



Tobacco and the Rights of Women and Girls in Chile

I. Summary

- A. Tobacco control is a human rights issue in Chile. According to the latest Tobacco Atlas, 13,000 people die each year from smoking, about 12% of all deaths in Chile. ¹
- B. Tobacco is the world's leading cause of preventable death and is therefore a considerable obstacle to the right that all people living in Chile have to health.
- C. Tobacco is a human rights and women's and girls' rights issue and should be considered as part of the government's human rights obligations. Tobacco, and the actions of the tobacco industry, prevents the women and girls of Chile from enjoying the highest attainable standard of health.

II. Relevant facts and statistics

- A. Women and girls are also exposed to second hand smoke (SHS), both at home and in public places. A recent study showed that the characteristics of participants exposed to SHS at home were: younger, women, those with lower educational attainment, lower income, living with a larger number of people in household, never smokers, and those with poor knowledge of tobacco's adverse health effects.²
- B. Smoking during pregnancy is a cause of preterm delivery and impaired fetal growth. Smoking while pregnant is also associated with increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome.³
- C. The economic cost of smoking in Chile is 1.755 trillion Chilean pesos. This includes direct costs related to healthcare expenditures and indirect costs related to lost productivity caused by illness and premature death.⁴
- D. Tobacco use also negatively impacts sustainable development and the environment, both of which have obvious negative consequences of the right to health of women and girls.

¹ <https://tobaccoatlas.org/factsheets/chile/>.

² Flor, L.S., Anderson, J.A., Ahmad, N. *et al.* Health effects associated with exposure to secondhand smoke: a Burden of Proof study. *Nat Med* **30**, 149–167 (2024). Available at <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-023-02743-4>.

³ Mitchell EA, Thompson JM, Zuccollo J, MacFarlane M, Taylor B, Elder D, Stewart AW, Percival T, Baker N, McDonald GK, Lawton B, Schlaud M, Fleming P. The combination of bed sharing and maternal smoking leads to a greatly increased risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy: the New Zealand SUDI Nationwide Case Control Study. *N Z Med J.* 2017 Jun 2;130(1456):52-64. PMID: 28571049, available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28571049/>. See also <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/2022-05/sudden-unexpected-death-in-infancy-report-may2022.pdf>.

⁴ <https://tobaccoatlas.org/factsheets/chile/>.

- E. Families of people who smoke spend resources on cigarettes that could be spent on other household expenses. The added healthcare expenses and lost income from tobacco induced-disease makes the financial situation much more dire.
- F. Cigarette butts are the most commonly discarded pieces of waste worldwide. It is estimated that 2,422 tons of butts wind up as toxic trash in Chile each year.⁵
- G. Chile is above average in some areas of tobacco control. For example, Tobacco taxes in Chile are 80% of the retail price. The global standard is 70%.⁶

III. **Special concerns**

- A. There were 7362 tons of tobacco produced in Chile in 2019 on 2396 hectares of quality agricultural land that could have been used to grow food.⁷
- B. Tobacco industry interference is a concern in Chile. The government collaborates with the tobacco industry through the Illicit Trade Observatory of the National Chamber of Commerce, where 12 public and private institutions participate, including British American Tobacco Chile.⁸
- C. In addition, tobacco corporations are not prohibited from promoting themselves through “corporate social responsibility,” and are not prohibited from promoting their products through sponsorships.⁹

IV. **Legal obligations**

- A. Chile is Party to the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The FCTC has been ratified by 182 countries and the European Union, which are obligated to put in place a range of measures to reduce tobacco use. The preamble encourages States Parties “to give priority to the right to protect public health,” and to respect the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as expressed in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).¹⁰
- B. The preamble of the FCTC also includes a statement “Recalling that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979, provides that States Parties to that Convention shall take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care.”¹¹

⁵ <https://tobaccoatlas.org/factsheets/chile/>

⁶ <https://globaltobaccoindex.org/country/CL>.

⁷ <https://tobaccoatlas.org/factsheets/chile/>

⁸ <https://globaltobaccoindex.org/country/CL>.

⁹ <https://globaltobaccoindex.org/country/CL>

¹⁰ World Health Organization, Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Preamble, available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/42811/9241591013.pdf;jsessionid=071ADE23A8056EE85BE6820E1A41A74E?sequence=1>.

¹¹ Ibid.

- C. In the preamble of the FCTC, Parties to the FCTC state that they are “Alarmed by the increase in smoking and other forms of tobacco consumption by women and young girls worldwide and keeping in mind the need for full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation and the need for gender-specific tobacco control strategies.”¹²

V. Recommendations

- A. We respectfully encourage the Committee to call on the government of Chile to protect the health of women and girls by implementing the best practices set out in the FCTC including, but not limited to
1. Encouraging the government to cut ties with the tobacco industry and to stop all activities that promote the tobacco industry.
 2. Banning tobacco industry promotion and sponsorship.

Signed,

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH)
Coalition for Americas' Health (CLAS)

¹² Ibid.

