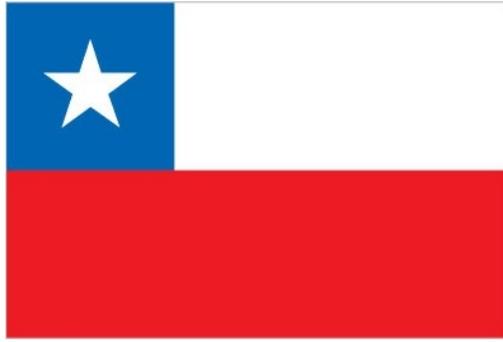


# IDENTITIES ABROAD: CHILE



## IDENTITIES ABROAD

As you prepare for your education abroad program, you may be considering how your own identities may or may not interact with the host culture in similar or different ways than they do at home. Below you will find country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in education abroad programs. This information, adapted from the Diversity Network's Country Diversity Notes (via [Diversity Abroad](#)), is intended to assist you in exploring how you might be received abroad based on your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, or ability.

The information below features a country overview for Chile as well as information pertinent to the socio-cultural climate that U.S. students of diverse backgrounds can reasonably expect while living in the country. It also offers bulleted information noting facts that may directly relate to student experiences in the country. Links with additional information resources on the various topics are also offered.

The below information provides a bird's-eye view of diversity matters in the country as they pertain to U.S. students. Purchase understands the below information is not exhaustive or inclusive of all possible student identities and experiences. We encourage you to conduct further research and chat with relevant points of contact including your program advisor, faculty leader, or peers who have traveled to Chile, to gain a greater understanding of your host country and/or city.

If you would like to speak with us about any questions pertaining to diversity and inclusivity abroad, please contact us at [study.abroad@purchase.edu](mailto:study.abroad@purchase.edu) and we will answer your inquiry to the best of our ability and/or refer you to others with the expertise that you need. Additionally, if you are interested in discussing other geographical locations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

### FAST FACTS:

**Capital:** Santiago

**Population:** 18,307,925

**Language(s):** Spanish 99.5% (official), English 10.2%, indigenous 1% (includes Mapudungun, Aymara, Quechua, Rapa Nui), other 2.3%, unspecified 0.2%

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

**Ethnic groups:** White and non-Indigenous 88.9%, Mapuche 9.1%, Aymara 0.7%, other indigenous groups 1% (includes Rapa Nui, Likan Antai, Quechua, Diaguita, Kawesqar, Yagan, or Yamana), unspecified 0.3%

Last reviewed by OGE 4/2021



Chile is a long, narrow country along the western coast of South America. The capital of the country is Santiago, and the national language is Spanish. Due to the very unique, long, shape of the country, (2,600 miles long) there are a variety of climates you can experience including tropical in the north, desert and Mediterranean-like in the middle, and very cold on the southern tip.

Chile is recognized as a World Bank high-income economy with high living standards and is among South America's most economically and socially stable nations. It leads Latin American nations in rankings of income per capita, state of peace, economic freedom, globalization, and low perception of corruption. It also ranks high in sustainability and democratic development. And it has the lowest homicide rate in the Americas after Canada. Over the past two decades, Chile has made a great effort to reduce its poverty rate, now lower than most Latin American countries.

Historically, Chile has been a country of emigration, but since its transition to democracy in 1990, it has attracted more immigrants. Many immigrants to Chile come from other Latin American countries, especially Peru.

Review current travel risks for Chile:

- [U.S Department of State Travel Risks](#)

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) [Open Doors Report 2019](#), 3,190 students from the United States studied abroad to Chile.

## ETHNIC MINORITIES IN CHILE

### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Spain conquered and colonized the region in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, overtaking Inca rule which had lasted from the 1470's to the 1530s. However, Spain did not manage to conquer the indigenous Mapuche, who still today occupy areas of south-central Chile and southwestern Argentina, including parts of Patagonia. The Mapuche, as well as several other indigenous groups still account for about 10% of Chile's total population. Chile gained its independence from Spain in 1810 but remains a majority-white country. There are currently issues in the country surrounding access to resources and support for indigenous communities including land rights and access to ancestral territory, and these populations face discrimination in access to education and employment.

There is a small but significant population of Afro-Chileans in the country. They are descendants from enslaved Africans that were brought to the Americas through the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the Spanish colony that is present-day Chile between the 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Slavery was banned in the country in 1811. Afro-Chileans unfortunately continue to face erasure and discrimination within the country and the government has never officially recognized them in the national census and there are significant developmental challenges facing their community including lack of access to secondary education and high rates of unemployment.

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR:

- Despite remaining a majority-white country there is a significant amount of racial and ethnic diversity within the Chilean population.

### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [World Directory of Indigenous People- Afro-Chilean](#), Minority Rights Group International
- [World Directory of Indigenous People – Mapuche](#), Minority Rights Group International
- [Recognizing Blackness in Chile](#) – Guernica Mag
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Chile](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Students in Chile](#), Diversity Abroad
- [Destination Guide](#), Diversity Abroad
- [Racism Against Indigenous Groups](#), NBC News
- [Culture of Chile](#), Adventure Life
- [Culture of Chile - history, people, traditions, women, beliefs, food, customs, family, social \(everyculture.com\)](#)
- [A Black Girl's Guide to Studying Abroad](#), Beyond Black and White

Last reviewed by OGE 4/2021

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN CHILE

### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Homosexuality has been legal in Chile since 1998. Currently, the country allows civil unions between same-sex partners with all benefits afforded to opposite-sex couples, with the exception of adoption rights and the title of marriage. A bill was introduced by President Michelle Bachelet in 2017 for marriage equality but as of January 2020, the bill was still under debate. There are legal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment and in housing. There are broad protections against discrimination and hate crimes are criminalized. In Chile, it is legal for individuals over the age of 14 to change gender and sex reassignment surgeries and hormone therapies are funded by the public health system and have been since 2013. Children under the age of 14 are not able to make their gender change legally but are recognized as transgender. Chile has been relatively slow to afford all rights that opposite-sex couples have to same-sex couples compared to other countries in the region such as Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and some states in Mexico which have recognized same-sex marriage for a while. In a June 2020 case in which a same-sex couple who had been married in Spain and had a child together asked to have their marriage recognized in Chile, the Constitutional Court denied the request and did not seem to believe that the denial of such a request could be seen as discriminatory in any way. Despite this, in a 2019 Gallup poll asking residents of the area if it is a good place to live for gay and lesbian individuals, most of the individual responses in Chile were positive.

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER OR QUEER STUDENTS:

- Public opinion in Chile has shown support for the LGBTQ+ community, 65% favored same-sex marriage in 2018 and data has shown that this support is even higher in Chilean youths.
- In 2017, the Ministry of Education issued a ministerial document called “Rights of girls, boys, and trans students in the field of education” to school administrations nationwide to protect and respect trans students and affirm their gender identity by guaranteeing their name is correct in all school documents, the right to wear uniforms and use bathrooms that align with their gender identity.
- Despite protections, there have been cases of discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity, including cases involving violence or death.

### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Sexual Orientation Laws in the World \(December 2019\), ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association](#)
- [LGBTQ Travel Safety](#), Asher Fergusson
- [A Step Backward for Same-Sex Couples in Chile | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)
- [LGBT Rights in Chile | Equaldex](#)
- [LGBT Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel

## DISABILITY IN CHILE

### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

The capital city of Santiago is more accessible than other cities in Latin America. Public transportation via bus and metro stations are accessible to individuals with physical disabilities and are wheelchair friendly. This may not be as common in other cities in Chile. The sidewalks in Chile are not well-maintained and can be difficult to navigate, but Chilean drivers are known to be very courteous to pedestrians.

The National Tourism Service and National Disabilities Service of Chile have created a guide to traveling in Chile with a disability, including a list of the country’s most accessible hotels and lodging. The National System of State Protected Wild Areas have accessible services in national parks, reserves and national monuments.

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

- Chileans with disabilities may have more difficulty accessing health services, both in getting to their health care facilities or paying for necessary treatments.

- Chile does have universal health care, but people with disabilities do have problems accessing care and report that they feel they are considered to be low-priority.

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Mobility International USA](#), Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities
- [Information for Students with Disabilities Traveling Abroad](#), U.S. Department of State (see section under Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016](#), (see Persons with Disabilities).
- [Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities](#), Mobility International USA
- [Travelers with Disabilities, U.S. State Department](#) (see section under Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [Traveling with Disabilities and Medications](#), Transportation Security Administration
- [Accessible Travel in Chile](#), Accessible Travel Americas
- [“Now We Are Visible”](#), Aljazeera News

## RELIGION IN CHILE

#### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

A majority of Chileans are Roman Catholics. Chile also has one of the greatest Protestant influence in Latin America with about 15% of Chileans identifying as Christian Protestant. They also do have one of the largest percentages of citizens that are either not religiously affiliated or that do not report religion as being an important aspect of their lives. There are a number of religious festivals, events, traditions and rituals that take place in Chile, many of which are Catholic based.

#### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDENTS:

- Semana Santa (Holy Week) is celebrated throughout the country and culminates on Easter Sunday

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Countries and Their Cultures: Chile](#) (see section on Religion and Expressive Culture), Every Culture
- [Faith-Based Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [Chile Buddhist Directory](#)
- [Culture of Chile](#), Adventure Life
- [Judaism in Chile](#), World Jewish Congress
- [The Muslim Community in Chile](#), Mission Islam
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Chile](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Mosques & Prayer Time in Chile](#), IslamicFinder.org

## WOMEN IN CHILE

#### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Though statistics like unemployment rates and income earned show that Chilean women are disadvantaged in comparison to Chilean men, education rates show that females under 35 have equal or more education than men. Middle- and upper-class women are well educated and employed in “female traditional” fields like nursing and teaching, but also as doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. The law in Chile states that men and women are equal, and the state is obligated to protect equal employment opportunities to both men and women. However, women are not as visible in places of power such as in politics, they gained full electoral rights in 1949 and have rarely exceeded holding 7% of the parliamentary seats.

#### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

- Chile is considered to be one of the safer South American countries for female travelers, but it is still strongly advised to never travel alone at night and try to stick to more populated or “tourist” areas for safety.

## ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Chile](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Sexual Harassment and Prevention In College Students Studying Abroad](#), The Center for Global Education
- [Information for Women Travelers](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Culture of Chile - history, people, traditions, women, beliefs, food, customs, family, social \(everyculture.com\)](#)
- [Tips for Women Travelers in Chile | Frommer's](#)
- [Why Chile's New Constitution is a Feminist Victory](#), Foreign Policy
- [Is Chile Safe?](#) Enchanting Travels

## REFERENCES

Maps, flag, and country facts are from the [CIA World Factbook](#). Accessed online in July 2020  
[IIE Open Doors Report](#) | [Lonely Planet Chile](#)

**Please note: The content within the resources provided were last reviewed in April 2021 and as such could have changed. Views expressed in links provided or in sub-links within the document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office for Global Education.**