

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Chile

CAPITAL: Santiago

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Multiparty Republic

AREA: 756,945 Sq Km (292,258 Sq Mi (

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION 14,995,500

Direct Link to Political MapDirect Link to Physical MapLOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Chile is located on the extreme southwestern coast of South America. It is bound by the Pacific Ocean to the west, Argentina to the east, Bolivia to the northeast and Peru to the northwest. The country can be divided into three longitudinal and six latitudinal regions. The three longitudinal regions are the (1.) Andean Cordillera on the east and (2.) the low coastal ranges of the west. (3.) The central valleys which begin below the northern Atacama Desert and have deep alluvial soils as well as extensive natural irrigation which makes it one of the most fertile regions of Chile. The six latitudinal regions are (1.) the Great North, (2.) the Andean Fringe, a transitional zone of short transverse valleys, (3.) Central Chile north of the Bio-Bio River, (4.) South Central Chile between the Bio-Bio River and the Gulf of Reloncari, (5.) the Archipelagic Chile in the far south which is dominated by fjords and (6.) the Patagonian Chile which is an undulating plain at the tip of the continent. Chile is vulnerable to earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, floods, avalanches and landslides due to its location in an area of geological instability. Around 30 rivers flow from the Andes and include the Loa, Huasco, Coquimbo, Limari, Mapocho, Maule, Maipo and Bio-Bio. Major Cities (pop. est.); Greater Santiago 4,628,300, Vina del Mar 319,400, Concepcion 318,100, Valparaiso 301,700, Talcahuano 257,800 (1993). Land Use; forested 22%, pastures 18%, agricultural-cultivated 6%, other 54% (1993.)

CLIMATE: Chile has a variety of climatic conditions ranging from subtropical to temperate and near polar due to its great lengths. Chile can be divided into three climatic zones, (1.) the north which includes the Atacama Desert which is characterized by arid and dry conditions. (2.) The central region of Chile which has a Mediterranean climate with mild wet winters and long dry summers and (3.) the south which is cold and wet with prevailing winds of gale intensity. Rainfall increases from almost nothing in the Atacama Desert in the north to 5,080 mm (200 inches) in the south. Average annual temperature ranges in Santiago are from 3 to 14 degrees Celsius (37 to 57 degrees Fahrenheit) in July to 12 to 29 degrees Celsius (54 to 84 degrees Fahrenheit) in January.

PEOPLE: The principal ethnic majority are the Mestizos who account for 90% of the population and are of mixed European and AmerIndian descent. Whites account for 2% of the population while AmerIndians mostly Mapuche or Araucanians account for 6% and the remainder include small but almost extinct tribal groups.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 18 persons per sq km (46 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 80.8% urban, 19.2% rural (1988). Sex Distribution; 49.4% male, 50.6% female (1989). Life Expectancy at Birth; 68.1 years male, 75.1 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 31% under 15, 29% 15 to 29, 20% 30 to 44, 12% 45 to 59, 6% 60 to 74, 2% 75 and over (1989). Birth Rate; 23.3 per 1,000 (1988). Death Rate; 5.8 per 1,000 (1988). Increase Rate; 17.5 per 1,000 (1988). Infant Mortality Rate; 18.9 per 1,000 live births (1988).

RELIGIONS: Mostly Christians with 80% of the population Roman Catholic while 6% belong to various Protestant Churches and the remainder are atheists.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Spanish which is spoken by almost the entire population except a few of the AmerIndians. The Mapuche speak the Araucan language which has seven dialects.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 9.4%, primary 56.6%, secondary 26.9%, higher 7.1% (1982). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 93.4% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: In 1970 Salvador Allende of the Popular Unity Party (UP) won elections and became President. Allende's intention was to make Chile a socialist state and his government embarked on a nationalization program taking over the ownership of mines, banks and industries. By mid 1972 a US embargo, spiraling inflation and internal sabotage of the economy led to strikes becoming commonplace. This persuaded the divided government to incorporate some military officials into the cabinet. On Sept. 11, 1973 military leaders overthrew the government and formed a Junta which ended Chile's 46 year era of constitutional rule. Pres. Allendes was killed during a massive raid by the military on the Presidential Palace. Following the coup thousands were imprisoned, executed or exiled. As a result Chile suffered serious social, economic as well as political problems while Chile's military government continued to violate people's civil rights. In 1981 a new constitution was adopted that guaranteed a gradual return to democracy with elections to be held in 1989. The government permitted the return of exiles and prepared for the Dec. 1989 elections. In Dec. 1989, the 71 year old Patricio Aylwin Azocar, leader of the 17 member Coalition for Democracy, took office as President ending Chile's military rule since 1973. The former military President Gen. Augusto Pinochet Ugarte remained as the Commander of the Army. In Apr. 1990 the President set up a Commission for Truth and Reconciliation to investigate the claims involving the disappearance and execution of political prisoners between 1973 and 1978. In Feb. 1991 the commission released a report which concluded the military secret police, an illegal organization, under the 1973-90 dictatorship carried out

a "systematic policy of extermination". In April 1991 Jaime Guzman, a right-wing senator and collaborator of army chief Gen. Pinochet, was murdered in a revenge attack for the atrocities committed by Pinochet's secret police. In Sept. 1991 the former secret police chief and his former chief of operations were arrested for the murder in the US in 1976 of an exiled foreign minister, Orlando Letelier. Also during 1991 the armed forces came under further scrutiny over allegations of corruption under the military regime of Gen. Augusto Pinochet which included the La Cutufa, an illegal investment and loan scheme and there were signs by way of strike and protests during the year that the labor movement was disillusioned with the government and its economic policies. In May 1992 former president Augusto Pinochet underwent heart surgery and reassumed his role as army head by the end of the month. In 1992 Pres. Aylwin proposed constitution reforms to reduce the autonomy they had conferred on themselves prior to handing over the government to civilians in 1990. On June 28, 1992 the ruling Coalition of Parties for Democracy won municipal elections with 53% of the vote which Pres. Aylwin claimed gave him a mandate to proceed with his constitutional reforms, although the right-wing warned it would allow him to force the country into constitutional change while it controlled the Senate. Also during 1992 the government had loosened exchange controls on the Peso which resulted in the stock exchange trading volumes doubling while irregularities in share transactions where employees were encouraged to trade them for ownership rights in investment societies highlighted the need for legislation to protect the rights of employees compelled to take shares in lieu of pay. On Nov. 10, 1992 retired Gen. Manuel Contreras and Col. Pedro Espinoza were formally charged with the 1976 murder of Orlando Letelier. In July 1993 a bill that attempted to speed up the cases of some 200 active human rights abuses by the military was rejected by the Chamber of Deputies with left-wing opposition to secret trials with witness anonymity. On Sept. 11, 1993 a national holiday was declared to commemorate 20 years since Gen. Pinochet's military coup which overthrew Salvador Allende Gossens' socialist alliance, although thousands of human rights abuse protesters clashed with police with 2 being killed and some 100 injured. In Nov. 1993 the military secret police heads on trial for Orlando Letelier's murder were sentenced to prison, the first time the courts had sentenced senior army officials for human rights abuses. On Dec. 11, 1993 Eduardo Frei the son of the 1964-70 president and ruling Concertacion center-left coalition candidate decisively won presidential elections, although the Concertacion coalition couldn't gain control of the Congress in parliamentary elections as result of not gaining a sufficient majority to outweigh the right-wing as the constitution also allowed Gen. Pinochet to appoint 9 non-elected senators.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Peso (P.)

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$42,454,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$16,031,000 (1993). Imports; USD \$11,125,400,000 (1993). Exports; USD \$9,416,200,000 (1993). Tourism Receipts; USD \$824,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; USD \$660,000,000

(1994). Economically Active Population; 5,219,300 or 38.6% of total population (1993). Unemployed; 4.6% (1993).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are the USA, the UK, Venezuela, Japan, Brazil, Germany, Spain, France and Argentina .

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Beans, Coal, Copper, Fish, Fruit, Grapes, Iron, Lead, Livestock, Maize, Manganese, Molybdenum, Nitrates, Oil, Onions, Precious Metals, Potatoes, Rice, Sugar Beets, Timber, Wheat, Zinc .

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Cement, Ceramics, Fishing, Food Processing, Forestry, Glass, Metal Manufacturing, Mineral Refining, Steel Cellulose and Wood Pulp .

MAIN EXPORTS: Copper, Fish Meal, Fruit, Iron Ore, Nitrates, Paper and Wood Pulp, Processed Fish, Wine.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 6,888 km (4,280 mi) (1988), passenger-km 1,056,000,000 (656,000,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 2,952,000,000 (2,022,000,000 short ton-mi) (1989). Roads; length 79,233 km (49,233 mi) (1987). Vehicles; cars 690,000 (1989), trucks and buses 300,000 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 365 (1990), deadweight tonnage 883,376 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 2,980,000,000 (1,852,000,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 689,844,000 (472,474,000 short ton-mi) (1990).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 33 with a total circulation of 887,200 (1994). Radio; receivers 4,400,000 (1994). Television; receivers 2,000,000 (1994). Telephones; units 1,520,300 (1993).

MILITARY: 93,000 (1994) total active duty personnel with 58.1% army, 26.9% navy and 15.0% air force while military expenditure accounts for 2.4% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).