

What Explains Chile's Fast Vaccination Rollout?

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Chile has implemented one of the fastest COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in the world. The swift vaccine roll-out has been supported by vaccine availability from several suppliers and high willingness to receive a COVID-19 vaccination by the population, along with several other factors. In this note, we briefly review some of these additional factors that have contributed to the rapid vaccination process.

- 1. Institutional Development:** The Republic of Chile has substantial historical experience with massive vaccination processes. Mandatory vaccination processes have taken place since 1887, along with the creation of an institution responsible for vaccine distribution. Separately, in 1949, Chile introduced vaccinations against Tuberculosis, and the Expanded Immunization Program was created decades later in 1978 – which included the mass distribution of 6 vaccines. The institutions in charge of vaccine distribution continued to evolve until the creation of the Immunization Department in 2011, which became responsible for the free distribution of vaccines included in the National Immunization Program; as of 2021, this program considered the distribution of 17 vaccines, including the one against SarsCov2. For context, in 2020, the Immunization Department vaccinated more than 8 million people against influenza.
- 2. Logistical preparation:** In order to enhance the logistical network for the mass distribution of vaccines nationwide, the Government of Chile purchased four super-freezers with the capacity to store up to 600,000 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines at -70°C. In March of 2021, additional similar-sized freezers were purchased, raising the storage capacity to 2,350,000 doses. Separately, the Government equipped 26 vaccine depositories with the highest sanitary and security standards distributed in the 16 regions of the country, which act as local distribution centers. Lastly, the Central Government transferred resources in excess of USD10 million to municipalities for the hiring of staff for vaccinations and transport of vaccines.
- 3. Territorial capillarity:** The Government of Chile, in coordination with local governments, set up a vaccination network with more than 1,370 points distributed across all the communes of the territory.
- 4. Demand Management and Prioritization:** To carry out an orderly COVID-19 vaccination process, the Government of Chile established a vaccination schedule following the health priorities recommended by the Expert Advisory Council. The objective of this calendar is to manage vaccine demand, avoiding large crowds and supply disruptions, prioritizing the target population to be vaccinated according to health criteria. As such, the Government was able to vaccinate more than 5 million people by the end of March-2021, and targets vaccinating 15.2 million people by the end of the first semester of 2021.
- 5. Centralized Coordination and Monitoring:** An important part of the success of the vaccination plan in Chile has been due to the fact that, despite the fact that the application of the vaccine is decentralized, there is a centralized monitoring online by the Government at each stage of the process. The existence of a single national immunization registry, and the centralized delivery of doses to each of the vaccination points, allows for an agile monitoring of the process, avoiding supply disruptions, large crowds, calendar adjustments, among others. The centralized registry has also allowed for the authorities to manage two additional challenges of the vaccination plan: a) monitoring of vaccinated people, a relevant point in this process since most vaccines require two doses; b) allow for two doses to be applied in different places for each person, if needed.