

Chile ahead of the 2025 elections

Will the political pendulum swing from the left to the far right?

SUMMARY

Chile will hold presidential and congressional elections on 16 November 2025, with a possible runoff between the two best placed presidential candidates on 14 December, if no candidate secures the absolute majority in the first round. The two most promising candidates according to the latest polls are Jeannette Jara, from the Communist Party, and far-right candidate José Antonio Kast from the Republican Party. Crime and immigration are among the top issues that dominate the election campaign, even though Chile remains one of the safest countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Since the *Estallido Social*, the 2019–2020 social uprising, which brought left-wing incumbent Gabriel Boric to the presidency in 2022, there has been a trend of polarisation in Chilean politics. The 2021 elections resulted in a highly fragmented and diverse Congress with no coalition winning a clear majority of seats.

From the EU perspective, in particular because of its rich natural resources and critical raw materials, Chile will be of strategic importance in the years to come. The recently signed Advanced Framework Agreement (AFA) between the EU and Chile (provisional application as from 1 June 2025), including the Interim Trade Agreement (ITA), which entered into force on 1 February 2025, are important instruments to realise the potential of the EU–Chile partnership.



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Introduction

Chile is one of **Latin America's most stable democracies**, with strong institutions and rule of law. It is the continent's fifth-largest economy, a major supplier of critical raw materials and one of the region's countries most aligned with the European Union (EU). The Andean country has enjoyed a long period of economic growth and political and social stability following the end of the military dictatorship under Pinochet (1973 to 1990).

Chile has more than 6 000 kilometres of Pacific Ocean coastline, which makes the country a key hub for connecting Latin America and Asia. Due to its export-driven economy and its **wealth of natural resources and critical raw materials**, Chile has become strategically important for the transformation of the global economy. Together with Argentina and Bolivia, Chile forms the '**lithium triangle**' – holding about half of the world's measured lithium resources. In addition, it is the **world's largest copper producer**. Both materials are essential for renewable energy technologies and the production of the lithium-ion batteries used in laptops, smartphones, and hybrid and electric vehicles.

- Chile is a representative democracy with a President who serves a four-year term as both Head of State and Head of Government. The constitution does not allow for consecutive re-election.
- The bicameral National Congress of Chile (*Congreso Nacional de Chile*), with the city of Valparaíso as its official headquarters, is made up of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies.
- The Senate is composed of 50 senators elected to eight-year terms with half of them being replaced every fourth year. Re-election is possible once at most. The Chamber of Deputies is composed of 155 deputies elected to four-year terms. Re-election is possible a maximum of two times.

Chile is a member of the [Pacific Alliance](#) regional trade initiative (Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru) and has negotiated 33 [Free Trade Agreements](#) (FTAs) with a wide range of countries and economic blocs, including major partners such as the United States (US), the EU, Canada, Mexico, China, South Korea, and Japan. In 2023, Chile officially entered the [Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) (CPTPP) trade agreement. The first South American state to join the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD) in 2010, Chile is strongly integrated in today's world economy.

The EU and Chile have **fostered political and economic relations** in recent years. On 13 December 2023, they signed the [Advanced Framework Agreement](#) (AFA) to modernise the 2002 Association Agreement. The agreement [partially provisionally applies](#) since 1 June 2025. An Interim Trade Agreement (ITA) entered into force on 1 February 2025 and will apply until ratification of the AFA is completed.

Boric presidency

Since the transition to democracy, **centre-left and centre-right coalitions** dominate [Chilean politics](#) with centre-left and centre-right presidents alternating over the last two decades. Following the presidency of **Sebastián Piñera**, who led a centre-right coalition to power for two non-consecutive presidential terms (2010–2014, 2018–2022), Chilean voters elected **Gabriel Boric**, the candidate of the left, in the second round of the presidential elections on 19 December 2021. Boric, a former leader of Chile's student movement, stood as the presidential candidate of the *Apruebo Dignidad*

electoral alliance created in January 2021. In the presidential run-off, Boric won 55.87 % of the vote, defeating far-right candidate **José Antonio Kast**, who won 44.1 %. President Boric's four-year term was inaugurated on 11 March 2022, and at 36, he is Chile's youngest-ever president.

The key objective of Boric's [political programme](#) was to deepen democracy, reduce socio-economic inequalities and foster social cohesion in Chile. This programme was intended to address the root causes of the [Estallido Social](#), the 2019–2020 **social uprising**, which saw mass demonstrations, violence and 36 deaths. Boric and his coalition pledged among other things to expand the welfare state, improve indigenous peoples' situation, and guarantee access to quality education for poorer sections of society, they promised decentralisation, pension system reform, and a thorough investigation of the Pinochet dictatorship. The cornerstone to achieving these goals was to replace the 1980 constitution adopted under Pinochet with a new, modern constitution.

The constitutional reform process has its origins in the *Estallido Social*. As a reaction to these events, which some [experts](#) consider a revolution, former conservative President Sebastián Piñera launched a [constitutional reform process](#) which channelled much of the energy away from the streets. On 25 October 2020, an overwhelming majority of Chilean electors (78.3 %) voted in a referendum to draw up a new constitution. Similarly, 79.0 % of voters decided that the new constitution would be drafted by a **Constitutional Convention**, which began its work on 4 July 2021. However, the objective to reform the constitution failed during the Boric presidency. In a constitutional referendum held on 4 September 2022, 62 % of voters rejected a first draft proposing reforms including recognition of indigenous territories, judicial restructuring, and expanded social rights. The outcome of a second constitutional referendum on 17 December 2023 was also negative: 56 % rejected the second constitutional draft. While the first draft, written by a left-of-centre convention, was perceived by many Chileans as too radical, the second draft, finalised by a right-of-centre council, was rejected as it was too conservative. Consequently, Chile's 1980 constitution remains in place, which many analysts describe as the **biggest setback for the Boric presidency**.

In addition to the failed constitutional reform, Boric – confronted with heavy fragmentation in Chile's Congress – has **struggled to implement his progressive reform agenda**; in particular the promised key structural reforms of healthcare, education and taxation. However, Boric can also record notable successes which were made possible by finding compromises with the centre-right opposition. A good example of this pragmatic approach was the adoption of a comprehensive [pension reform](#) promoted by the Boric administration. The reform overcame a decade-long deadlock in Congress and replaced the privatised system established under Pinochet.

Under the Boric administration, Chile's **economy** has stabilised following the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted Chile significantly, causing a 5.8 % economic contraction in 2020 and raising unemployment to a 10-year high of 9 %. However, [according](#) to the OECD, macroeconomic imbalances created during COVID-19 have largely been resolved and Chile's economy has returned to growth, with inflation falling (down from 12.8 % in 2022 to 4.5 % in 2024) thanks to adequate macroeconomic policies. Following a 2.6 % expansion in 2024, growth is projected to remain solid at 2.3 % in 2025 and 2.1 % in 2026. The unemployment rate however remains relatively high at 8.6 %. According to political analyst [Robert Funk](#), Boric's biggest economic successes were: lowering post-pandemic spending, increasing the minimum wage by 51 % without impacting inflation (however, failing to reduce unemployment) and cutting the working week from 45 to 40 hours.

Approaching the end of his four-year presidential term, [analysts](#) draw the conclusion that the Boric presidency was a mixed bag of success and failure: with successful economic stabilisation and

pension reforms [coexisting](#) alongside deep social disenchantment, high perceptions of insecurity and political fragmentation. This perception is also reflected in relatively low [approval ratings](#) for Boric (around 30 %) and high disapproval rates for the government (around 60 %). By way of comparison, at the end of her first term in 2010, left-wing president Michelle Bachelet had an [approval rating](#) of 84 %. Measured against his initial comprehensive, progressive reform agenda, Boric might go down in history as a preserver of the status quo or the president who brought Chile back to normality, rather than as a great reformer. This might be a missed historic opportunity, according to one [observer](#). However, looking back at the social uprising in 2019 and the negative impacts of the pandemic on society and the economy, it could also be concluded that bringing Chile back to normality is a political success.

2025 presidential race

Chile will hold the **first round of the presidential election** plus **congressional elections** for all 155 members of the Chamber of Deputies and for 23 Senators (out of a total of 50 Senate seats) on 16 November 2025. As the constitution forbids two consecutive terms (a second term is possible after a break), Boric cannot run in the 2025 presidential elections. A runoff between the two best-placed candidates will be held on 14 December 2025, if no candidate secures an absolute majority in the first round. The winner will be sworn-in as president of Chile on 11 March 2026. This is the first presidential election since 2012 to make **voting mandatory**, with financial penalties for citizens who fail to vote. This will likely lead to a significantly higher participation rate than in 2021 (56 %).

Chile remains one of the **safest countries in the LAC** region. Nevertheless, over the last three years, [preoccupations about social inequality](#) and a lack of social mobility in Chile have been overshadowed by concerns about public security. Crime, immigration and unemployment are among Chileans' top concerns and dominate the election campaign. While Chile's homicide rate has declined since its peak in 2022 (6.7 per 100 000 inhabitants), the murder rate is still twice what it was in 2015 (2.9 per 100 000 inhabitants). Other crimes such as gendered violence and carjacking have also risen. Chileans' [security perception](#) has been falling, leading to increased public support for *mano dura* (iron fist) policies. The influence of **international organised crime groups** in the country, such as Venezuela-based [Tren de Aragua](#), is growing, posing numerous security challenges.

A closer look at the **presidential candidates** indicates that the **polarisation** of Chilean politics observed in some elections since 2021 (presidential elections, election for the members of the Constitutional Convention, Constitutional Council elections) might continue. This trend represents a departure from the country's historic political normality, where moderate centre-left and centre-right coalitions ruled the country since the end of the military dictatorship. However, according to sociologist [Axel Callís](#), the 2025 campaign is not polarised, as the proposals from the presidential candidates, with nuances, do not point to significant or structural changes, as occurred in the last three elections. Overall, [eight candidates](#) have officially announced their candidacy: Jeannette Jara, José Antonio Kast, Evelyn Matthei, Johannes Kaiser, Franco Parisi, Marco Enríquez-Ominami, Harold Mayne-Nicholls, and Eduardo Artés. Similar to the 2021 presidential elections, the two most promising candidates in the race come from the outer political spectrum.

The three candidates with the best chances are:

Jeannette Jara of the Communist Party is the left-wing **Unidad por Chile** candidate. Founded in 2022, the coalition consists of eight parties ranging from the left to the centre-left, plus the Christian Democratic Party, which is not part of the original government alliance. In June 2025, to most

[observers'](#) surprise, Jara won the *Unidad por Chile* presidential primary ahead of former Minister of the Interior and Public Security, Carolina Tohá, from the centre-left *Partido por la Democracia*, who until then held a comfortable lead (The right and centre-right parties failed to organise primaries). Jeannette Jara served from 2022 to 2025 as minister for labour and social security and oversaw the Boric government's most important achievements (pension reform, the 40-hour work week law and an increased minimum wage). Her campaign [programme](#) is based on several pillars, including economic growth, security, and improvements in health, education, and housing. Jara pledges to improve security and fight organised crime by e.g. increasing funding for police, social programmes and biometric screening at the border. [Analysts](#) point out that although Jara's candidacy broadly embraces Boric's legacy, it introduces a new focus: a reaffirmation of principles linked to social justice, strengthening the state, and defending the working class, with an emphasis on redistributive policies. Strategically, this approach seeks to mobilise a grassroots electorate that, in the 2021 elections, showed signs of disaffection or abstention.

José Antonio Kast is the **far-right candidate** of the ***Partido Republicano*** (REP), which he founded in 2019. Kast, who served as a member of the Chamber of Deputies (2002–2018) for the centre-right Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI) until 2016, has already run for president twice. First as an independent in 2017, when he won 7.93 % of the votes and again in 2021, when he won the first round of the presidential elections with 27.91 % of the vote. He then lost to Boric in the second round. While Kast's two previous presidential election campaigns focused on attacks against abortion and same-sex marriage, among other things, he has now shifted away from his ultraconservative approach and strives for a more moderate profile. The 2025 Kast election campaign focuses almost exclusively on public security, which according to an August [Ipsos survey](#), is the most important issue for 64 % of Chileans (followed by illegal immigration and the economy). Kast wants to close borders, set tougher sentences for gang members, deploy the military to high-crime neighbourhoods and build maximum-security prisons, among other things. He also praises El Salvador's President [Nayib Bukele](#) for his 'anti-gang war'. On the economic front, Kast's programme sets out plans to increase the annual GDP growth rate to 4 %, reduce the corporate tax rate, and cut public spending.

Evelyn Matthei, from the ***Unión Demócrata Independiente*** (UDI) has the longest and broadest political experience. She served as a member of the Chamber of Deputies, in the Senate, as minister of labour and as mayor of Providencia. Matthei represents the **centre-right Chile Grande y Unido** electoral alliance and presents herself as the 'moderate' alternative to the more radical candidates. However, Matthei – who lost to Michelle Bachelet in the 2013 runoff – lost her initial pole position, which she held for almost a year, according to observers because conservative voters may prefer Kast's more direct style of promising rapid change to Matthei's steadier, governance-focused approach. If Matthei does not make it to the run-off, her electorate could have a decisive influence on the outcome of the election. While Matthei remains optimistic, she [stated](#) that she would never 'vote for someone who is a continuation of the current government, much less a communist'.

Currently, most polls show a tight [presidential race](#) between the **left and far-right candidates, Jeannette Jara and José Antonio Kast**. According to the latest [poll](#) from Cadem of 19 October 2025, Jara has a lead (26 %) over Kast (22 %) and Matthei (14 %). Looking at the Cadem scenario for the second round, in a runoff election between Kast and Jara, Kast, would have a 16-point lead over Jara (49 % v 33 %). Another recent [survey](#) of 17 October projects Jara at 30 %, Kast at 27 % and Matthei at 18 % and predicts that, the majority (55 %) would vote for Kast in a presidential runoff if the race were between Kast and Jara.

Congressional elections

The **congressional elections** are overshadowed by the presidential race. Nevertheless, the outcome of the congressional elections is crucial, as it determines the extent to which the next president can implement his political agenda. The National Congress of Chile is composed of representatives of different political parties and alliances, such as the governing alliance (Unidad por Chile) or the opposition Chile Vamos coalition, for example. The 2021 elections resulted in a **highly fragmented and diverse Congress** with no coalition winning a clear majority of seats. The [political landscape](#) in the Congress is complex and includes representatives from 16 political parties, as well as several independent candidates. Multiple new parties were registered or began organising in 2020, motivated by interest in participating in the Constitutional Convention elected in May 2021.

Parliamentary elections operate under the D'Hondt system, distributing seats through lists and requiring political parties to form alliances to secure the greatest number of elected representatives. On 16 August 2025, the deadline for formalising pacts with the Electoral Service for the parliamentary elections concluded. Five [electoral lists](#) are competing in the Congressional elections:

- **Cambio por Chile** (Change for Chile), composed of the Republican Party of Chile, the National Libertarian Party, the Social Christian Party, and Independents.
- **Izquierda Ecologista Popular Animalista y Humanista** (Popular Ecologist, Animalist, and Humanist Left), composed of the Humanist Party, Equality, and Independents.
- **Unidad por Chile** (Unity for Chile, also known as *oficialismo*), composed of the Socialist Party of Chile, the Broad Front, the Communist Party of Chile, the Christian Democratic Party, the Liberal Party of Chile, the Party for Democracy, the Radical Party of Chile, and Independents.
- **Chile Grande y Unido** (Great and United Chile), composed of National Renewal, the Independent Democratic Union, Political Evolution, the Chilean Democrats Party, and Independents.
- **Verdes, Regionalistas y Humanistas** (Greens, Regionalists, and Humanists), composed of the Green Social Regionalist Federation, the Humanist Action Party, and Independents.

An October 2025 [study](#) projects that the ensemble of centre-right and radical right parties could obtain a majority in both chambers. Of the 85 seats the right would obtain in the Chamber of Deputies, 56 would be for the centre-right *Chile Grande y Unido* pact and 29 for the *Cambio por Chile* pact (Republicans, Libertarians, and Social Christian). To achieve an absolute majority, 78 seats are required. In this scenario, the political left would get 68 seats: 67 for the *Unidad por Chile* pact and one representative from the Green, Regionalists, and Humanists pact. In the Senate, meanwhile, projections point to 26 seats for the centre-right and radical right and 22 for the left, leaving two seats for other parties. The distribution would be: 23 seats for Chile Vamos and the Democrats, and three for the Republicans, Libertarians, and the PSC. Meanwhile, on the left, *Unidad por Chile* would win 19 senators, while the Greens, Regionalists, and Humanists coalition would secure three seats. Consequently, should far-right candidate Kast win the presidential elections, he would face a centre-right and radical-right majority in Congress, which would make it much easier for him to implement his government programme.

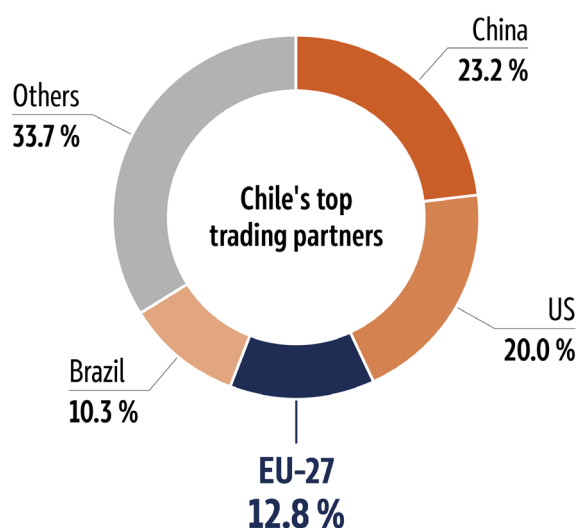
EU-Chile relations

Chile was the first country in Latin America to sign an Association Agreement with the EU in 2002. It included three pillars: political dialogue, cooperation and trade. Over the last two decades, the EU and Chile have strengthened their political, trade and investment ties based on common values, democracy, human rights, the promotion of multilateralism and free and rules-based trade. The EU and Chile maintain regular political dialogues, such as on human rights, and the [first dialogue](#) on security and defence for example, which took place on 5 June 2025, with discussions on common security and defence policy missions, cybersecurity, and the role of women in peace and security. In 2017, the EU and Chile launched negotiations to modernise the Association Agreement. On 13 December 2023, the EU and Chile signed the Advanced Framework Agreement (AFA) which is composed of [two parallel legal instruments](#):

- The EU is Chile's third-largest trading partner, accounting for about 10 % of Chile's total trade in 2024.
- In 2024, overall bilateral trade in goods between the EU and Chile amounted to €21.1 billion, with an average annual growth of about 10 % during the period 2020-2024. The EU had a goods trade surplus with Chile of €2.3 billion in 2024.
- EU-Chile bilateral trade in services amounts to €8.7 billion, with a surplus for the EU of €2.5 billion (2023 data).
- The EU is Chile's top source of foreign direct investment (FDI), with stocks of €55.9 billion in 2023, accounting for about one-third of Chile's overall FDI stock.

1. The AFA, which includes a) the **political and cooperation pillar**, and b) the **trade and investment pillar** (including investment protection provisions).
2. The **Interim Trade Agreement (ITA)**, which covers only those parts of the AFTA trade and investment pillar that are an EU exclusive competence.

Figure 1 – Chile's top trading partners



Data source: [European Council](#); graphic by Lucille Killmayer, EPRS.

While the AFA is as a mixed agreement subject to ratification by all Member States, the EU-only ratification process has been applied to the [ITA](#). On 29 February 2024, the European Parliament approved both the AFA and ITA, and on 18 March 2024, the Council gave its final endorsement to the ITA, which completed the ITA's EU-level ratification. Finally, the ITA entered into force on 1 February 2025 and will apply until the ratification of the AFA is completed. It is the first EU agreement that contains a **specific chapter dedicated to energy and raw materials**. In addition, it contains, specific chapters on trade and sustainable development (TSD), gender and trade, sustainable food systems and small and medium-sized enterprises and state-of-the-art provisions on digital trade, trade in services and public procurement.

In 2024, overall bilateral trade in goods between the EU and Chile amounted to €21 billion. Today, the **EU is Chile's third-largest trade partner**. By way of comparison, Chile's bilateral trade in goods with **China**, its most important trade partner, is worth an estimated approximately €32 billion. Chile's exports to China – worth approximately €24 billion, representing almost 75 % of total trade – are primarily made up of minerals. On the other hand, the EU's main imports from Chile were vegetable products (39 %). Political and trade relations are complemented by a regular dialogue between parliamentarians of both parties through the [EU-Chile Joint Parliamentary Committee](#). This comprises two delegations with an equal number of members from the European Parliament and from the Chilean Senate and Chamber of Deputies. As of 2023, Chile was the world's **second largest producer of lithium**, accounting for 25 % of global production, and is the **world's largest copper producer**. Against this background, in July 2023, on the margins of the EU–CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) [Summit in Brussels](#), the EU and Chile signed a [memorandum of understanding](#) (MoU) on **sustainable raw materials value chains**. With the signature of the MoU, the parties expressed their intention to intensify cooperation in the field of global sustainable value chains, including those raw materials that support clean energy and the digital transition, such as copper, lithium and rare earths. In addition to the raw materials sector, the EU seeks to foster cooperation on renewable energy and hydrogen.

There are currently [three flagship initiatives](#) in Chile under the EU–LAC [Global Gateway Investment Agenda](#) (GGIA): the Team Europe Initiative on Renewable Hydrogen, the Regional Copernicus LAC Chile Centre, and Sustainable Value Chains in Critical Raw Materials (CRM). In March 2025, agreements were signed to support Chile's growing **renewable hydrogen industry** via the [Team Europe Renewable Hydrogen Funding Platform](#) for Chile. [According](#) to the European Investment Bank, the funding platform will provide up to €216.5 million to support the decarbonisation of Chile's economy, creating green jobs and generating business opportunities for Chilean and European companies while also helping the EU to meet its import demand for renewable hydrogen.

Outlook

Almost all [experts predict](#) that no candidate will obtain the absolute majority of the votes in the first round and many assume a **run-off between Jara and Kast** on 14 December. While it is not automatic that undecided and moderate voters (for example Matthei's electorate) will align themselves with Kast in a possible runoff, many [analysts](#) nevertheless predict **victory for Kast in the second round over Jara**, given that most Chileans disapprove of the left-wing Boric administration for which Jara served as minister. Since 2009, Chileans have voted against the ruling party in every presidential election. Moreover, the 2024 [municipal and regional elections](#) showed that **Chile's political centre has shifted to the right**. The issue that most concerns citizens – public security – also benefits the far-right candidate. The possibility of Kast governing with a **right-wing parliamentary majority in Congress** as the above-mentioned study predicts, opens an opportunity for the implementation of a far-right presidential agenda that could mark **a historic shift** compared to recent governments in Chile.

Following the presidential election victories of centre-right politicians in Ecuador on 13 April 2025 (Daniel Noboa) and in Bolivia on 19 October 2025 (Rodrigo Paz), Chile could be the third country in a row to reject a left-wing president. This could represent a trend towards stronger centre-right or right-wing governments in Latin America. Looking ahead to the presidential elections in Colombia (31 May 2026), which currently has a left-wing president (Gustavo Petro), it remains to be seen whether this trend will intensify.

From the [EU perspective](#), in particular because of its rich reserves of lithium and copper, which are essential for renewable energy technologies and the production of the lithium-ion batteries used in laptops, smartphones, and hybrid and electric vehicles, **Chile is of strategic importance**. The country could contribute to the clean transition of Europe's economy, mitigating supply-chain risks and reducing the EU's strategic dependencies on countries with which the EU is not aligned. Strengthening political, trade and investment ties further, implementing the ITA, ratifying the AFA and the MoU can help to reinforce the EU's economic security. However, according to [Inga Carry](#), of Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, the EU should seek to ensure that its existing initiatives with Chile are more closely aligned and should make more effective use of synergies between raw materials, renewable energy and hydrogen.

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