the 2012 Anti-Discrimination Law (Rioseco, 2024).
	Non-binary genders	The 2018 Gender Identity Law faced strong opposition from religious and right-wing actors, particularly regarding minors' rights to change their gender identity without parental consent (Hidalgo, 2022).
Sexual and reproductive health	Gender-affirming healthcare, especially for adolescents	In 2024, right-wing legislators in the Chamber of Deputies passed a bill proposing to block the Ministry of Health from financing gender-affirming healthcare, including hormone blockers, for adolescents (Movilh, 2024b).
	Same-sex marriage and adoption	Right-wing political parties and conservative Catholic and Evangelical groups opposed the 2015 proposed civil union agreement (AUC), arguing in defence of the 'traditional heteronormative family' (Stutzin and Troncoso, 2019)
Education	LGBTQI+ teachers' and students' access to schools	Private and religious schools in Santiago have tried to expel transgender students (Espejo, 2022). In 2007, the Catholic Church decided to not renew the teaching certification of a teacher who had identified as a lesbian (Vargas, 2022).
	Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)	In 2019 and 2022, conservative religious groups lobbied against proposed laws for sexuality education and LGBTQI+ inclusive school policies (Rojas, 2024)
	Gender-neutral language	In 2021, two pastor congressmen from the PRN presented a bill against inclusive language (Barrientos et al., 2022)
	Social transitioning of minors (i.e. choice of names/pronouns other than those assigned at birth; choice of uniform)	In 2017, after the Education Superintendency published Circular 0768, which would permit students to choose their own names or pronouns and the uniform or bathroom 'most appropriate for their gender identity' conservative religious and parent-led groups, such as the Conferencia Episcopal de Chile argued that it was an 'imposition' on which there had not been proper consultation (Vargas, 2017).
	Gender studies in higher education	In 2021, congressmen from the PRN asked the Ministry of Finance (Ministerio de Hacienda) to collect information on all financial resources allocated to gender studies and related subjects (Barrientos et al., 2022).

The following sections explain the motivations and objectives behind this backlash, which stem from conservative or religious beliefs, economic interests or the desire for political power, and nationalism or the protection of a perceived national identity.

Conservative or religious beliefs

Chile's social and political landscape remains deeply influenced by conservative values rooted in religious beliefs. These same beliefs have fuelled anti-gender movements that seek to undermine progress for LGBTQI+ communities. Many conservative groups oppose LGBTQI+ rights based on their interpretation of religious doctrine or founding documents, such as the Constitution or the Bible, which they claim view non-heteronormative identities and relationships as morally unacceptable (Murray, 2022). They defend the 'traditional' or 'natural' family (McEwen, 2020), creating a juxtaposition between Chile's democratic aspirations and its conservative religious values (Guzmán et al., 2010).

Political power and economic interests

Opposition to gender-inclusive policies is part of a broader political struggle for power and influence (Goetz and Mayer, 2024). Political actors use anti-LGBTQI+ discourse to position themselves as defenders of 'traditional values' and consolidate support among conservative voters. Conservative influence within political parties has remained a significant obstacle to the full recognition of LGBTQI+ rights (Díez, 2015). Right-wing political parties and Christian Evangelical leaderships have maintained a presence in Congress and in the Chamber of Deputies (Ramírez, 2019; Vivaldi, 2024; KII CSO 4). Indeed, an interviewee described how challenging it is to concretise a new law when LGBTQI+ supporters do not have the majority in Congress (KII CSO 5).

There is limited evidence on the actual number of seats or legislative presence held by religious groups in Chile. One study indicates that Evangelicals have only maintained, on average, two seats in Congress from 1990 to around 2018, and despite being treated as an important interest group by mainstream politicians, have remained largely on the sidelines compared to their influence in other Latin American countries, such as Brazil (Boas, 2023).

Yet literature from the past five years would suggest otherwise. Despite the absence of quantitative data on their direct representation in key governing bodies, religious groups have gained political power and influence through their networks and alliances. Evangelical groups, especially, have served as campaign advisors for the Republican Party and mobilise people of all classes to vote for conservative parties, expanding their reach for the first time to the 'non-elites' (Corrales, 2018).

Despite this, anti-gender groups in Chile are more rooted in the country's social and economic elites. Certain business groups, particularly those associated with conservative think tanks, oppose progressive policies, especially as they relate to structural transformations of the economy (Barrientos Delgado et al., 2022; KII CSO 5).

Anti-gender actors have made various attempts at reallocating fiscal resources away from LGBTQI+ rights issues. One example already mentioned prior happened in 2021, when the PRN demanded that the Ministers of Finance and Health reveal all the details of the fiscal resources allocated to gender identity and sexual diversity health or education programmes, and to university gender studies programmes (Barrientos Delgado et al. 2022; Corrêa, 2022). More recently, in 2024, conservative legislators in the Chamber of

Deputies voted to block funding from the Ministry of Health for gender-affirming healthcare for adolescents (Movilh, 2024b). One interviewee described this as a ‘*cunning*’ strategy by anti-gender actors, as it would have ripple effects beyond health, and would restrict the ability of the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación) to implement sexuality education or LGBTQI+ inclusion policies in schools (KII Academic 3).

Nationalism

As in many parts of Latin America, and globally, gender and sexuality play a central role in marking the boundaries of national identity (Radcliffe and Rivers-Moore, 2009). Promoting a Chilean national identity that is heteronormative and gender binary and presenting LGBTQI+ movements as a ‘foreign’ imposition are key delegitimizing tactics of anti-gender actors. They claim that LGBTQI+ rights are a threat to Chilean identity and sovereignty or traditional Chilean values (Graff and Korolczuk, 2022). Like the discourse around the common enemy, nationalistic messaging thrives within the current Chilean context, where there are large influxes of migrants and refugees. As an interviewee described:

It’s as if being a patriot or a nationalist implies having a discourse against the rights of migrants, [and] against the rights of gender and sexual diversity. (KII CSO 7)

The association of Chilean identity with Christianity, patriarchy, whiteness and authoritarianism, and the rejection of secularism, homosexuality, indigeneity, blackness and liberalism, both reflect and is complicated by Latin America’s postcolonial history (Weld, 2020). As a result, the marginalisation of LGBTQI+ individuals is compounded by intersections with race and class, reflecting broader societal inequalities (Radcliffe and Rivers-Moore, 2009; Goetz and Mayer, 2024).

Tactics and strategies used by anti-gender actors

Anti-gender actors strategically position themselves within government structures, influencing policy discourse and development and blocking progressive reforms. Some of the key tactics they use include: disinformation and controlling the media, scapegoating, violence and intimidation, and lobbying and legislative influence.

Disinformation and controlling the media

The literature and interviewees point to various narratives that anti-gender actors use in their discourse. One such narrative frames LGBTQI+ rights as western impositions that threaten Chilean values (Verdugo Silva, 2020). A second narrative invokes the protection of children and family values, especially in the realm of education and parental choice, as seen through campaigns such as ‘Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas’ and the ‘Freedom Bus’. The dissemination of the concept of ‘gender ideology’ has also been a key strategy in mobilising conservative sectors against policies promoting gender and sexual equality (Murray, 2022).

Anti-gender actors leverage social and mainstream media to diffuse their messages of hate and disinformation. As an interviewee noted, in Chile, ‘*basically all the formal media are part of economic groups, which are also linked to conservative and [anti-gender] groups*’ (KII CSO 4). The Evangelical community, in particular, has been instrumental in mobilising grassroots opposition, by leveraging their media presence, using television, radio and social media to spread anti-LGBTQI+ messages (Ramírez, 2019; Rojas, 2024).

Two interviewees described how anti-gender actors are tapping into the world of influencers, using key figures to spread their messages. This has included trans influencers, and persons

who have ‘de-transitioned’ (*detransitado*), a phrase used to describe transitioning back to the gender you were assigned at birth (KII CSO 5; KII Academic 3). The use of digital and print media and simple, bold messaging has been a strategic way of garnering influence over audiences who are illiterate or have limited digital literacy skills; this includes poor, rural and older communities (KIIs CSO 6 and 7).

Scapegoating, violence or intimidation

Anti-gender actors often play into people’s fears, scapegoating LGBTQI+ individuals and their advocates. Interviewees described how anti-gender actors in Chile ‘create a common enemy’ (KIIs CSO 5 and 6) and then build a ‘common sense of protection’ against that enemy (KII Academic 3). This discourse is reflective of global trends. Anti-gender actors often monitor the political situation in countries, paying attention to protests and political unrest as potential opportunities to mobilise (Martínez et al., 2021).

In Chile, this unrest has emerged from an economic crisis and a migrant crisis (KII CSO 6; KII Academic 3). The COVID-19 pandemic also facilitated this discourse, reaching Chile just after the 2019 uprisings, and in a context of political tension, where ‘*the credibility of the country’s government was almost non-existent*’ (Corrêa, 2022: 14).

Intimidation and verbal or physical attacks on LGBTQI+ individuals and their advocates are common tactics used by anti-gender actors. Interviewees generally agreed that trans people, in particular, face disproportionate levels of discrimination (KIIs CSO 3, 4 and 5). One interviewee offered a potential explanation for this, indicating that anti-gender actors see trans identities not just as a threat to the ‘traditional family’ – as they do with non-heteronormative

relationships – but also to gender identity, as they ‘*question what it means to be a man, or what it means to be a woman*’ (KII CSO 5).

Indeed, attacks on LGBTQI+ individuals and their advocates are often justified through the rhetoric of protecting traditional family values and conservative societal norms (Goetz and Mayer, 2024). The Chilean Criminal Code, Article 373, which penalises offenses against ‘morality and decency’ has been used to target LGBTQI+ individuals, especially transgender women, in public spaces (Hidalgo, 2022). Evangelical groups have denounced non-heteronormative relationships as against religious morality and pathologised LGBTQI+ identities, using social media to circulate messages of how individuals can only be cured by joining the Evangelical Church (Rojas, 2024).

How LGBTQI+ groups resist anti-gender actors

Local and grassroots LGBTQI+ organisations have played a crucial role in advocating for and protecting the rights of the LGBTQI+ community (Verdugo Silva, 2020). LGBTQI+ organisations – such as Movilh, Fundación Iguales, Organizando Trans Diversidades and Todo Mejora – use several strategies to resist anti-gender actors. These include using data, evidence and social media to raise awareness and combat disinformation, leveraging human rights frameworks in legal advocacy efforts, and creating alliances for enhanced mobilisation and public demonstration.

Data, evidence and social media as tools to raise awareness and combat misinformation

Since the 2000s, LGBTQI+ organisations in Chile have worked to document the experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals and raise public awareness about human rights violations (Díez, 2015; Schulenberg, 2019). Given the lack of data available

on LGBTQI+ experiences (Brixi et al., 2023), national surveys and studies documenting the abuse and discrimination faced by LGBTQI+ individuals have helped to make their plight visible (e.g. Fundación Iguales, 2021; Prodemu, 2023; Movilh, 2024a). Several interviewees noted the need for access to more, and better quality, data and evidence to combat misinformation and bring legitimacy to grassroots advocacy efforts (KII CSO 5 and 7).

In the absence of scientific evidence, anti-gender actors can more easily spread misinformation and lies. Several interviewees described how this became apparent in the context of the 2024 publication of the *Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people* (the ‘Cass review’). The report, commissioned by the UK National Health Service, stated that there was insufficient robust evidence on the long-term effects of hormone blockers and social transitioning (key elements of ‘gender-affirming care’) and the circumstances in which particular groups of children might benefit from them (Cass, 2024).

Given that gender identity in childhood is a key target of anti-gender actors in Chile (Barrientos Delgado et al., 2022), anti-gender groups misrepresented the findings of the Cass review to their advantage, using it to feed conspiracy theories for their own political and ideological purposes (Toro, 2024; KII Academic 3). The fact that the report had come from the UK government enhanced its legitimacy in the eyes of the Chilean public (KII CSO 5). Seizing this opportunity, anti-gender actors demanded a response from the Government. As a result, the Ministry of Health passed ‘Circular 7’, which instructed Chile’s national health services to defer new admissions of adolescents who are seeking puberty blockers or hormone treatment. Later, the Chamber of Deputies requested a review of the country’s

gender identity programme for LGBTQI+ minors, Grow With Pride (Crece Con Orgullo), which led to its temporary freezing by the Health Minister (Arnold, 2024). In the context of polarised political and media discourse on the topic, interviewees considered that the publication of the Cass review was a critical moment in the fight for LGBTQI+ rights in Chile, especially given the slow progress made around gender-affirming healthcare for adolescents (KII CSO 6 and 7).

Social media has played a crucial role in amplifying LGBTQI+ voices and exposing violations to human rights. Online platforms provide a space for organising protests, raising awareness and countering misinformation or disinformation spread by anti-gender groups (KII CS4, 5 and 7; KII Academic 3). The closed, private nature of Facebook groups has been particularly empowering for students and young activists, as it allows them to combat power dynamics and control the narrative around LGBTQI+ rights (Errázuriz, 2021). However, this is also an area where interviewees express the need for more financial support and expertise, including to develop creative digital content that could help expand their reach and potential impact (KII CSO 5).

Legal advocacy and leveraging human rights frameworks

Progressive civil society groups, including feminist organisations and some moderate religious groups, have played a critical role in advocating for LGBTQI+ rights (Guzmán et al., 2010). While LGBTQI+ organisations often use lobbying and legal advocacy to advance their efforts, their success hinges on their ability to both coordinate internally and to leverage international networks for support (Díez, 2015). By drawing on international human rights frameworks and institutions, such as the UN and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), LGBTQI+

organisations have successfully challenged LGBTQI+ discriminatory laws and policies. The UN has been particularly important in bringing together smaller and informal groups of LGBTQI+ activists to develop their agency, forge alliances, formulate collective goals and resolve competing priorities (Sandler and Goetz, 2020).

The IACHR, a judicial body within the Organization of American States (OAS), has played a key role in defending the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals in Chile, especially in the absence of support from Chilean courts (Schulenberg, 2019). One important case was the 2012 *Atala Riffo v. Chile* hearing, which set a precedent for LGBTQI+ rights in Chile by affirming that sexual orientation is a protected category under human rights law (see Box 4). In 2018, the IACHR set another precedent by mandating the signatory countries of the American Convention on Human Rights to legalise equal marriage (Martínez et al., 2021).

Despite these efforts, anti-gender actors continue to oppose the IACHR, the Chilean state has not acted on the court's recommendations, and the Constitutional Court and Supreme Courts of Chile continue to be reluctant to rule in favour

of LGBTQI+ rights, pointing to limitations of these international frameworks and institutes (International Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDS et al., 2014; Schulenberg, 2019).

Various interviewees shared examples of the shortcomings of their attempted advances: negotiations that may turn into circulars (*circulares*), regulations (*normativas*), or recommendations, but with little impact on policies or laws (KII CSO 4 and 7; KII Academic 3). This was especially the case in the protection of LGBTQI+ minors. Interviewees noted limited progress towards gender-affirming healthcare, as in the case of Circular 7. This defers the start of new hormonal therapy treatments for children and recommends against the use of hormone blockers until there is more reliable scientific evidence to support it (KII CSO 4). The Ministry of Health has also planned to publish technical guidelines for hormone therapy, and there has been recent progress in this area for adults, but not for children (KII CSO 4). Despite some progress on comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), it is not being implemented, and teachers are rarely trained or supported to deliver the curriculum (KII CSO 7; Rojas et al., 2020).

Box 4 The Inter-American Court of Human Rights defends LGBTQI+ rights

In the 2012 case of *Atala Riffo vs. Chile*, the IACHR reviewed a Supreme Court ruling that in 2004 awarded child custody to a father due to the mother's homosexual orientation, and the need to 'protect' her daughters (Schulenberg, 2019). The IACHR ruled in favour of *Atala Riffo*, arguing that the Chilean court had arbitrarily interfered with her private and family life. It also ordered the state of Chile to implement ongoing training and education programmes aimed at public servants and legal officials to teach them about human rights, non-discrimination and the protection of the rights of the LGBTQI+ community (International Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDS et al., 2014). The court's decision set an important precedent for LGBTQI+ rights in Chile and Latin America by affirming that sexual orientation is a protected category under human rights law (Martínez et al., 2021).

Alliances and mobilisation

The expansion of rights is dependent upon the creation and maintenance of networks (Díez, 2015). Alliances and mobilisation among diverse stakeholders, including state and non-state actors and feminist groups, have contributed to several critical advancements for the LGBTQI+ community. In 2011, for example, Fundación Iguales was able to form close ties with the right-wing presidential candidate Sebastián Piñera. This contributed to Piñera signing and sending to congress the 2011 Cohabitation Agreement (*Acuerdo de Vida en Pareja*), a bill recognising cohabitation of same-sex couples, and leading to the later passing of the 2015 AUC (Díez, 2015). This win was a testament to the effective alliance between LGBTQI+ organisations. For one of the first times, activists from LGBTQ+ rights organisations joined with the traditional centre-right political class, conservative and progressive lawyers, and Catholics and Evangelical representatives, all of whom participated in the AUC discussion (*ibid.*). Another crucial win for LGBTQI+ rights activists, resulting from collective mobilisation, was the passing of the Anti-Discrimination Law in 2012, following the brutal murder of a young homosexual man, Daniel Zamudio (see Box 5).

Interviewees mentioned working with each other, with government actors across the Ministries of Education, Health, Women and Gender Equity, and Justice and Human Rights, as well as with the Ministry of Exterior Relations. They also mentioned working with regional and international organisations such as assemblies of the OAS, Red de Litigantes LGBTI+ de las Américas, the Coalition of LGBTQI+ groups within the European Union, the United Nations, and other bilateral or multilateral agencies.

Yet Chilean LGBTQI+ groups have not always been successful in creating alliances. Compared to other Latin American countries, Chile's LGBTQI+ movement has historically been weak, limiting its ability to push for legal reforms (Díez, 2015). This was echoed by interviewees, who described challenges both in forming alliances with other LGBTQI+ organisations and with the government, often due to conflicting priorities and agendas, or a lack of coordination on both sides (KII CSO 3, 5 and 7; KII Academic 3).

Box 5 Mobilisation leads to the passing of the 2012 Anti-Discrimination Law

Known locally as the '*Ley Zamudio*' ('Zamudio Law'), the Chilean Anti-Discrimination Law of 2012 (Law 20.609) was sparked by the brutal murder of a young gay man, Daniel Zamudio, who was beaten to death by four attackers linked to a neo-Nazi gang. Zamudio's death caused national and international outrage, uniting progressive and conservative parties, and helping to forge intergenerational and intersectional alliances, including among organisations representing migrants, persons with disabilities and Chile's Jewish community (Díez, 2015; KII Academic 3). The event accelerated the LGBTQI+ rights movement, leading to advancements that otherwise would have taken many more years to achieve (KII CSO 5). Significant public pressure forced the government to act swiftly (Díez, 2015). Despite this achievement, an interviewee noted that today the law is often used to defend other marginalised groups, while the LGBTQI+ community remains forgotten (KII CSO 7).

Divisions *within* progressive coalitions have further hindered the formation of the strong alliances necessary to sustain advances to LGBTQI+ rights (Franceschet and Thomas, 2015). When alliances or networks form organically, they easily fall apart due to changes in leadership, challenges within a single organisation or friction between two organisations (KII CSO 3). Two interviewees expressed fear over the recent division among left-leaning groups, particularly in relation to leftist criticism over ‘woke culture’ (KIIs CSO 5; KII Academic 3). *‘It isolates us [the few organisations left in the alliance], and so it’s not the same fight anymore’*, one said (KII CSO 5). The lack of strong networks with state and non-state actors and the conservative institutional design of the political system in Chile have created significant barriers to policy change (Schulenberg, 2019; KII CSO 7). Conservative actors, often tied to strong national and international alliances, have generally held more resources and political leverage than LGBTQI+ organisations (Vivaldi, 2024).

Chilean feminist groups constitute another potential alliance for LGBTQI+ rights organisations, though they have not been taken full advantage of. These groups have been instrumental in leading social rights movements in the country. Feminist groups are responsible for ‘Mayo Feminista’, a series of protests led by university students against sexual violence in 2018 (Rojas, 2024). High-profile campaigns, including the viral performance *Un violador en tu camino* (‘A rapist in your path’) have spotlighted GBV and LGBTQI+ discrimination, rallying domestic and international support (McGowan, 2021). Alliances between feminist groups – such as Coordinadora 8M, Chile’s largest feminist advocacy group – and LGBTQI+ organisations played a key role in the social uprisings that led to the 2023 constitutional referendum (ibid.).

But not all feminist movements recognise the struggle of LGBTQI+ communities. Globally, feminist groups are sometimes critiqued for promoting a binary understanding of gender and sexuality, excluding trans women or lesbians from their efforts (Nazneen and Okech, 2021). This was also reflected in the KIIs. While four interviewees, three of whom identified as men and one a trans woman, described feminist groups as potential partners, a woman who self-identified as a lesbian noted that her past participation in such groups seemed tokenistic (*simbólica*) (KII CSO 7). Being aware of these dynamics is important when considering how to build meaningful alliances that foster equitable participation of different marginalised groups. It also speaks to the diversity of experiences within LGBTQI+ communities.

3.3 Children in alternative care

The child protection system in Chile has evolved significantly over the past six years, leading to a new architecture that focuses both on prevention and the protection of children and adolescents through a rights-based approach. While the reform process began in 2009, the finalisation and approval of several legal reforms was in large part triggered by a complaint made to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 2018 which resulted in a number of recommendations:

1. adopting a law on the comprehensive protection of children and ensuring that it is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child
2. promoting the rights of all children and adolescents and establishing programmes that promptly identify risks of violations
3. providing appropriate assistance to families in the fulfilment of parental responsibilities in order to reduce the need for alternative care

4. protecting children and adolescents whose rights have been violated through measures that prioritise foster care – whether in the extended family or in another family – over residential care; and working with families to seek the return of children or adolescents when it is in their best interests.

The state responded to the recommendations by moving to adopt a more comprehensive regulatory framework for the protection of children and adolescents, including reforms to the laws that regulate the alternative care system, in order to better enable the fulfilment of the rights of children (KII UN Agency 2). Nevertheless, while several important laws are now in place, including the Law on Guarantees and Comprehensive Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents (Law 21.430, enacted in 2022), challenges in the implementation of the System of Guarantees for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, which is defined under the law, remain (UNICEF Chile, 2022).

The System of Guarantees consists of a set of institutions, actors, policies and norms serving as co-guarantors in respecting, promoting and protecting the physical, mental, spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of children and adolescents, to the maximum of the resources available to the state (BCN, 2022). The System of Guarantees, led by the Undersecretariat for Childhood in the Ministry of Social Development and Family (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia) is in charge of issuing guidelines, supervising and coordinating the actions of all bodies within the system at national, regional and local level, and, in particular, ensuring its functioning and operationalisation (BCN, 2022). This includes the implementation of the alternative care system, following the parameters set out in Article 27 of the new Law 21.430.

After providing a brief overview of the evolution of the alternative care system in Chile, this section will explore the following questions:

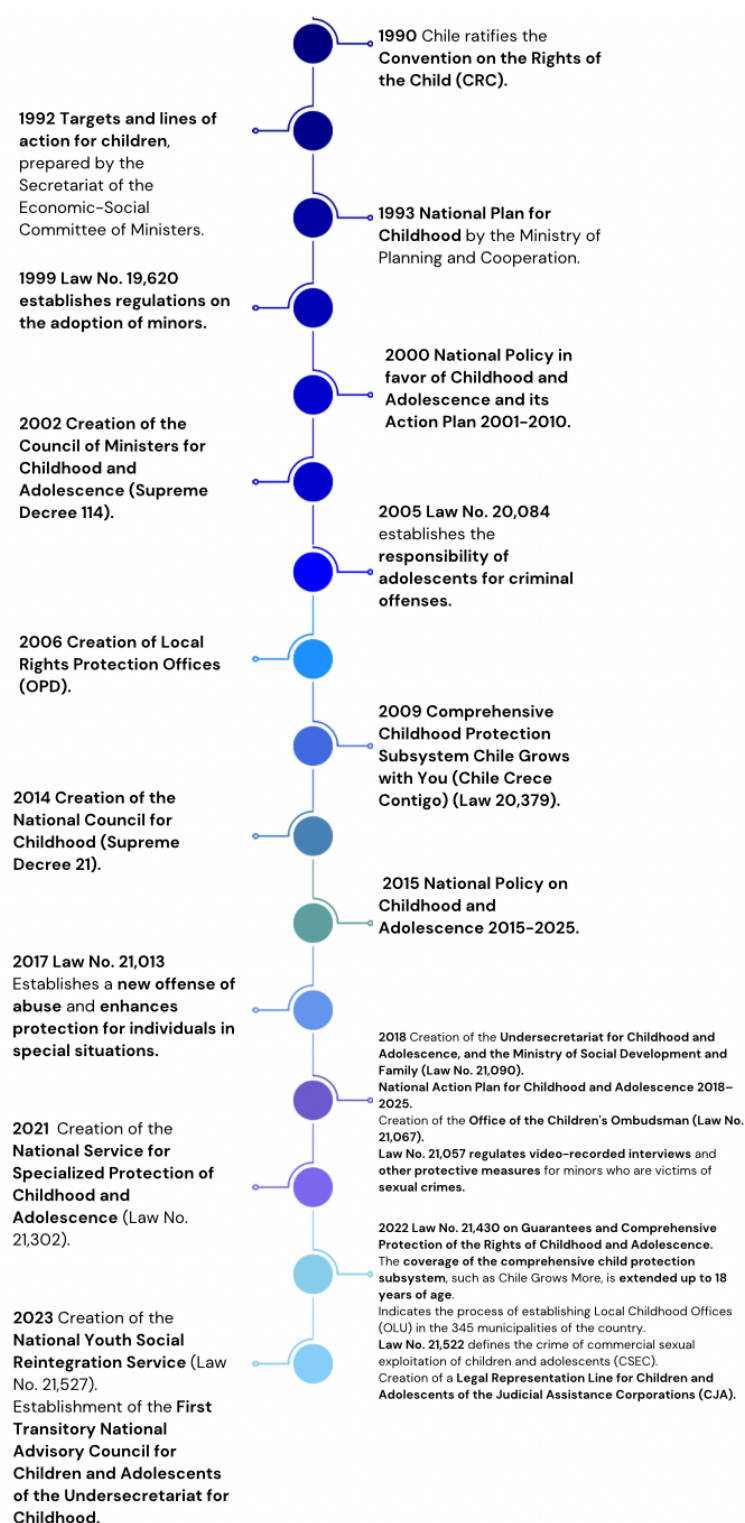
- How is the Chilean alternative care system organised?
- What data exists regarding children in alternative care? Is data from organisations providing care without government subsidies reported and transparent? How are they regulated?
- What is known about Chile's alternative care system in terms of attitudes, policies/programming and outcomes of key models?
- Is Chile leveraging support or engaging with other countries in the region or beyond to adopt or implement children's alternative care reform or progression, or to learn about promising practices? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- What approaches are seen by Chile as good practices that could be replicated within its own models and policies of the alternative care system?

Evolution of the alternative care system in Chile

The provision of child protection and care services in Chile has been facing challenges for over three decades, with low effectiveness of public services aimed at supporting children whose rights had been violated (Gale, 2016; Muñoz Guzmán, 2022). This period saw increased rates of child violence, abandonment, drug addiction within the family, neglect and high social vulnerability (Gale, 2016). In the absence of focused support to families in severe poverty or vulnerability, and/or where children's rights were not being fulfilled, cases were largely resolved by the courts. Children were mostly placed in the residential alternative care system, which lacked appropriate oversight and mechanisms to protect children against abuse and to guarantee their rights (KII UN Agency 2).

Figure 8 provides a timeline with key milestones of the evolution of the legal and policy architecture for the child protection system in Chile between 1990 and 2024.

Figure 8 Normative and institutional evolution of the protection of children and adolescents in Chile



Source: National Policy for Childhood and Adolescence 2024–2032 (Gobierno de Chile, 2024b).

The alternative care system has been strengthened since 2009 after the introduction of the Comprehensive Childhood Protection Subsystem, Chile Grows with You (Chile Crece Contigo). This started to focus on prevention and address some of the reasons why children were being remitted to the family court system (such as household poverty, inability to access basic services and poor parenting practices). However, the system still faced many challenges (KII UN Agency 2). The child protection system was burdened with a lack of capacity among staff, poor remuneration, low morale, high workloads and a lack of financial and other resources. Case management was often subjective as a result of poor technical capacity, management tools and mechanisms (KII UN Agency 2).

Until 2018, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights (Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos) was responsible for the delivery of child protection and childcare services through the National Service for Minors (Servicio Nacional de Menores, SENAME), which held responsibility for both residential care for adolescents in juvenile justice processes and for regulating and monitoring alternative care for children with special protection needs. Its oversight duties with respect to state-funded childcare services had been assessed as weak, under-resourced and poorly staffed, with workers lacking the skills and knowledge with which to fulfil their roles and responsibilities (Gale, 2016).

As noted at the start of Section 3.3, the poor state of the child protection system in Chile resulted in a complaint being filed before the UNCRC in 2018, which led to an in-depth investigation. The 2018 report by the UNCRC expressed concern over the existence of grave or systematic violations of the rights of children and adolescents in residential care centres under the direct or indirect control

of SENAME (UNCRC, 2020). These were attributed to four main structural causes relating to: (1) children as subjects of protection rather than subjects of rights; (2) a misinterpretation of the role of the state as hierarchically above its citizens, particularly children; (3) the courts' excessive influence over the system; and (4) insufficient human, technical and financial resources in the system (UNCRC, 2020).

Triggered by these observations, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children (Defensoría de la Niñez) was established in 2018, along with a new governing body within the Ministry of Social Development and Family, the Undersecretariat for Childhood. The Undersecretariat, which is in charge of policies aimed at children, is responsible for the System of Guarantees. As described in the introduction to Section 3.3, this is a set of institutions, actors, policies and norms serving as co-guarantors in fulfilling the rights of children. From that moment on, the Government committed to separate the juvenile justice system from specialised protection, and to allow a transition period to close SENAME (KII UN Agency 2).

In 2021, the National Service for the Specialised Protection of Children and Adolescents (created under Law 21.302; also known as 'Mejor Niñez', or the 'Better Childhood Service', and henceforth referred to as the Specialised Protection Service or 'the Service') was created under the Undersecretariat for Childhood and is responsible for the regulation and functioning of the alternative care system. Under the law:

the purpose of the Service is to guarantee the specialised protection of children and adolescents whose rights are seriously threatened or violated, understood as specialised diagnosis, restitution of rights, reparation of damage caused and prevention

of further violations. This will be achieved by ensuring the provision and implementation of specialised programmes to deal with cases of medium and high complexity. (KII, Gov 3)

The Service is responsible for delivering these services directly or through nonprofit private institutions.

To fulfil its mandate, the Service provides the following programmes:

- specialised clinical diagnostic for children reported to the Service, for an initial assessment that enables a personalised intervention plan for each case
- strengthening of and engagement with families, by providing support to families of origin and channelling them to relevant supportive services within the System of Guarantees
- day programmes providing targeted family psychosocial support to avoid separation
- alternative care
- adoption.

As part of the reform process that began prior to 2018, the Law on Guarantees and Comprehensive Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents (Law 21.430) was finally enacted in 2022. This led to the establishment of the System of Guarantees and the new subsystem of administrative protection of rights by the Local Offices for Childhood (UNICEF Chile, 2022).

Today, the 2024–2032 National Policy for Children and Adolescents (Política Nacional de la Niñez y Adolescencia), based on Law 21.430, commits the Government to strengthening the specialised child protection system by: (1) continuing to develop the technical and professional skills of those working with children and adolescents using a rights-based perspective; (2) developing mechanisms

for monitoring, evaluation and accountability of the System of Guarantees; and (3) strengthening the programme offer aimed at children and adolescents and their families, in compliance with the human rights approach to childhood and adolescence (Gobierno de Chile, 2024b; Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, 2023).

The enactment of these legal reforms has been crucial for advancing the fulfilment of the rights of the child and making decisions in their best interests. The reforms favour all cohorts of children but particularly infants and young children, who are now supported to stay in their families when adequate care and guarantee of their rights can be ensured after family support interventions. If they have to be placed in alternative care, kinship foster care is prioritised.

Situation of children under specialised protection in Chile

Chile has experienced a declining birth rate over the past 20 years. While 25 years ago children under the age of 18 accounted for more than 35% of the population, today they account for less than 25% (Defensoría de la Niñez, 2022). At the same time, however, in recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of children and adolescents in the specialised protection subsystem. Between 2020 and 2023, there was a 25% increase in the number of protection measures granted by the judiciary. Likewise, the number of cases on the waiting list for effective entry increased by 32% (ibid.).

One worrying phenomenon stands out: since October 2023, the number of children referred to courts for specialised protection in a given month has been higher than the number of children born in Chile during that same month (KII Gov 3). This highlights the magnitude of the problem: Chile is a

country with declining numbers of children but with increased reports of violations of children's rights, particularly in the forms of violence and neglect. Recent studies have shown a rise in violence, not only domestic violence but peer-to-peer violence among children and adolescents in Chile (UNICEF Chile, 2024). This increase in the occurrence of violence is taking place in parallel to an increase in reporting as a result of the stronger protection system, which includes prevention and promotion measures at the local level (KII Gov 4). As a result, between October 2021 and December 2024, the number of children going through family courts and into the alternative care system continued to rise.

No specific studies were identified on the outcomes for children and adolescents who had been in alternative care in Chile on key dimensions of their child development and well-being (education, health profile, substance abuse, risk behaviours, employability, among others), both during their time in the alternative care system and, especially, once they leave it. This is an information gap that is important to investigate, to complement the existing evidence in support of deinstitutionalisation and the promotion of family-based care.

On the other hand, studies have pointed out, in broad terms, the impact on children of spending time in alternative care institutions. Gale's (2016) study on alternative care points out the emotional impact of abuse, separation from the family and placement in care on children. Depending on the severity of each case, many of the children leaving institutions needed psychosocial and other support services to mitigate the harmful effects. The particularly complex support needs of children who have spent many years in a residential facility, either when leaving care at the age of 18 or when moving to another institution, are also a concern. Malagón (2021) also points out that low-quality

institutional care rarely promotes healthy physical and psychological development and can have serious negative consequences for long-term social integration, especially in young children.

In 2024, the Specialised Protection Service served 5.4% of Chile's population of children under 18, falling to only 3.99% in 2020. The system has become more efficient at identifying children at risk and channelling them to the most suitable programme (KII Gov 3), but it has also seen an increase in the occurrence of child protection violations. The number of children and adolescents referred to the protection system are difficult to estimate because there is currently no access to individual data on the reasons for referrals. This can only be obtained through requests via the Transparency Law. Courts make referrals using a generic term called 'protective measures'. Work is under way between the Service and the courts to use a more specific definition of the reason for referral that may inform more effective action on prevention (KII Gov 4).

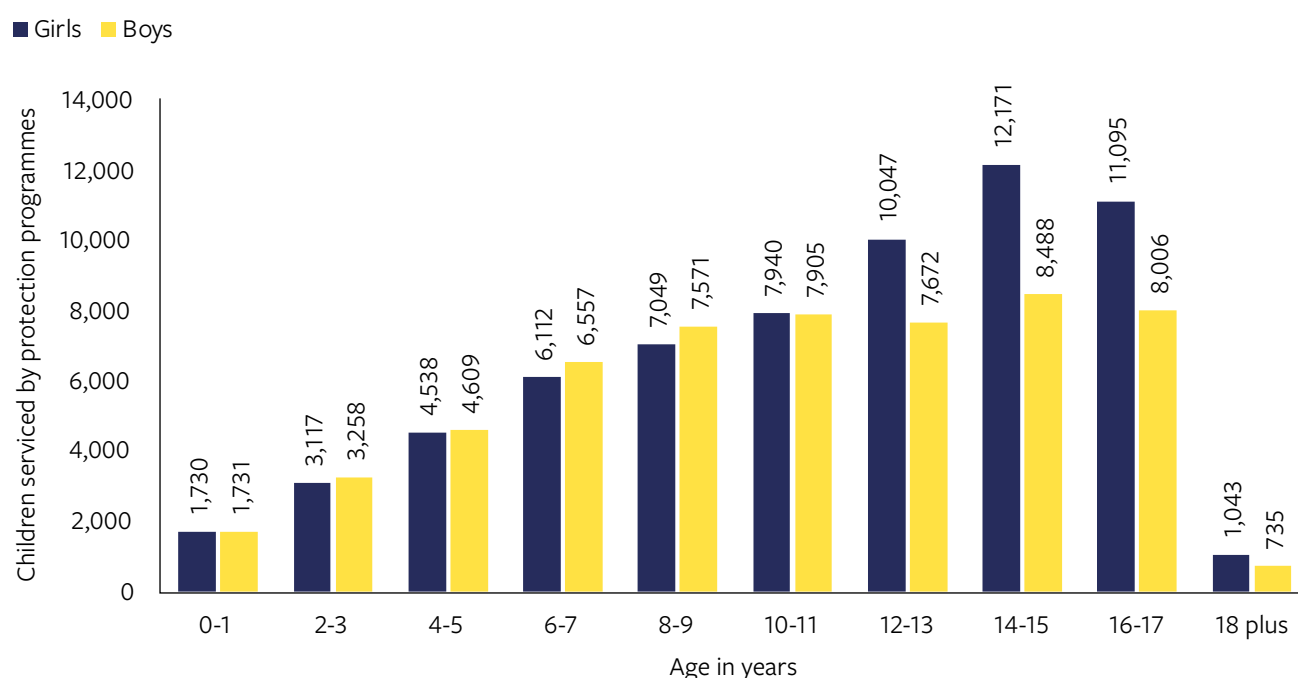
The Children's Ombudsman reported the main reasons for admission into the specialised protection system as 'gross negligence' (35.6%), followed by 'witnessing serious domestic violence' (7.2%), 'abandonment' (3.2%), 'giving up for adoption' (2.4%), 'severe physical abuse' (1.7%) and 'prenatal abuse' (1.1%) (Defensoría de la Niñez, 2021). Evidence suggests a rise in alcohol and drug use, both among pregnant women and among children and adolescents, leading to reports of negligence. There has also been an increase in admissions of children under the age of four and of children under the age of one, with more cases of abandonment of newborns (KII UN Agency 2; UNICEF Chile, 2024). There has been a significant increase in the number of adolescent girls, aged 12 and over, entering specialised protection and adolescent boys entering the juvenile justice

system. This reflects the greater involvement of adolescent boys in crime and girls' greater risk of sexual abuse and maltreatment (KII Gov 3).

Figure 9 illustrates the number of children served by specialised protection programmes during

the course of 2024. While the proportion of girls and boys aged 10–11 years served by specialised protection programmes in December 2024 (the latest data available) is similar, from the 12–13 years age group onwards there is an increase in the proportion of females compared to males.

Figure 9 Children serviced by protection programmes per year group and sex in December 2024



Source: Servicio Nacional de Protección Especializada a la Niñez y Adolescencia (2024)

Organisation of the alternative care system in Chile

Article 20 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child notes that children who are temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment, or whose best interests prevent them from remaining in that environment, have the right to special protection and assistance provided by the state. In accordance with their national laws, states must ensure alternative care options for these children. Such care may

include foster families, kinship care, adoption or, when necessary, placement in appropriate care institutions (UN, 1989).

Alternative care can, therefore, be classified in two large groups: care that is provided within a family context and care that is provided outside of a family context, referred to as residential care (Cantwell et al., 2012). Tables 7 and 8 outline the types of alternative care that can be found within these two large groups.

Table 7 Types of family care

Kinship care	Foster care	Family care
Care provided by relatives, carers or people close to the family of origin and who know the child.	Care provided by families (couples or individuals) in their own homes, who have been authorised by the protection system, subject to the technical guidelines designed by it. These can be: (1) short-term foster families, (2) medium-term foster families and (3) long-term foster families.	Refers to an alternative care setting where a family plays a formal caring role similar to that of a foster family but does not operate within the foster care system.

Source: Muñoz Guzmán (2022)

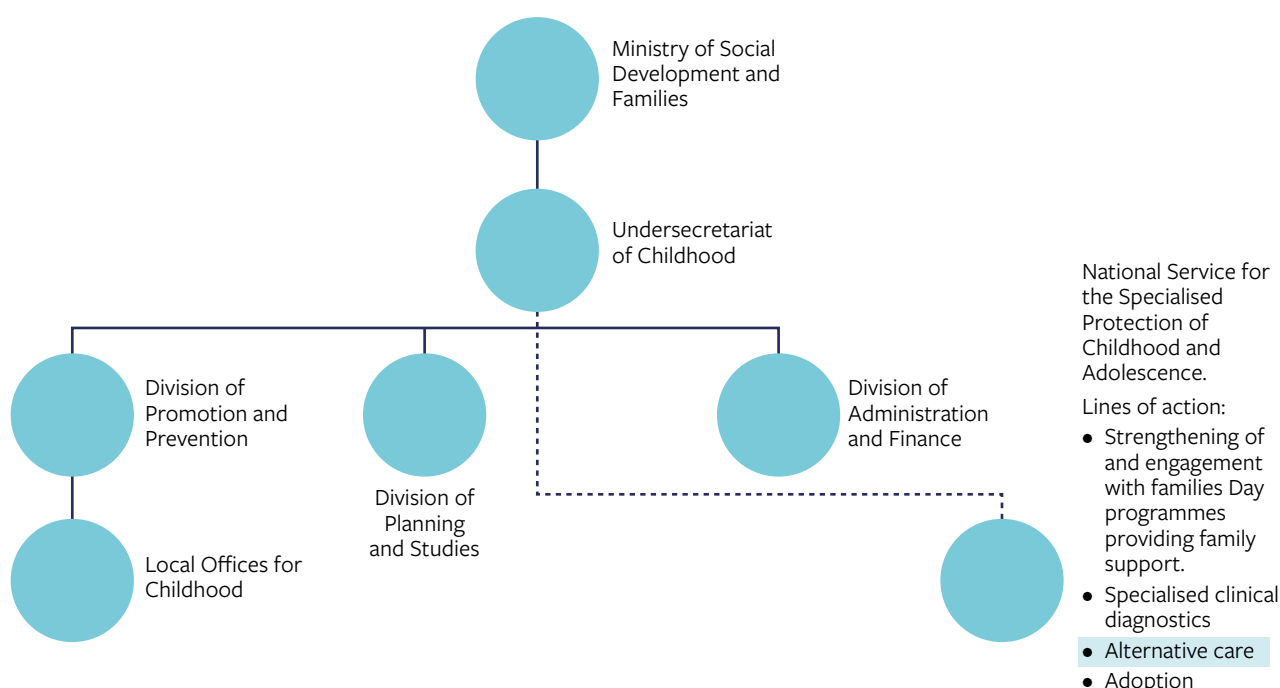
Table 8 Types of residential care

Homes or family residences	Residential care	Supervised independent living
Where care is organised and provided in small, largely autonomous, groups, in conditions that resemble a family environment as much as possible.	Includes a wide range of alternatives, from emergency shelters and small group homes to larger residential facilities.	Usually an option for adolescents in transition from a care environment to an independent life in the community.

Source: Muñoz Guzmán (2022)

As mentioned, the alternative care system in Chile is managed and implemented by the National Service for the Specialised Protection of Children and Adolescents which is responsible for guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents. It does this both through the programmes under its mandate and through referrals to the relevant actors or institutions in the System of Guarantees (for instance, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and the Ministry of Health, among others). Its Division of Prevention and Promotion (see Figure 10) is in charge of implementing preventive actions to reduce the occurrence of child protection violations. These include actions at the local level with the newly instituted Local Offices for Childhood, which together comprise

‘administrative protection’, community level preventive actions and administrative actions, as well as referrals to the necessary national level programmes or to the Service when the cases are more severe. The Specialised Protection Service is under the structure of the Undersecretariat, but it is autonomous and also auxiliary to the justice system. The Service receives referrals of cases of children and adolescents from the judicial protection process in family courts and from the Local Offices for Children at the municipal level (currently 199 of the 345 municipalities have such offices). These offices can also refer cases. Administrative protection (which is separate from judicial protection) in Chile is very recent; it was only put in place in August 2024 (KII Gov 4).

Figure 10 The institutional structure for Chile's alternative care system

Source: Authors' elaboration using data from the Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia

Within this framework of action, the Specialised Protection Service is the legal continuation of SENAME, which today is only in charge of juvenile justice and now only exists in 3 of the 16 regions of the country. In the other 13 it is being reconfigured into the Youth Social Reintegration Services. Under this new architecture, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children was also created as an autonomous constitutional body, whose purpose is to ensure that all actors comply with their mandates.

The Service is only responsible for protection responses; prevention is the responsibility of the Undersecretariat for Childhood and of the Local Offices for Childhood. The Service is, however, in charge of secondary or targeted prevention, which means that when a child or adolescent enters one of the programmes, it should provide services that prevent their lack of protection from becoming chronic.

Referral mechanisms and social worker assessment

Under the new model implemented by the Service, referrals to family courts have to be based on a clinical diagnosis carried out by a specialised organisation which, on the basis of the diagnosis, develops a restitution plan before being returned to the courts. These restitution plans should help guide judges in their referral process according to the characteristics of 'lack of protection' (that is, the violations of rights) that the child is experiencing. The judge can refer the child to the alternative care system, but under the new child protection architecture this should be a last resort, and if they do enter alternative care, they should ideally be placed in foster care.

In cases where a referral to alternative care is not necessary, the restitution plan should include information about what programme support the child would require to ensure the full protection of his or her rights. Clinical diagnostics are done

via private non-profit providers authorised by the Government. These are called accredited partner organisations (Organismo Colaborador Acreditado – OCAs) and include civil society and church/faith-based organisations, and even specific public sector or municipal government providers. OCAs provide a range of services, from clinical diagnostics to residential care, and are selected through public tenders in each region. OCAs are paid according to the number of diagnostics delivered.

The situation of children arriving at the Specialised Protection Service is multifaceted. On the one hand, there are the characteristics of the child or adolescent: whether they have a disability, where they were born, etc. But there are also the characteristics associated with the environment in which they live, their situation of poverty, the family's capacity for care or parenting skills and, of course, the nature of the violence to which they were subjected. Using these different criteria, child protection experts determine whether the child may have an initial lack of protection (first contact with the protection system), an intermediate lack of protection (the child may have had multiple contacts, but the case is not considered more serious, or as constituting an advanced lack of protection), or if they have a history of entering the system or the level of lack of protection is serious in terms of violation of rights (for example, sexual abuse).²⁵ This determination is then used to make referrals, depending on the level of lack of protection, either to day programmes for family support or to the alternative care system. Day programmes are associated with family re-engagement and parenting support, which is designed to work

with the family to try to encourage the child or adolescent to stay with their family, when the lack of protection can be resolved.

The alternative care model in Chile in principle covers children aged 0–18. However, in some exceptional cases, it may continue supporting adolescents over 18 if they are under state care in a residential model or with a foster family where they are able to stay longer and where they are studying. The Service has a growing number of adolescents with disabilities because its offer of programmes for children/adolescents with disabilities is better than those for adults managed by other government agencies. (KII Gov 3). The Service has been working to develop policies for youth who transition out of alternative care, as well as on programmes to support their continuation in education, skill development and entry into the labour force (KI Gov 3).

Kinship care, foster care and other kinds of family care

The alternative care system is continuing to move towards foster care. Currently, 30% of children in the alternative care system are in residential care and 70% in foster care (Servicio Nacional de Protección Especializada a la Niñez y Adolescencia, 2024). Among those in foster care, 80% are in extended families and the rest are with accredited families who provide foster care services. This balance is better aligned to international standards.²⁶ However, sometimes extended host families may experience similar difficulties as the family of origin that violated the child's rights in the first place (many of whom are living in poverty or extreme poverty), in which case it is important to support them with

²⁵ Child protection experts can be social workers, child psychologists or lawyers.

²⁶ According to international standards, residential care should only be used as a last resort and on a short-term basis prior to a transition back to family-based care (CRS, 2021).

additional social policy and social protection measures. As part of the System of Guarantees, more efforts are being made to forge stronger linkages between child protection and social protection, in particular through the Chile Grows with You programme, which is also under the Ministry of Social Development and Family (KII UN Agency 2; KII Gov).²⁷

The Service also manages adoptions. For both adoption and foster care, a formative evaluation of the family is carried out, depending on whether they are opting to become a foster family or an adoptive family. Chile is in the process of reforming its adoption law to strengthen the system and ensure greater security for adoptees (KII UN Agency 2).

Residential care programmes

The Specialised Protection Service operates its residential care programme through mixed service provision, with some residential facilities being run by OCAs and others by the Service directly. Of the 288 residential care homes in Chile, 250 are private (OCAs) and 38 are state-run, managed by the Service. In the case of OCAs, the Service pays a monthly fee per child resident. While there was a reduction in the number of children in institutional care between 2018 and 2020, this number increased between 2021 and 2024 (in October 2021 there were 4,417 children and adolescents in institutional care, and in December 2024 there were 5,014 (Servicio Nacional de Protección Especializada a la Niñez y Adolescencia (2024).

Challenges faced by the alternative care system

Despite progress, both foster families and residential care programmes are challenged financially within the alternative care system in Chile, resulting in overcrowded residential facilities and long waiting times for children to be placed in foster homes. Although the number of centres has remained relatively stable, there has been a 31% decrease in the average number of places available between 2020 and 2023. At the same time, the percentage of centres with overcrowding increased to 37% in 2023 (Defensoría de la Niñez, 2024). A recent evaluation by the Supreme Court found that 19 of the 31 residential care facilities administered directly by the state at the national level are over capacity, and as a result, children are residing in overcrowded conditions. Several other care facilities are also at full capacity (Corte Suprema de Chile, 2023). The waiting lists for foster families and adoptive families to undergo the necessary assessments prior to being able to place children with them are very long, preventing compliance with the principles of need and suitability. There is also scope to improve the process of developing the restitution plans based on more comprehensive clinical diagnostics, helping to understand the nature and the extent of the violation of the rights of children and adolescents, and thus improve the attention they receive within the system (Muñoz Guzmán, 2022).

Analysis of records from visits to residential facilities reveals that many children and adolescents in residential care are exposed to physical, psychological and emotional

27 Chile Grows with You (Chile Crece Contigo) is a comprehensive child development support system created by the Chilean Government in 2007. It aims to ensure the well-being of children from pregnancy through early childhood by providing universal and targeted support to families, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

victimisation, facing new risks of vulnerability. According to an analysis by the Supreme Court (2023), there is an absence of targeted intervention plans to address these issues both individually and collectively. Violence among peers has become normalised within these facilities, highlighting the urgent need to work with staff to improve residents' quality of life and eliminate mistreatment in all forms.

Another critical issue observed is the lack of structured planning for the use of time within residential facilities. This absence contributes to behavioural crises among children and adolescents, as there are insufficient recreational activities, methodologies and resources to help them maintain regular contact with their families. The study also observed that there had not been enough effort made to prepare older adolescents for independent living, which is of particular concern for those nearing the end of their protective measures, as they lack the necessary tools to transition into adulthood successfully. In addition, and importantly, the study reports a shortage of professional and technical staff, with many institutions struggling to provide adequate mental healthcare due to financial constraints. This leads to long waiting times for psychological support, particularly in the public healthcare sector, further exacerbating the challenges faced by vulnerable children and adolescents (ibid.).

Nevertheless, and despite the important challenges that remain, there have been significant improvements in the six years since the reform process has been put fully in place, including an increase in the resources available for the protection of children and adolescents (Muñoz Guzmán, 2022). There is greater commitment by the Government of Chile to allocate resources to strengthen the system

and, in addition to the laws approved as part of the reform, there have been important efforts to strengthen the Service. This has involved greater use of data and evidence for planning, drawing on technical support from academic and international experts, commissioning support for the development of guidelines and protocols to organisations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) that have the technical expertise in this field, and seeking to inform the services provided with information from studies in the field of international good practices. For instance, there are now plans to develop specific strategies to address the needs for independent living for those who are about to leave the system, something that was highlighted as a gap by the 2023 Supreme Court study (KII Gov 3).

Data on children in alternative care is accessible and transparent

The Government of Chile is generating aggregated data from cases being managed locally and reported to the Service, enabling it to monitor changes regularly. This draws on information supplied by government providers and OCAs to the Specialised Protection Service through its monitoring system and reported in its portal, 'The Power to Care in Figures' ('El Poder de Cuidar en Cifras'), which is updated on a monthly basis. It is important for the data to be kept up to date given constant changes, both in the growing demand for specialised protection services, as well as in the type of protection provided.

In addition to this, the Children's Ombudsperson (Defensoría de la Niñez) publishes an annual report with relevant statistics on progress in the fulfilment of children's rights, including data on the situation of children in alternative care.

This section provides an overview of some of the key data on children under specialised protection more generally, and under alternative care in particular.²⁸

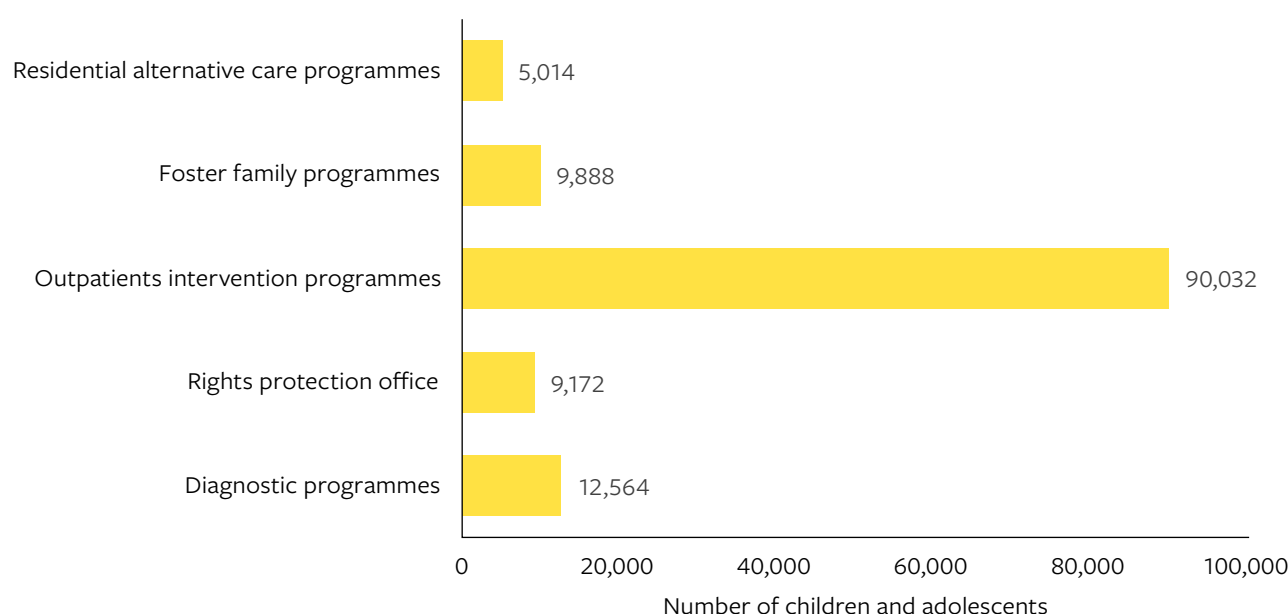
Figure 11 shows the number of children and adolescents who received the different types of services in December 2024 (see the ‘Organisation of the alternative care system in Chile’ section for information about the different programmes). The number of children and adolescents in alternative care has continued to grow. In October 2021, there were 4,417 children and adolescents in residential care, rising to 5,014 in December 2024, as noted in the previous section. During the same period the number of children in foster families increased considerably. In December 2024, there were 9,988 children and adolescents in foster care (KII Gov 3; Servicio Nacional de Protección Especializada a la Niñez y Adolescencia, 2024).

In other words, approximately 14,900 children and adolescents are currently in alternative care for diverse reasons.

As detailed in Figures 12 and 13, data provided by the Service for children in the alternative care system as of December 2024 shows that:

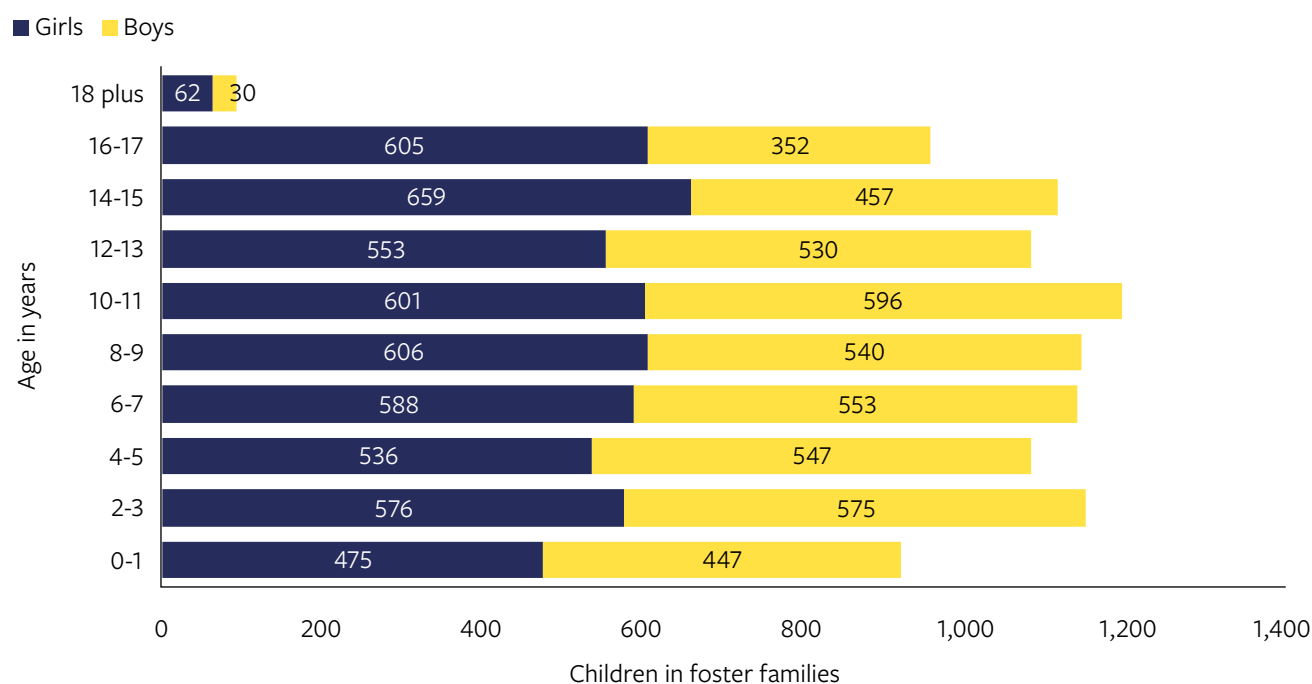
- Among the total of 9,888 children and adolescents who are in foster care, the greatest share of girls in foster care is in the 14–15 age range, while in the case of boys, it is in the 10–11 age range. There is a relatively even distribution in numbers across age groups.
- Out of the total 5,014 total children and adolescents in alternative residential care, the majority are aged 12 and over. There is also a larger number of adolescent girls than adolescent boys in residential care, although, as already noted, older adolescent boys tend to be referred to the juvenile justice system.

Figure 11 Children and adolescents who receive services per type of programme

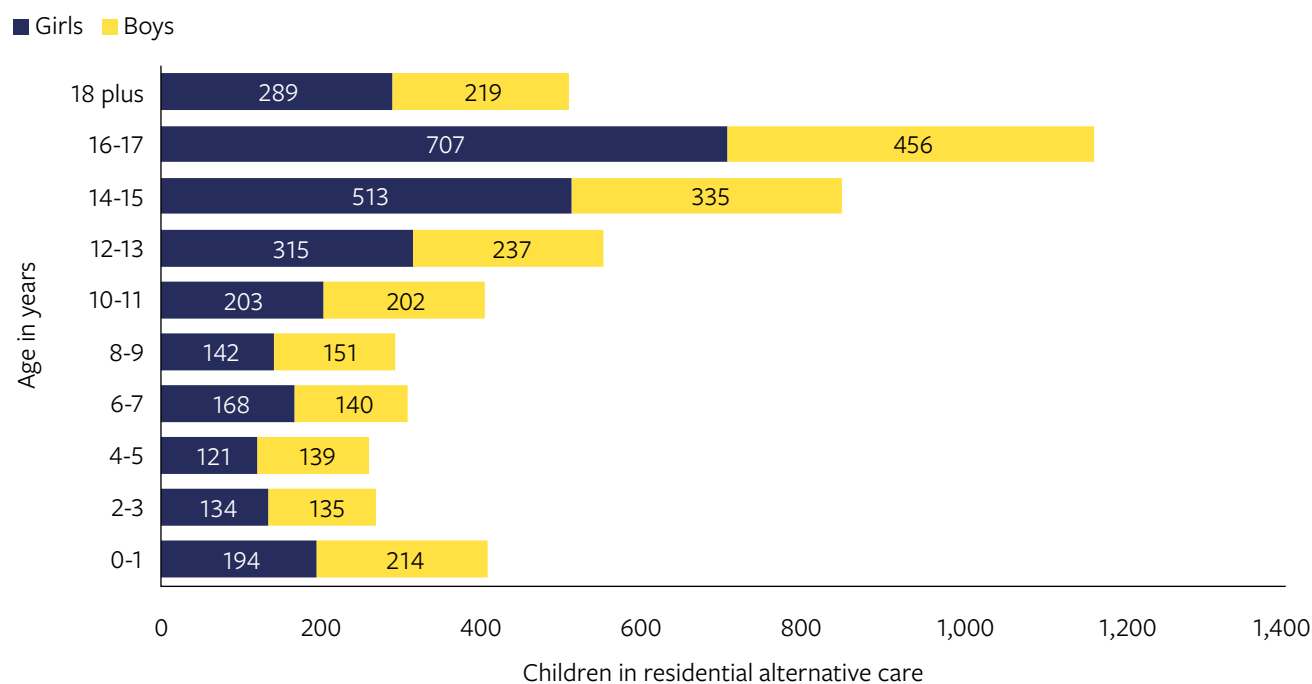


Source: Servicio Nacional de Protección Especializada a la Niñez y Adolescencia (2024)

²⁸ All data is from ‘The Power to Care in Figures’ website and updated to December 2024.

Figure 12 Children in foster families, by sex and age, December 2024

Source: Servicio Nacional de Protección Especializada a la Niñez y Adolescencia (2024)

Figure 13 Children in residential alternative care, by sex and age, December 2024

Source: Servicio Nacional de Protección Especializada a la Niñez y Adolescencia (2024)

Reporting of data by organisations providing care

All OCAs must report data on the children to whom they provide services. Since, in general, government payments for the provision of alternative care is on the basis of the number of children cared for, there is an incentive to ensure these databases are up to date. This then enables the government to publish the data on a monthly basis. All OCAs and foster families receive some form of government subsidy or support.

To promote the use and analysis of data, the Service signs agreements with universities and sponsors postgraduate (masters or doctoral) theses, so that academics can access data and information. The Service currently has a mechanism for providing information through the Transparency Law. However, its plan is to increase the access to data on the website, including anonymised individual data, and to publish a statistical yearbook. The Service aims to have an open data system to generate analysis and studies, with the ability to conduct impact assessments of its interventions.

There is less data, however, on the situation of children in alternative care or once they leave alternative care. Studies have been undertaken to research the experience of children living in institutions (e.g. Hogar de Cristo, 2017), but data on this population is difficult to collect on a regular basis.

Attitudes towards alternative care

Attitudes by children and residential care staff towards the alternative care system in Chile seem to be generally negative, particularly given the

perception of the children who are in the Service. While data is scarce, there is an understanding among those working in the sector that many of these children and adolescents, whose needs have not been met over a long period of time, suffer from psychological and psychiatric difficulties, interrupted school trajectories, learning difficulties, and problematic consumption of alcohol and other drugs (KII Gov 4). These conditions reflect the context of poverty and exclusion in which they were born and grew up. According to a 2017 study by Hogar de Cristo, some of the more senior workers in a residential care facility perceived the residents of previous generations as ‘*more normal*’ (that is, having less complex problems) than the current ones. As a residential care staff member interviewed by Hogar de Cristo (2017, p.89) described it:

The girls arrive with a higher level of damage, they are taking drugs and the violations are multiple... and that also means that their behavioural difficulties are much more complex.

The children and young people interviewed in the study also expressed negative images of themselves, of what they are like, how they behave and what feelings prevail in their lives, with a considerable number of interviewees who participated in the study saying they felt sad and/or angry, and that they had experienced loneliness and sadness as a result of damaged interpersonal relationships or a lack of them (Hogar de Cristo, 2017). This highlights the need to continue improving the system, from prevention to alternative care, to minimise the risk to children and to ensure their rights are met. Evaluations of different components of the new protection services, including alternative care, are planned.

Knowledge exchange and international good practices informing Chile's approach

The Specialised Protection Service, which is tasked with implementing the law on special protection that includes alternative care, is leveraging technical support from other countries in the region and beyond, as well as from international organisations, which are also financing some small-scale initiatives. During an interview with the director of the Service, several projects with international support, either soon to start or ongoing, were highlighted (KII Gov 3). These included projects with the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the autonomous city of Buenos Aires, UNICEF and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

Projects with the World Bank include the following:

- The Service and the World Bank are jointly planning a programme that will support adolescents in the Service to develop livelihood generation options that can allow them to exit the alternative care system in a sustainable and safe manner.
- Knowledge exchanges are being set up with the World Bank in Colombia to identify relevant initiatives with migrant children in need of alternative care. With support from the World Bank, the Service is studying responses by the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare in Cúcuta to children on the move, as well as mechanisms for responding to violence faced by children in Medellín.
- In Chile, the World Bank has an important project for the universalisation of primary healthcare. The Service is planning to work on children's and adolescents' mental health within the framework of this programme, linking it to primary healthcare.

With the Inter-American Development Bank, the Service is working on professional exchanges or internships for Service staff. Support is being provided for Chile to learn about the implementation of the Adaptive Mentalisation-Based Integrative Treatment (AMBIT) model in Spain, through the University of Barcelona (Anna Freud Manuals, 2018). It is also exploring relevant models in Argentina.

In the case of adoption, the Service is exploring the model being implemented in the autonomous city of Buenos Aires (called 'open adoptions') as well as its actions promoting the transition to independent living.

Projects with UNICEF include the following:

- The Service is designing a model for adolescents under alternative and institutional care to transit to independent living, which includes an impact evaluation design from the outset so that results can be monitored and evaluated over time.
- It is providing technical assistance on how to improve mental health support for children in alternative care and child protection interventions (UNICEF Chile, 2022).
- UNICEF is also developing manuals with standards of care, has provided technical support and has engaged in policy and practice discussions with the government during the child protection system reform process (UNICEF Chile, 2024).
- The Specialised Protection Service is also looking at good practices from UNICEF Mexico that focus on preventing children from joining drug cartels and becoming victims of violence as these issues are also dealt with by the Service (KII Gov 3).

With the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the Service is exploring actions to promote crime prevention, especially in relation to drugs, which are increasingly causing protection risks to children.

Good practice approaches

Chile's child protection system reforms have been informed by an analysis of evidence and have elicited the technical support of institutions such as UNICEF. This has helped to ensure that they draw on international good practices and that they are documenting and evaluating processes to generate data to enhance the system as it develops.

The Service is looking for ways to increase the level of evidence and analysis it uses for planning and implementing its actions. In late January, the Service issued an open invitation to academics from Chilean

universities, and 90 participants engaged. The aim was to invite them to access information that they can use and share, foster research regarding the system, apply for studies as well as tender to provide capacity building. In 2025, the Service has a budget available to support academic institutions to provide training in specialised protection; it is also seeking for universities to commit to this training, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, to ensure better trained child protection professionals in the near future.

Through the alliances being promoted with universities, the aim is that the Service's actions will be more professionalised, and that it is carried out to a higher standard and with greater transparency. The increased level of information, and the analysis and evaluation of impacts, will shed greater light on what works and does not.

4 Future research agenda and policy recommendations

This chapter presents key themes for a future research agenda on GEDSI around the three topics of this report, alongside policy recommendations.

4.1 Feminist foreign policy

Future research agenda

- Assess further the impact of FFP both internationally and domestically, focusing on policy arenas that have received less scholarly attention, such as the promotion of care systems, science and technology, and addressing climate action; as well as on understudied marginalised populations, such as Indigenous women.
- Analyse the impact of FFP from a cross-institutional perspective, such as what has been achieved through actions of ministries and agencies other than MFA, including MoW&GE, defence, environment, or the Chilean Agency of International Cooperation for Development (Agencia Chilena de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo).
- Identify best practices for institutionalising FFP in MFA and across various government agencies.
- Survey the perceptions of the public and political actors (e.g. opposition parties) on FFP, including detailed assessments of what elements of FFP have political support and buy-in across the political spectrum, and which are divisive, to better understand how to future-proof the commitment to gender equality and/or FFP with changes in government.

- Analyse diplomatic postings and ranks of women diplomats. The analysis of which missions women get posted to, the frequency of their rotations between posts and capital, and the prestige (political importance) of the posts would further enhance understanding of the transformation of gender norms within the MFA. Similar studies were conducted, for example, by Haack and Karns (2023) and Towns and Niklasson (2018).

Policy recommendations

Support internal activities of the MFA to institutionalise FFP.

- In the context of backlash to gender equality and the rollback of explicitly FFPs in other countries, support efforts to institutionalise FFP in Chile. This can include the development or sharing of research and data gathering on good practices to improve the evidence base for FFP, including the impact of gender chapters of trade agreements.
- Share experiences and technical expertise through facilitating knowledge exchanges and spaces for dialogue between Chile and other countries, especially opportunities to convene regionally and South–South (KII GOV 1 and 2). Of particular interest to some government staff are institutional processes of mainstreaming gender, such as establishing gender affairs divisions or units, especially in the immediate term (KII UN Agency 2).
- Support other learning opportunities for MFA staff on gender equality; women, peace and security; feminism and other topics.

Encourage and amplify Chile's global leadership on gender equality by highlighting achievements at home especially among civil society. This can be achieved by increasing the communication channels between CSOs and the Government.

- In the context of possible abandonment or watering down of FFP if the (centre)-right parties win the next election, development partners could support Chilean feminist civil society's involvement in FFP discussions (KII Academic 1; KII Former Gov 1). Options include enabling and supporting CSOs' participation in global feminist and gender equality focused conferences (KII Academic 2).
- Work with Chile to strengthen collaboration to hold the line against the global roll-back of women's rights and attacks on multilateralism and the human rights-based order.
- Work with MFA to further strengthen its support for missions and diplomats abroad to deliver FFP and gender equality focused work, bearing in mind the capacity limitations faced by the Chilean foreign service.

Collaborate and run new initiatives on shared areas of interest.

- To advance progress on joint goals, partners could consider supporting civil society and the MFA through scientific or education exchanges (which are part of the FFP commitment) and working together to facilitate insights from Chilean civil society into FFP and the wider multilateral spaces (KII Academic 1; KII Former Gov 1; KII UN Agency 1).

4.2 Anti-gender backlash

Future research agenda

- Examine more closely the alliances, and especially funding flows, between Chilean anti-gender actors and international organisations, including through empirical studies.
- Explore the impact of more overt forms of violence, including threats or attacks on LGBTQI+ individuals and champions. Data on hate crimes and human rights violations usually comes from LGBTQI+ organisations that conduct national surveys, or blogs and investigative journal articles that provide anecdotal evidence and testimonials.
- Generate empirical evidence on the experiences and tactics of local LGBTQI+ groups, the ways they connect with one another, and with regional or international actors. This should also include an exploration of government actors, how they perceive or engage with local LGBTQI+ groups and CSOs, including in Santiago, but also beyond the capital and urban centres.
- Compare and contrast the different experiences of subgroups of LGBTQI+ communities (e.g. lesbians, gay men, transgender, queer or intersex) and those LGBTQI+ individuals facing intersecting characteristics of marginalisation (e.g. LGBTQI+ indigenous, migrant, or rural and remote groups). Though there seems to be a growing body of literature on the transgender community, it is often based on anecdotal evidence.
- Generate empirical evidence on the experiences and tactics of local LGBTQI+ groups, and on the ways they connect with one another, and with

regional or international actors. This should also include an exploration of government actors and how they engage with local LGBTQI+ groups and CSOs, including in Santiago, but also beyond the capital and urban centres.

Policy recommendations

Finance and build the capacity of local LGBTQI+ organisations.

- Additional funds are necessary to cover basic programmatic and operational costs, such as the provision of services to LGBTQI+ individuals, employee salaries, office rent and utilities, and events and demonstrations that require safety and security measures (KIIs CSO 4 and 6). Increased access to resources would also allow these organisations to expand their reach, scaling to the peripheries of Chile, and reaching rural and remote communities beyond central Santiago (KIIs CSO 6 and 7; KII Academic 3).
- Invest in capacity building initiatives to enhance local LGBTQI+ organisations' use of social media and digital content. These could include reels or infographics that help combat mis- and disinformation, as well as programmes that build the digital literacy skills of the public, to help them differentiate between fake news and facts, and to build the critical thinking skills of both younger and older generations alike (KIIs CSO 5, 6 and 7).
- Support organisations' marketing and communication skills, enhancing their ability to create a public image that could build their credibility. This has worked for Fundación Iguales, whose consistent use of quality evidence, has allowed it to have an advantage by 'inserting themselves into the cultural elite of Chile' (KII CSO 5).

Invest in research and the generation of evidence on LGBTQI+ issues.

- Generate more evidence and data to build awareness of the challenges faced by LGBTQI+ individuals, so this evidence can be leveraged to combat misinformation and lies spread by anti-gender actors, and to make a stronger stance against local governmental bodies such as the Research Commission of the Parliament (Comisión Investigadora del Parlamento) (KII CSO 3).
- Support organisations in their knowledge translation efforts, making scientific evidence more accessible by sharing it in simple language and appealing to different audiences, including the government but also the public (KII CSO 5).
- Build alliances between local LGBTQI+ organisations and research institutes or think tanks, including international organisations, universities, health professionals and other LGBTQI+ groups, who can help share evidence and raise awareness through international collaboration, webinars and events (KIIs CSO 3 and 5). The Red de Litigantes LGBTI+ de las Américas was considered one of the organisations that had contributed in this regard (KII CSO 3).

Foster collaboration and strengthen alliances among local LGBTQI+ groups and between LGBTQI+, feminist and other minority groups.

- Enhance collaboration and coordination across LGBTQI+ organisations and with other social groups so they can better organise themselves, build shared visions and streamline their resources and efforts to enhance the potential impact and scale of the LGBTQI+ movement in the country. Alliances can extend beyond joining with feminist groups to reach other social groups, such as organisations defending

persons with disabilities, migrants and minors (KII CSO 3).

Support interministerial collaboration and diplomacy.

- Strengthen multisectoral collaboration to defend LGBTQI+ rights related to SRHR, gender identity, CSE and LGBTQI+ inclusion, engaging relevant government institutes, such as the MoW&GE together with the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education (KII CSO 4).
- Foster political will and leadership, identify champions within the government and support sustained lobbying efforts to ensure progress continues and is not stifled within the context of anti-gender mobilisation. As one interviewee mentioned:

‘firstly, you have to use all of the tools that the state has to meet with deputies, senators and ministers without fear, and to appeal to the whole lobbying audience and ask, ask, ask’ (KII CSO 5).

- Engage local authorities, such as municipal governments, that have successfully opened offices of diversity, equity and inclusion, and created alliances such as the one referred to as the Red Diversa (Diverse Network) (KII CSO 7). Build on existing government structures and leverage local leadership to sustain LGBTQI+ advances.

Leverage regional and international networks to form alliances.

- Continue to cultivate alliances with regional and international organisations, such as the Red de Litigantes LGBTI+ de las Américas, the International Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex people for Latin America and the Caribbean, the European Union’s Coalition of LGBTQI+ groups, bilateral

organisations such as FinDev Canada, and multilaterals such as the United Nations or the IACHR. These organisations have played a key role in supporting Chilean LGBTQI+ groups, including through funding, capacity building and support, sharing knowledge and evidence, and connecting like-minded organisations in the region and internationally.

Safeguard and protect local LGBTQI+ activists.

- Ensure all programmatic activities consider and address the security and well-being needs of those involved, including the mental health, security and well-being of activists. These are often deprioritised in programmes focused on advocacy and service delivery.

4.3 Children in alternative care

Future research agenda

- Investigate outcomes for adolescents and youth once they have left the alternative care system. There is a dearth of studies on the outcomes for children across their life-course as a result of being placed in different types of alternative care. This type of evidence would help understand where investments and support are needed to improve the trajectories of individuals once they leave the system (i.e. what services they require access to, how they can best be supported), and to strengthen alternative care options that result in better outcomes for adolescents and youth.
- Ideally, such studies would include longitudinal research with children in different types of alternative care being followed into adulthood, but given the cost and time of such studies, mixed methods research of young people who are known to have left the specialised protection system would provide important insights about their trajectories and well-being.

- Investigate mental health risks. One of the key concerns within the specialised protection system is the consequences of institutionalisation on children's mental health, although not much research has been conducted on this topic. It is thus an important priority as part of a research agenda.
- Study the subjective well-being of children. The Specialised Protection Service is interested in supporting a study on subjective well-being of children in alternative care using qualitative and participatory methodologies validated globally. This would enable a better understanding of the needs of children and adolescents and how they can be better supported.
- Investigate the situation of unaccompanied migrant children in alternative care. Much of the growth in the numbers of children going through the specialised protection system is the result of migrant children – many of them unaccompanied – entering through Chile's Northern border. Not enough is known about why they are entering and the risks they face. In-depth studies would inform tailored prevention efforts and improve the support that can be provided to them within the alternative care system.
- There is evidence that some of the migrant children entering institutional care are separated from mothers who have been trafficked into Chile and have subsequently been imprisoned (KII UN Agency 2). This phenomenon and the risks it presents for children needs to be better understood.
- Research good practice in supporting transitions to independent life for adolescents leaving the alternative care system. The Specialised Protection Service is placing renewed attention on supporting adolescents who transition out of the alternative care system, including in terms of education,

livelihoods and social integration. Research into good practices from other countries that could inform programme design in Chile would be relevant during this planning process.

- Evaluate smaller institutional care facilities and family-based care models. The Service is allocating resources and efforts to move towards smaller institutions and more family care models. Broad evidence suggests that this is likely to lead to better attention and supervision, and eventually to better outcomes for children. It would be useful to conduct process and results evaluations on these new models to verify that they are resulting in better outcomes for children, as well as to understand how they can be strengthened.

Policy recommendations

Support academic and policy research to generate more knowledge to strengthen the system.

- Officials heading the new Specialised Protection Service are interested in evidence-based policy and planning and are, therefore supportive of public use of data on alternative care that can provide insights to strengthen the system. It is important for different actors, including those in academia, civil society and the UN system, to take advantage of that opportunity to engage in relevant research and for funding to be made available for such research initiatives.
- Based on the Government's openness with data, there is a window of opportunity for development partners to support or incentivise analysis of this data in collaboration with the Specialised Protection Service, for example, through awards or competitions, or through providing matching funds that could foster data analysis or new data collection on key topics.

Increase funding for alternative care to improve condition of facilities.

- While the budget allocated to the Specialised Protection Service has risen, the shift to a model of smaller and more closely supervised institutions, as well as to family care, is more costly. This means that there is a shortfall of resources to support the system, particularly in the short term. Looking into alternative sources of funding, including through partnerships with the private sector, NGOs and international agencies, could help to strengthen and improve the quality of this new care model. In the medium to long term, resources currently being spent on institutional care can be freed up and channelled into preventive social services, inclusive education, etc.
- Support the Undersecretariat for Childhood in conducting foster-care campaigns and recruiting motivated foster parents for children in need – including those with disabilities, infants, victims of violence or neglect, and at-risk children. Collaborate with experienced organisations such as UNICEF to enhance outreach and effectiveness.

Advocate for more funding and support for prevention.

- The budget for the alternative care system has increased as a result of the reforms in order to facilitate its implementation. By contrast, resources for prevention programmes that fall both under the Division of Promotion and Prevention of the Undersecretariat for Childhood and Local Offices for Childhood at the municipal level are still very low in relation to the need and the services they could provide.
- Given the cost effectiveness of investing in prevention versus response to child protection violations (Office of the Special Representative

on Violence against Children et al., 2022), and the growth in child protection cases being turned to family courts, increasing funding and support to preventive actions should be prioritised to reduce the need for alternative care. These actions include parenting programmes and violence prevention at the community and school level, among others.

- As violence among peers and in the community is a growing reason for referral to the Specialised Protection Service, it is particularly important to identify and fund the implementation of pilot programmes – including, for example, some that have worked well in other contexts (such as the Cure Violence Programme, referenced by one of the KIIIs). These can help to develop contextually relevant actions and contribute to changing the violence spiral that is impacting children.

End the stigma associated with children and adolescents in alternative care.

- Promote the development of well-designed, integrated campaigns in partnership with key actors (such as UNICEF) to reduce stigma around children and adolescents in institutional care, highlighting how they can be effectively included in society when the support they receive in alternative care is positive.

Foster greater connection between actors within the child protection system

- While the child protection system is being strengthened under the new reforms, it is important to foster and support institutional communication of all actors within the system who are co-guarantors in fulfilling children's rights, to strengthen preventive and protective responses, using an ecological approach that spans: individuals, communities, institutions and systems.

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Annex 1

List of key informants

KII number	Topic(s)
Academic 1	FFP
Academic 2	FFP
CSO 1	FFP + LGBTQI+
CSO 2	FFP
Foreign Gov 1	FFP
Foreign Gov 2	FFP
Former Gov 1	FFP
Gov 1	FFP
Gov 2	FFP
UN Agency 1	FFP
Academic 3	LGBTQI+
CSO 3	LGBTQI+
CSO 4	LGBTQI+
CSO 5	LGBTQI+
CSO 6	LGBTQI+
CSO 7	LGBTQI+
CSO 8	Alternative care
Gov 3	Alternative care
Gov 4	Alternative care
UN Agency 2	Alternative care



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