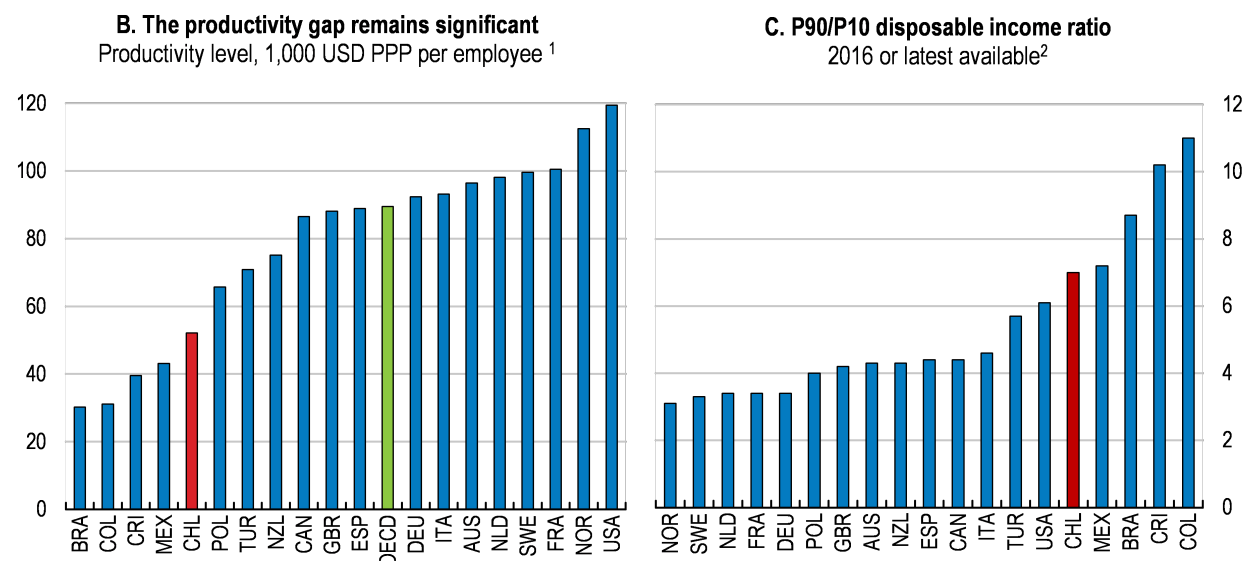
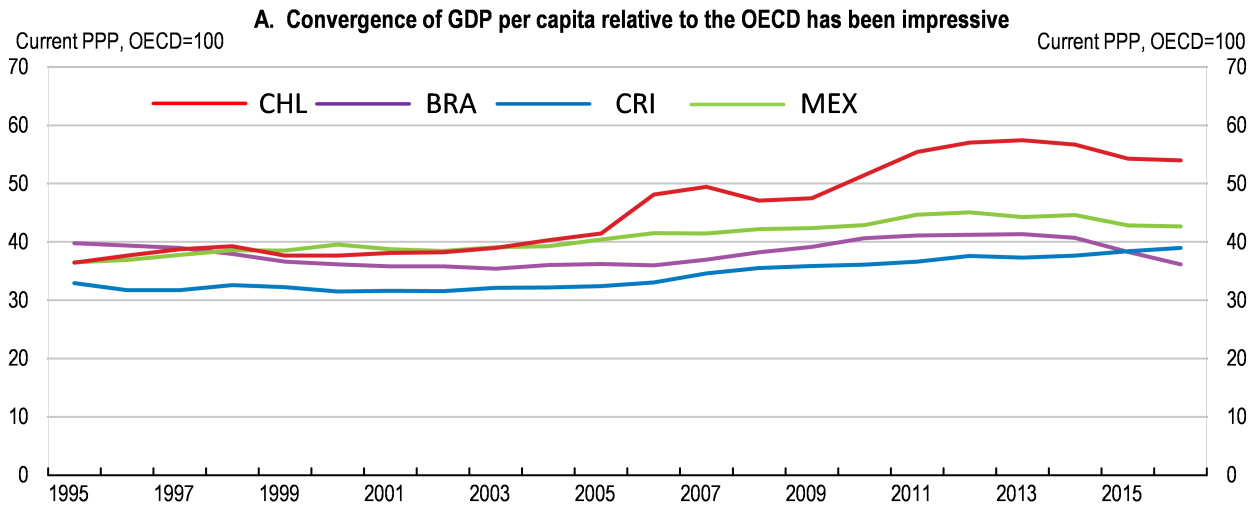


# Mind the gaps: boosting productivity and reducing inequality in Chile

*Antoine Goujard and Paula Garda, OECD Economics Department, Chile/Colombia desk*

**Chile has been one of the fastest-growing economies in the OECD in recent decades.** Sound macroeconomic management, bold structural reforms, such as trade and investment liberalisation, and buoyant natural-resource sectors, supported fast convergence in living standards (Panel A). However, progress has slowed: declining productivity gains are limiting prospects for rising incomes and better-quality jobs; and inequality remains stubbornly high (Panels B and C).

## The twin challenges for Chile: boosting productivity and reducing inequality



1. 2016 or latest available year.

2. Data refer to 2015 for Chile. The P90/P10 ratio is the ratio of income of the 10% of people with highest income to that of the poorest 10%.

Source: OECD, National Accounts Statistics and Productivity and Income distribution databases.

**Chile is at a turning point if it is to continue raising the living standards of all.** The [2018 OECD Economic Survey of Chile](#) projects a solid expansion of the economy by 2.9% in 2018 and in 2019. Chile will benefit from more favourable global economic conditions and stronger world trade. The rebound in copper prices will also support short-term growth.

**The cyclical recovery offers a key opportunity to address the country's low and stagnant productivity and its persistently high inequality.** An ambitious reform agenda could increase GDP per capita by over 5% in ten years and lower inequality, notably through better-quality jobs, according to [OECD estimates](#). This calls for increasing competitive pressures and

incentives for innovation, reducing the administrative burden, improving labour market regulations and raising social spending and the employability of all by more training.

**Greater productivity would be a major boost for broader-based export growth** ([Chapter 1 of the Survey](#)). Competition and simplified administrative procedures, notably licences and permits, are key for better competitiveness. The simplification process should include more stakeholders and stronger ex-ante and ex-post evaluations (OECD, 2016). Systematic reviews of competitive pressures and additional technical assistance and mentoring for young and smaller firms would support entrepreneurship and ease access to export markets. Together with higher and well-targeted support for R&D, this will raise innovation and productivity growth. At the same time, further infrastructure investment, notably in intermodal connections, railways and digital networks (OECD, 2017a), are needed to bridge remaining connectedness gaps and to reduce congestion.

**Chile has to do more to realise the full potential of its people.** Productivity boosting reforms need to go hand-in-hand with measures to raise skills and make the labour market more inclusive ([Chapter 2 of the Survey](#)). The recent education reforms will support teaching quality and skills, lowering inequalities (OECD, 2017b). However, continuing to strengthen the quality of education and developing apprenticeships would improve opportunities for all. Female employment and the skills of the youth would benefit greatly from better access to early childcare and extended daycare opening hours. Providing additional relevant training for vulnerable workers would support productivity and employment, notably for women, the lower skilled and the youth. Lower restrictions on permanent contracts and broader access to unemployment insurance would also ease labour market adjustment for workers and firms and increase quality-jobs, thereby reducing informality and boosting well-being.

**Further reading:**

[OECD \(2018\), OECD Economic Surveys: Chile 2018, OECD publishing.](#)

OECD (2017a), [Infrastructure Governance Review: Chile – Gaps and governance standards of public infrastructure](#), OECD publishing.

OECD (2017b), [Education in Chile, Reviews of National Policies for Education](#), OECD publishing.

OECD (2016), [OECD Reviews of Regulatory Reform – Regulatory Policy in Chile, Government Capacity to Ensure High –Quality Regulation](#), OECD publishing.