

# CHILE

## Crisis of trust and a precarious industry

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### Introduction

Chile has a population of 19,458,310 inhabitants (INE, 2020). Surrounded by the Andes and the Pacific Ocean, Chile's neighbours are Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru. The long territory from north to south gives the country a wide variety of climates, landscapes, and cultures. The main political and economic activities in the country are concentrated in its centre, specifically in the capital city, Santiago de Chile, in the Metropolitan Region, with a population of 8,125,072 people (INE, 2020) and also where the main national media is located. Politically, since 1990 Chile is a democracy, going through profound structural changes as the writing of a new constitution in 2021.

**Freedom in the World 2021:** status "free" (Score: 93/100, down from 94 in 2017–2019, but up from a dip to 90 in 2020).

Chile is a stable democracy that has experienced a significant expansion of political rights and civil liberties since the return of civilian rule in 1990. Ongoing concerns include corruption and unrest linked to land disputes with the indigenous Mapuche population. (Freedom House, 2021)

**Liberal Democracy Index 2020:** Chile is placed in the top 10–20% bracket – rank 25 of measured countries, down from 21 in 2018 (Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2019, 2021).

**Freedom of Expression Index 2018:** rank 36 of measured countries, up from 39 in 2016 (Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2017, 2019).

**2020 World Press Freedom Index:** rank 51 of 180 countries, down from 46 in 2019 (Reporters Without Borders, 2020).

Chile is currently experiencing a very important political moment. After a dictatorship that lasted for 17 years, Chile's democracy has spanned the past

30 years with seven governments: five from left-wing parties and two from right-wing parties. This made Chile an exemplary case of both a functioning democracy and a booming economy in Latin America.

However, under the current administration of right-wing president Sebastian Piñera's second term, on 18 October 2019, after a rise in public transportation fares of CLP 30 (EUR .033), a group of students decided to avoid paying and started jumping over the turnstiles at metro stations. This gesture was the origin of a social movement questioning the country's political and economic structure and calling for improvement in pensions, healthcare, education, and political institutions, among other issues. According to analysts, this moment could usher in a paradigmatic shift in Chile, where structural elements inherited from the dictatorship have collapsed, as, also, the neoliberal economic system (Mayol, 2019). A crisis of legitimacy of political institutions – which functioned under the constitution written and approved by the dictatorship with a fraudulent referendum (Fuentes, 2019) – and the disillusionment and discontent from the middle-class towards politicians, accumulated throughout the years and crashed under the current administration (Tironi, 2020). The protesters represent a generation that does not share the values of the previous ones (Peña, 2020) – this in addition to economic inequality (Araujo, 2019). The slogan of the movement became, “It is not 30 pesos; it is 30 years”.

Clashes between protestors and the police became commonplace, and the president made several national broadcasts and instituted restrictive measures, for example, a curfew, all leading to economic crisis and uncertainty. The parliament called for a national referendum on the possibility of creating a new constitution, where the option for a new document finally prevailed. Amid this political scenario, the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic arrived.

One call from the movement was to “turn off the television”, extended as a general critique of the media's coverage of the protests, especially because of the insistence to repeatedly show videos of the violent clashes and barricades. Some examples of anger were flyers of journalists' faces with the word “miente” [lies] pasted on street walls, protests in front of the offices of television channels, and attacks on journalists unable to identify themselves as such when covering the protests.

This heightened already existing mistrust towards media. The 2020 Reuters Institute's *Digital News Report: Chile* shows a decrease of 15 points in trust towards media, dropping to 30 per cent (Fernández Medina & Núñez-Mussa, 2020). This came hand in hand with a wave of misinformation, giving rise to several new fact-checking projects in Chile (Núñez-Mussa, 2019).

Chile's media system has political parallelism and a commercial profile with high concentration, with businesspeople in charge of holdings. The only Chilean public television channel, Televisión Nacional de Chile [National Television of Chile] (TVN), functions within corporate practices because it is financed through

advertising; therefore, it highly relies and depends on ratings. This adds to an already existing economic crisis within the media industry, worsened by the one being experienced by the rest of the country.

### *Covid-19*

The scenario described above has had a few variations since the onset of Covid-19. The government's early strategy was moderate quarantine, which led to a fast growth of the contagion curve. Two months after the first cases, there were erratic calls for a "new normalcy" and a return to adapted routines and commercial activity, which were later dismissed after the obvious increase in contagion. Large parts of the country were quarantined – with permission required to move within them – a curfew has been implemented since April 2020, borders were closed, and supermarkets' opening hours were shortened. Towards the end of 2020, some measures were made more flexible, such as the opening of shops and restaurants.

The relationship between the press and the government has been tense. The former minister for health, in charge of the crisis response for the first months, declared in an interview on television, "The work of the press is to sell by inventing lies" (Vera, 2020), and after being questioned in different news stories, he accused journalists of fabricating "fake news" (CNN Chile, 2020a). Now that the press is overseeing the government, right-wing sectors are spreading the hashtag "#rechazoprensabasura" [#rejecttrashmedia], showing that the lack of trust towards journalism is cross-cutting and has intensified in different political sectors, depending on the context.

Despite the aforesaid, research shows that since Covid-19, trust in legacy media increased, while the confidence across social media platforms decreased (Cadem, 2020; Grassau et al., 2020). However, whether this sudden regaining of trust in the media will be sustained in the future is uncertain.

### *Leading news media sample*

For this investigation, the media selected includes the only public television channel, TVN, whose press director was interviewed along with a journalist. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with one editor-in-chief and a journalist each from two leading informative FM radios, *Cooperativa* and *BioBio*; one journalist from the newspaper *La Tercera*; the editor-in-chief of *El Mostrador* (dedicated to written journalism and a pioneer digital outlet); and the director of Pauta.cl (FM radio with a multiplatform vocation). Finally, the general secretary of Colegio de Periodistas [National Journalism Association] was also interviewed.

## Indicators

### *Dimension: Freedom / Information (F)*

#### (F1) Geographic distribution of news media availability 3 POINTS

There is a large variety of media, complemented by access to it for the citizens in the country. Nationwide media coexists with regional media.

The two main newspaper companies in Chile, El Mercurio SAP and Copesa, are located in the capital, Santiago. Regarding nationally distributed newspapers, El Mercurio SAP prints the morning paper *El Mercurio*, an evening paper *La Segunda*, and the tabloid *Las Últimas Noticias*. Copesa is transitioning to a digital media company, so it reduced its print outlets in 2021. Their daily national newspaper *La Tercera* is now printed only on weekends in two regions of the country, and their tabloid *La Cuarta* became a website.

El Mercurio SAP also owns a network of regional publications, including daily newspapers, periodicals, and magazines, the most extensive network in the national territory. Some of these publications belong to other owners, for whom El Mercurio SAP sells the advertising. Distributed by zones, each newspaper covers more than one city.

Building upon data collected by Orchard and colleagues (2017), I reviewed how many printed publications are still functioning, discarding those without an active online presence proving their existence; I also removed one published by a municipality. In total, I identified 63 regional newspapers in Chile, outside of the Metropolitan Region, including dailies and weeklies. Of this number, 34 belong to the network of regional newspapers of El Mercurio SAP and 21 of them are owned directly by the company (Medios Regionales, 2020; see also Indicator E2 – Media ownership concentration regional level).

The Metropolitan Region has the largest number of newspapers, including more niche and independent projects, for instance, specifically economic or political media. Therefore, it is the region that offers most access and media diversity.

Among the free newspapers is *Publimetro*, by Metro International, distributed in the metro stations in Santiago and ten other cities across the country, and *HoyxHoy*, born as a project from El Mercurio's regional newspapers to exclusively cover the Metropolitan Region. Until 2020, Copesa also printed the newspaper *La Hora*, which was closed down due to the economic crisis that the media is currently undergoing.

The average number of televisions per home is 2.5, as of 2017 (CNTV, 2018a); and, it is in the regions with higher purchasing power that the most modern equipment can be found, for instance, smart-TVs (CNTV, 2018b).

There are eight open access channels nationwide. The only public channel is TVN, with a large offering of VHF television signals and one signal for digital television. Meanwhile, private channels *Canal 13* and *Chilevisión (CHV)* have geographically extensive coverage in both systems. In terms of total coverage, these are followed by *Mega*, *Telecanal*, and *TV+*. After the start of quarantine due to Covid-19, a new channel called *TV Educa Chile* was created to be aired on open access television, online, and through over 20 companies of paid television. It broadcasts educational content for the whole country (Mineduc, 2020).

The public station TVN has a network of nine regional centres distributed across the country from north to south: Antofagasta, Atacama, Coquimbo, Valparaíso, O'Higgins, Maule, BíoBío, Araucanía, and Austral. Every day they produce a half-hour regional news programme, only shown in the respective region and privileged over national broadcasting. At the same time, they feed regional information to the central headquarters to be eventually distributed nationwide (TVN, 2020).

An example of the large coverage of open access television in Chile is its reach to Easter Island, where, despite logistical difficulties, three signals are received: TVN, CHV, and *La Red*, alongside the local channel, *Mata o te Rapa Nui*.

Digital Land Television had hoped to end analogue television by 2020. However, television channels requested the Telecommunications Undersecretary to postpone it until 2024, since they are not yet ready for complete nationwide implementation that demands more sophisticated technology (Bertran, 2019a). Most channels already working with this technology across the country belong to the main open access stations (TVD, 2019), but between 2017 and 2018, local access concessions were given to educational, commercial, and community entities, of which some signals are still available (CNTV, 2020b). Therefore, the technology spans the country and is projected to be accessed by 80 per cent of Chileans by 2022 (Bertran, 2019b).

For each of the 16 zones dividing Chile, there are open access regional television channels. In addition, there are local and community television concessions that reach less than 25 per cent of regional population. Despite this, regional television has an increased viewership and greater approval from audiences when it shows content focused on the representation of local identities (CNTV, 2018b).

The Regional Association of Television Channels, comprising 21 stations, produces the television news programme *Portavoz Noticias*, which unites long and short news pieces sent by the different members of the network; these are broadcast by each station. The Regional Association of Television Channels also manages projects, such as workshops, to instruct their associated channels about content digitalisation and streaming-based transmission.

According to data from the Telecommunications Undersecretary (Subtel, 2020a), there is a wide variety of companies providing cable services across Chile, present in all 16 regions and representing a total of 1,760,368 cable

television subscribers as of September 2019. The Metropolitan Region, where the capital is located, has the single largest number of 213,068 subscribers, and the Aysén Region, located in the southern end of the country – although with the least number of subscribers, 10,743 out of a population of 66,568 – speaks of a high connectivity.

Companies offering satellite television are also present throughout the territory, with 1,505,912 users. Of these, the majority are concentrated in the central zone: the geographically adjacent Valparaíso, Metropolitan, and O'Higgins regions.

The offering of cable television includes the open national stations and two channels broadcasting national news 24 hours a day: *24 Horas* from TVN, and *CNN Chile* from Warner Media Latin America.

Radio is the form of media that enjoys the widest access in the country. Data from the Telecommunications Undersecretary represents a total of 2,454 radio stations for the whole country, including FM (1,879), AM (147), minimal coverage (10), short wave (1), and community (417) stations. This is because of the technological ease of radio transmission and reception, as well as access to concessions in the radio-electric spectrum at regional levels. Radio is the only medium for which the Metropolitan Region does not concentrate most of the broadcasting stations; instead, they are concentrated in Los Lagos and Valparaíso, with the largest number of stations (Subtel, 2020b).

In Chile, the rate of Internet penetration is 78 per cent (Fernández Medina & Núñez-Mussa, 2019). The most current data provided by Subtel, from September 2019, shows three companies providing Internet services to all regions, another one is concentrated in the southern zone, and six others operate at specific locations. The total number of broadband Internet subscribers nationwide is 3,434,402, with a total penetration of 17.88 per 100 people. The highest concentration of connections is in the Metropolitan Region (1,661,025), and the second-highest – though significantly lower – is Valparaíso Region (373,294). Mobile Internet has a higher impact on the total statistics, with 18,755,659 connections, of which 291,504 are neither 3G nor 4G. The total penetration rate per 100 inhabitants is 97.71, representing significantly wide access at the national level (Subtel, 2020c).

All of these combined guarantees access to online versions of most national media. Newspapers *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera* have paywalls on their web pages, but other portals, such as television channels and radio signals, are open access. In addition, there are also a series of regional portals, which correspond to a citizen media network called *Mi Voz*, alongside the *SoyChile* network, with regional content, belonging to *El Mercurio SAP*.

(F2) Patterns of news media use (consumption of news) 2 POINTS

The protests that erupted in Chile emphasised the amassing tendency for a frequent consumption of news, but it is tainted with distrust, especially for online and television news and with a small readership of printed newspapers, leaving radio as the most credible medium.

When analysing patterns of media consumption in Chile, one must consider a before-and-after 18 October 2019, when the media was publicly criticised by protesters with a call to “turn off the TV”, a critique extended to all forms of media. It was a response to the coverage of the protests, as well as increased discontentment with mass journalism throughout the years, exacerbated by the civil unrest in October.

The 2020 Reuters Institute’s *Digital News Report: Chile* (Fernández Medina & Núñez-Mussa, 2020) presents a scenario where general trust in the media is at 30 per cent, 15 points lower than the previous year. This is telling, since in 2019 it had reached 45 per cent, 8 points lower than the previous year (Fernández Medina & Núñez-Mussa, 2019). According to the report, the main source of news consumption for Chileans was online media (86%), including social media. This was followed by social media platforms alone (73%), television (66%), and finally, print (24%), which had dwindled progressively, from 2017 (46%), 2018 (40%), to 2019 (33%). While online news is the most widely consumed, only 9 per cent of users paid for it. At the same time, the most-used devices to access news are smartphones (83%), followed by computers (31%) and tablets (9%).

The social media network most widely used for news consumption in 2020 was Facebook, with 63 per cent of usage, one point lower than the previous year; this was followed by WhatsApp, with 40 per cent.

The most recent national survey from the National Council for Television shows that open access television is the preferred media for information, followed by radio and social media (CNTV, 2018a). *The Digital News Report* made digital outlets combined with social media the most-used form of media. However, both reports coincided in the importance of television. Across the full range of open television programming, informative content was the most-offered one in 2019, consisting of 20.6 per cent, which is totally produced in the country. This was 3.1 per cent higher than in 2018. Informative content was the most consumed by Chilean users in 2019 (28.6%), surpassing the previous year (25%) (CNTV, 2020b).

Informative radio stations with the largest news departments, *BioBio* and *Cooperativa*, ranked fifth and sixth places, respectively, in the radio ranking, behind entertainment music stations, with a small percentage increase in their audience between the first semesters of 2018 and 2019. Meanwhile, in the age group 15–34 years old, *BioBio* was in fourteenth place and *Cooperativa*

in nineteenth. For audiences older than 25, *BioBio* was at third place, and *Cooperativa* at fourth. Both were more commonly listened to by men than by women (AAM, 2019).

61 per cent of radio news content corresponded to current events, with informative programmes including guests, having a demand from 64 per cent of the audience. Current events information by itself – for instance, commentary and analysis – was offered against 28 per cent and 21 per cent demand, respectively. News programmes occupied 11 per cent of radio content offered and were demanded by 15 per cent of the audience (IPSOS & ARCHI, 2019).

The free print newspaper *Publímetro* had the highest weekly readership (386,920). As for paid newspapers, the most widely read was *El Mercurio* (328,808), which increases its circulation on weekends (409,161), followed by the tabloid from the same company, *Las Últimas Noticias* (268,879). Their key competition, *La Tercera*, had a weekly readership of 268,879 (Valida, 2018).

Muñoz and González (2018) show that Chileans stated they consumed little political content: 63 per cent declared that they did not watch, read, nor listen to political information on the Internet, radio, television, or newspapers (21% used only one medium, 9% two, and 4% all four). Television was the most utilised (27%), followed by newspapers (13%), Internet (10%), and finally, radio (9%). The population 18–24 years old – with higher levels of education and who identify with either the left or right wings – were more likely to use mass media to inform themselves about politics. It must be noted that the databases utilised by Muñoz and González (2018) were from 2014–2017.

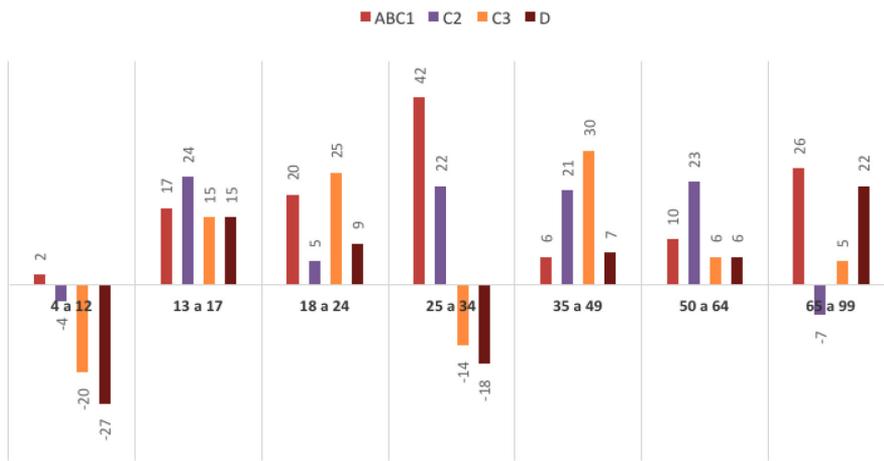
The most-watched contents on television and other screens by teenagers 15–18 years old were news programmes (25%) (Antezana Barrios et al., 2018). General interest from young people in political issues was at 30 per cent, being more visible in the upper-middle class (41%) and middle class (33%) and dropping among lower-middle and poorer classes (both 25%) (Scherman et al., 2018).

Political turmoil had an impact on news consumption. During the protests, Chileans consumed news mostly in the mornings and nights. The most-used traditional media were open access and cable television, while WhatsApp and Facebook were the most-used social media platforms. Facebook positioned itself as the most influential medium, surpassing television for all targets, regardless of age, gender, and socioeconomic status, except for people over 55 years old: those 55 and older, and of higher socioeconomic status, preferred television. Magazines and print newspapers had minimal relevance (Cadem, 2020).

In October, news programmes increased their offering on television, occupying 30 per cent of total programming countrywide, 554 hours more than in September. There was also a general increase in the number of hours dedicated to television consumption; however, this was unequal regarding age and socioeconomic groups. A relevant contrast appears in the age group 25–34: within this group, people with higher earnings increased their television consumption,

across all of the population, while those with lower earnings decreased their consumption (CNTV, 2020b), as shown by Figure 1. This last group was the most active in the protests, which may provide a possible explanation to this pattern.

**Figure 1** Variation in time dedicated to open access television, January–September average compared with October, 2019 (by age & socioeconomic group)



Comments: Levels of earnings go from higher to lower, ABC1 being the group with higher economic earnings.

Source: CNTV, 2020b: 39

The age group reading more digital outlets was 18–45 years old, though in the 50+ group, there was a considerable amount of consumption too. Those upwards of 35 years old listened to a lot of radio, while it was lower in younger age groups. Printed newspapers did not have wide readership, reaching a maximum of 22 per cent in the age group 45–54 (Grassau et al., 2019).

In the first week of the protests, 80 per cent of people stated they used social media to read news, while 62 per cent used WhatsApp. The number of hours dedicated to each network varied according to age, with younger people dedicating more time (Grassau et al., 2019).

Cadem survey data (2020) about news consumption during the protests reveals that higher levels of usage did not translate into greater trust in a medium, as the best-evaluated medium was radio; in second place, newspapers and online outlets; and thirdly, Facebook, which showed a growing relevance. The decrease in trust is more pronounced for open access television (dropping from 55% in 2017 to 29% in January 2020). In the same period, the increase for Twitter was considerable (14% to 30%).

Grassau and colleagues (2019) demonstrated that the most-used forms of media were also the worst evaluated by users. Television was the second-most consumed medium and was evaluated poorly, followed by digital outlets in a bad evaluation, which were the most used. Both Grassau and colleagues (2019) and Cadem (2020) showed radio as being the best-evaluated medium and being better valued by users for its credibility and informative role.

Cadem (2020) presents that the decrease in trust towards media happened across all social groups: genders, ages, socioeconomic, and geographic. One explanation given by the report for the low rating of television is that 90 per cent of the surveyed people saw it as being interested only in their earnings and increasing their audiences. This view was already evident in 2017, when the public declared their suspicions about not all the news being given, the media taking advantage of human suffering, the irrelevance of some subjects, and a political bias within them (CNTV, 2018a).

Though the protests of 2019 made the problem visible, in the case of young people, general trust in media had been decreasing throughout the years in any case. According to Scherman and colleagues (2018), in 2009, trust was at 60 per cent, against 20 per cent in 2018. This went together with diminishing trust in other institutions, such as the armed forces, the police, and the Catholic church. In 2018, radio was the most trusted by this age group, followed by open access television and social media.

Brands with higher trust indexes according to the Reuters Institute *Digital News Report: Chile* (Fernández Medina & Núñez-Mussa, 2020), were Cooperativa radio, CNN Chile, and BioBio Chile – all had an informative focus and were at the top of the survey in the previous year.

After the protests, the media sector saw an increase in their negative visibility (12% in August 2019, much lower than November's 46%). Open access television channels were the most affected; for instance, Canal 13, which before and after the crisis had 9 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively. Among the more reliable brands for users, according to the *Digital News Report*, CNN Chile went from a negative visibility of 14 per cent to 36 per cent (Cadem, 2019).

### (F3) Diversity of news sources

2 POINTS

Daily journalism includes mostly official sources, with nuances varying between each publication outlet. Television is the one medium that introduces more diversity with citizen sources. The daily agenda, work rhythm, and the part and counterpart logic, sees influence in their lack of deep reflection on source selection.

Mellado and Scherman (2020) studied diversity of sources in the Chilean media. They compared the outlet, that is to say the distribution platform, as well as the medium, understood as the brand, considering that the majority owns more

than one platform. Outlets emerged more influential than the medium when it came to diversity of sources, with television the most diverse. This can be understood as its being the one that incorporated more citizen voices.

In the same study, radio was highlighted for being the outlet including more political sources. Online news stood out for including more sources coming from other outlets, without being a considerable contributor to diversity – an outcome of their economic structure and publication rhythms. Newspapers included the most non-political official sources.

However, Mellado and Scherman propose that the selection of sources can be better explained by the medium than by their outlets, considering the editorial culture and work structure of each organisation. The visibility of some sources is influenced by the political and economic stance of the medium and how they evaluated their news balance.

On average, most articles published by printed media in Chile contained two sources, usually an interview and a press release (Del Valle-Rojas et al., 2016). In this regard, the interviewed editors said they could use just the press release in the article, but they usually processed it.

Díaz and Mellado (2017) concluded that the sources with biggest presence in the news were official and governmental ones – a warning about Chilean journalists' dependency on them. The Barometer for Information Access of the National Press Association (ANP, for the initials in Spanish) shows that the five sources to which journalists resort to the most are municipalities, regional governments, Carabineros de Chile [national police], investigations police, and the Ministry or Regional Secretaries for Health (ANP, 2019).

The media houses interviewed for this research all subscribed to at least one news agency, without this being an input that defines their editorial identity. As declared by the editors, neither was it relevant when deciding what is published, except for one case that gave special emphasis to economic journalism and where, as a result, information from Bloomberg was key to the development of their content.

From the interviews, it was also understood that even if they sought balance in news coverage, it was only to search for objectivity, which is often reduced to political party representation, implying that both the government and opposition parties were represented in an article or as interviewees throughout the week. However, there was barely any search for sources that intended to reflect other types of existing diversity or those that emphasised the representation of minorities. “It allows us to move very little, we are boring. We go to the sure thing: who gives us the news”, in the words of one interviewee. Other editors and journalists expressed a similar idea. This is symptomatic of a daily journalism punctuated by routines and urgency, rather than planning a strategic agenda.

There are instances of investigative and long-form journalism – but they are exceptions. These journalists have freedom to research, but only few media

houses could afford themselves the time and resources to delve deep into this form with their own teams, as well as to sustain them (see Indicators C7 – The watchdog and the news media’s mission statement and C9 – Watchdog function and financial resources).

#### (F4) Internal rules for practice of newsroom democracy 1 POINT

Media structure in Chile is hierarchical. Journalists can participate in the discussion of content and may advance in their careers, but the editors and directors have the power to make decisions.

In Chilean media, there is no horizontal democratic structure, either for the development of professional careers or for daily work. Editors-in-chief are selected by directors and, very often, approved by the management board. It often happens they were journalists who have had a consistent internal trajectory leading them to higher positions within the organisation, or that their trajectory in other media and the trust from the directors played a role. Through the interviews, a common observation emerged about how media organisations allowed for such different careers to be developed, in order to one day assume decision-making roles. There was no established set of rules or a specific process for hiring at these positions.

Media structure in Chile tends to be vertical, and the interviewed editors-in-chief and directors recognised that especially for contingent topics more relevant for each media, they involved themselves in the production and decisions related to content. In their daily work, journalists had the possibility to propose topics and decide how to cover them, even though they depend on the editors’ dispositions (see Indicator F5 – Company rules against internal influence on newsroom/editorial staff). The mechanisms for this process vary across media forms and organisations, and type of content; daily journalism has less participation from reporters than long-form reporting, where proposals usually come from the journalists themselves.

Regarding daily agenda, what emerged as commonplace is that the editor assigned tasks and supervised the process, without an established formal mechanism. The latter gave this aspect of journalism several variations, depending on the journalists’ experience, the editor’s trust in them, the topic, or even their shift. For instance, according to our interviewees, journalists working on weekends had more chances of taking decisions because editors in those shifts were usually reporters in the rest of the week.

In every case, it was the editor, or even the director, who made decisions for aspects such as titles, cover pages, central issues, and key interviewees, and dealt with the political and social consequences of an article. While this

is a hierarchical relationship, they also assumed responsibilities for protecting journalists from complaints that the article might generate, as well as defending reporters and editorial decisions in front of management boards, whose tension with the newsroom staff varied for each individual medium.

Women reporters did not feel a gender gap and observed there was recognition for the individual abilities of each journalist. However, a gender gap was evident for women journalists when it came to reaching editor-in-chief and director positions (see Indicator F8 – Gender equality in media content).

(F5) Company rules against *internal* influence on newsroom/editorial staff

2 POINTS

Internal pressures exist between management boards and editors-in-chief and directors, but these do not directly reach journalists, who confirm the exercise of freedom in their work. The 2019 protests implied an exceptional internal pressure within different forms of media.

Perceptions of inner pressures were different between interviewed journalists and those in a decision-taking position as editor-in-chief or press director. Journalists stated they do not feel inner pressures from owners or management boards and testified to having no contact with them. They were aware of the view that owners have on current affairs and that if there were orders, these would reach them through their editor, on whom they recognise pressure being exerted. This is all understood as part of the job.

All the interviewed journalists considered that they could freely exercise their profession. Even when they had differences with their editors, their own ethical criteria in the reporting process was the most important ground to close the conversation or take decisions, without consequences to their professional development. Their answers were coherent with the data gathered by Mellado (2014), showing that 62.3 per cent of journalists considered they had a high level of freedom to make decisions about the news, 27 per cent considered they had moderate autonomy, and 10.6 per cent stated they had low levels of autonomy. “If there are differences, there is a margin to discuss this. The journalist has power to make decisions, because they are the ones on the ground reporting on the story”, said one of the interviewed reporters. This agrees with Greene González (2017), where journalistic ethics appeared as an important value for Chilean reporters.

Although the interviewed journalists said they had the possibility to dialogue with their editors, they also recognised that the editor had the final say for titles and content. A recent case setting a union against editors showed that this inner pressure can happen (El Dínamo, 2019), much in line with what research shows (Gronemeyer, 2002; Mellado, 2014; Otano Garde & Sunkel, 2003).

Journalists appeared to know that the director or editor-in-chief is a person trusted by the owners. They assumed that conversations between them impinged upon editorial directions for the journalists. This is in line with research by Sapiezynska, Lagos, and Cabalin (2013), who concluded that internal pressures are generated from these conversations. Although 76.9 per cent of Chilean journalists valued leadership inside their newsroom, this was centred on the person, not their company's rules (Yez, 2011).

Among interviewees, the ones who experienced significantly more internal pressures were the editors-in-chief and directors. The tension levels varied also among the different media forms. In some cases, they mentioned having management boards being more open to dialogue, while in other interviews, press directors or editors-in-chief saw themselves defending the journalistic autonomy of their team. Therefore, their role is fundamental in dealing with such types of pressure. Here, the different levels of command within media must be considered, since Gronemeyer (2002) stated that editors felt more autonomy than journalists did. Within our interviews, we had some editors-in-chief and directors who had a direct relationship with management boards and corporate levels. Therefore, their differences with medium-level management, who only makes editorial decisions, must also be considered.

Such a view agrees with the results from Greene González (2017), who concluded that the main internal pressure faced by Chilean journalists comes from the corporate level, which corresponded with media company interests. In the study by Yez (2011), 38.1 per cent of journalists declared they were "encouraged" to cover a story by the owners or the director. Our interviews revealed the process is not direct, but with the editor as a mediator. Equally, this was not a decisive feature in daily routine, because 76.6 per cent of Chilean journalists reported not having received criticism or internal pressure from their editor after covering a story against the financial interest of the owners of the media company (Yez, 2011).

For the interviewees, direct pressure from commercial areas to reporters was absent, and they considered it as not affecting their autonomy (see Indicator F6 – Company rules against external influence). A most common aspect to these areas is their being in different physical spaces and functioning separately from the newsroom.

One form of tension appearing from the interviews was from editors-in-chief and directors, who, after the 2019 protests, in turn received more pressure from their management boards, resulting in that between journalists and editors. Most journalists received instructions: "Since the 2019 protests there is more preoccupation from above, from the editors. They have asked for facts, not opinions", mentioned one journalist. Another interviewee explained:

When the protests started, we all received a message saying that we would only cover the facts, but we were not going to focus on the police repression.

This decision made us uncomfortable as journalists, because we saw what was happening on the streets, and in the end, we did not respect it much.

In this regard, the collective experiences of journalists and editors represented the generational gap on how the protests could be covered. “For the first time in our medium’s history we had to exercise editorial control. Our journalists were from a younger generation, were on the streets, and felt effervescent for the historical moment, leaving other perspectives out”, commented an editor-in-chief. “Those of us from previous generations are more impartial, disciplined; younger people express themselves in social media”, said a journalist. This last aspect accounted for the discussion regarding the different ways of understanding the function of journalism in a politically tense context among different generations.

(F6) Company rules against *external* influence on newsroom/editorial staff

2 POINTS

Chilean media depends highly on advertising, which has led to scenarios of low revenue resulting in firing of journalists and editors. Despite this, journalists defend their autonomy from commercial interests.

In Chile, media functions as an industry, depending on advertising for its subsistence, which is also true for the public television channel. In 2019, some newspapers and online media started trying subscription models, but at the time of writing this report, in general, advertising was still the main economic support and income for media.

Between 2019 and 2020, the amount of monthly advertising fell significantly, due to both the economic crisis caused by the 2019 social unrest and the Covid-19 pandemic. When comparing advertisers’ investment in media between May 2019 and May 2020, there was a variation of -67.5 per cent in print and online press, -42.3 per cent in radio, -23.2 per cent in paid television, and -21.0 per cent in open access television (Megatime, 2020). This has dealt a critical blow to the media, which lost advertisers, including one case that became public, because there was an ideological difference between the company that provided advertising revenue and the coverage given to the protests. Consequentially, this economically precarious scenario has resulted in the firing of multiple journalists and editors within the industry, which was already dealing with a previous crisis of redundancies.

Before the crisis intensified, data from previous research stated that 26.3 per cent of Chilean journalists reported being asked to cover a story related to advertisers, and the two biggest problems they see for the practice of journalism are the greater concern about reaching audiences than quality (26.7%) and too

much emphasis on economic achievement (23.1%) (Yez, 2011). In the current critical context, testimonies of the interviewees remain consistent with these numbers. Reporters were aware of the commercial reality of the industry, but in their daily work, they said they did not have any dialogue with commercial areas – and did not even know them. “I find out who the advertisers are when I read the medium”, mentioned one journalist. However, while they did not consider it to be a direct or habitual pressure for journalistic work – nor something that could be generalised for the Chilean case – some interviewees did mention exceptions. In one such case, they admitted to taking special care when giving unfavourable coverage to one of the sponsoring companies. In another, the production of “advertorials” was mentioned as a business strategy adopted in order to reduce effects of the current economic crisis. Therefore, while commercial aspects may not exert a direct pressure on journalists, the medium’s economic subsistence emerged as an unavoidable concern.

Directors and editors-in-chief are more directly exposed to all types of pressures (as presented in Indicator F5 – Company rules against *internal* influence on newsroom/editorial staff). While they recognised such pressures did not always exist, it varied from case to case, since it largely depended on the internal rules of the medium, as well as the temper and personality of the head of the specific newsroom in question. While one of the editors-in-chief stated they preferred to lose an advertiser before losing their autonomy, and a director commented that considering sponsors inside the newsroom would be a “mortal sin”, others said that due to their economic dependency on advertising, they have had to cede to and privilege commercial aspects, for instance, when a topic might potentially damage a sponsoring company. At the same time, they concurred on the relevance of protecting certain stories – giving the medium more credibility – from any kind of pressure.

#### (F7) Procedures on news selection and news processing 2 POINTS

Routine is the main element when selecting news, with relatively small space for reflection. Decisions are mainly taken in editorial meetings and the conversations between journalists and editors during the day.

An ethical code from the national journalism association, Colegio de Periodistas, does exist. But neither the document nor the entity was considered a referent by the media. In their interviews, they asserted it was a political entity, hindering journalistic labour and situating itself in opposition to the media, rather than being a true contributor to their work.

Three of the interviewed media houses stated they had stylebooks. The public television channel explained that it exists, and each journalist receives

it, but also that its use was reserved only for critical situations. However, for another, it was reported as a fundamental tool, updated yearly, and it could imply a sanction for journalists not respecting it. In this case, an abridged version was displayed in the editorial meeting room. Generally, there was a certain consensus that journalists gradually learnt and knew the identity of the medium where they work. Therefore, either with or without a document, there were issues and ways of addressing them that respond to that identity, which are developed on the job.

In every case, the most relevant factor for defining the medium's identity in its news selection was the decision taken by the editor together with the journalist. Editorial meetings, often more than once a day, are an established part of the daily routine for most media, where the staff decides on what news would be covered. Also, depending on the format – for instance, in-depth reporting or a live dispatch on television – journalists and editors agreed that the dialogue during the day is vital, whether it happens remotely or inside the newsroom. Such conversations were considered essential to internal deliberation. It is where, for instance, they defined how to treat issues of equality, the plurality of sources, and the language and focus of the news.

This, however, does not automatically imply high levels of reflection, and functions in the same way as the daily editorial meeting, answering to the agenda and urgent matters of the day. Studies on written and televised news in Chile (Gronemeyer & Porath, 2015; Mujica & Bachmann, 2015; Valenzuela & Arriagada, 2009) have shown that there is a tendency towards homogeneity in news selection. Explanations for this are that the media in general answers to routine, invitations to common briefings called by authorities or other public figures through communication agencies, journalists covering the same area for too long, and solidarity among colleagues from different media working on the same topic. The interviewed journalists and editors working in daily coverage recognised that routine has a heavier weight than strategic reflection about content. One editor interviewed commented: “The guidelines for daily reporting are constructed usually by heart. It is not as if we have heavy discussions in the mornings, because there is no time. The topics are the obvious ones”.

There are indications that digital media republishes content from other media, and therefore, it does not make a substantial difference in the news selection process (Mellado & Scherman, 2020). However, it was observed that media incorporating more investigative journalism intended to differentiate themselves and introduce topics in the agenda. While content published in social media helps them to be up to date with public discussion, both editors and journalists stated they were careful when checking this information. In interviews, they asserted a critical view against polarisation, uncivility, and disinformation occurring on social networks, therefore considering them less relevant than other mechanisms for the generation of news.

## (F8) Rules and practices on internal gender equality 1 POINT

There is a notorious gap in participation in higher positions, where women face greater challenges to work than men. There is also a difference in salaries between genders.

The *Global Report on the Status of Women in News Media* (IWWMF, 2011) showed that in the Chilean media industry, the ratio of men to women was 2:1, a split even more noticeable in women's participation within management boards and higher positions of command. This agrees with the general national reality (CNN Chile, 2020b). Only in junior and senior professional levels inside the media industry – such as in administration, sales, and finances – is there a certain gender balance.

**Table 1** Occupational level of men and women journalists in Chile

Occupational level	Men (#)	Men (%)	Women (#)	Women (%)
Governance	32	91.4	3	8.6
Top-level management	16	76.2	5	23.8
Senior management	38	92.7	3	7.3
Middle management	53	77.9	15	22.1
Senior-level professional	364	58.1	262	41.9
Junior-level professional	465	66.8	231	33.2
Production & design	465	79.4	121	20.6
Technical professional	512	87.8	71	12.2
Sales, finance, & administration	389	43.8	500	56.2
Other	51	81	12	19
Total	2,385	–	1,223	–

Source: IWWMF, 2011

From the analysis of this data by Lagos and Mellado (2013), it can be concluded that there are no significant policies within the different media companies to promote gender equality, nor for enhancing women's careers inside the newsroom. This reality is further confirmed with data from the Global Media Monitoring Project (2015), which stated that in both television and written journalism, 41 per cent of journalists in Chile are women, and 59 per cent are men. Specifically for television, 35 per cent are women and 65 per cent men, while in newspapers, women make up only 23 per cent of journalists, compared with men's 77 per cent.

The women journalists interviewed stated they did not feel a notorious gender gap in the journalistic environment, but they did in decision-making positions. One summarised: "In this medium, the editor is a man and all the journalists

are women”. A female editor commented: “When I arrived, there were no women in editorial positions. This has been one of my preoccupations, adding more women editors”. A woman journalist, from the same medium, added: “As for women reporters, there is no problem, but there is a lack of women editors. It is a man’s world. This happens because of the schedule. There is a lack of space for women there”. The interviewed women editors recognised difficulties ranging from questioning their work and their positions, to their relationship with the management board and external sources; therefore, they face higher challenges in validating themselves in a position of command. One commented: “My first year was very difficult. I had problems with my peers of the type: ‘*Who are you to be my boss?*’” These women directors and editors-in-chief have been opening positions for other women journalists to rise in the hierarchies of their media.

**Table 2** Annual salary of journalists in Chile by gender (USD)

Occupational level	Men (avg. low salary)	Men (avg. high salary)	Women (avg. low salary)	Women (avg. high salary)
Governance <sup>a</sup>	1,311.97 (N = 3)	4,808.32 (N = 3)	2,412.55 (N = 3)	2,412.55 (N = 3)
Top-level management	68,553.44 (N = 3)	92,935.11 (N = 3)	35,231.94 (N = 2)	50,331.35 (N = 2)
Middle management	30,749.72 (N = 7)	69,729.68 (N = 6)	36,903.73 (N = 6)	57,134.16 (N = 6)
Senior-level professional	13,802.11 (N = 8)	46,284.52 (N = 8)	17,928.84 (N = 7)	49,617.17 (N = 7)
Junior-level professional	10,556.89 (N = 7)	38,014.19 (N = 6)	9,530.93 (N = 8)	28,175.56 (N = 8)
Production & design	8,365.47 (N = 8)	19,824.49 (N = 8)	7,568.86 (N = 5)	29,866.70 (N = 5)
Technical professional	6,966.79 (N = 5)	22,714.91 (N = 5)	10,249.47 (N = 3)	17,300.77 (N = 3)
Sales, finance, & administration	11,577.69 (N = 7)	48,230.51 (N = 6)	10,154.03 (N = 9)	39,529.64 (N = 9)
Other	7,382 (N = 5)	17,878.01 (N = 5)	27,266.07 (N = 2)	44,888.45 (N = 2)

Comments: N = number of companies.

<sup>a</sup> “Salaries are noticeably low for both women and men in the governance level, suggesting that service on boards of directors may be mainly voluntary or paid by small honoraria” (IWMF, 2011: 166).

Source: IWMF, 2011

In the area of salaries, the *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* (IWMF, 2011) shows that in most positions, men have higher salaries than women. There are some exceptions, as in the senior professional level, where the participation gap is narrower, corresponding with women reporters and news presenters (see Table 2). This, again, is consistent with the national reality in other work environments (GfK Adimark, 2020). Nevertheless, from the interviews conducted, what emerges is that in positions corresponding to senior and junior levels, negotiations are individual, and other factors such as experience and professional capacity are also weighed, adding to our understanding of why the wage gap is smaller at these levels.

Maternity is an issue arising when discussing women's role in media. Media follows parental leave laws, which rule at a national level, allowing their contracted employees to return to their work positions. However, these are not always fully respected, as evidenced by some cases becoming public due to this (Sepúlveda Pozo, 2018). The interviews revealed that individual maternity experiences varied according to the empathy of each employer. In some cases, more allowances such as a home office or flexible schedule are practiced, while in others, such measures are not adopted.

Regarding harassment, the *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* (IWMF, 2011) shows that internal policies are often irregular: 56 per cent of all Chilean media do not have regulations in place, while 44 per cent do. While this was not a prominent topic in the interviews, we can confirm that for female journalists, support in confronting this type of situation is dependent on the criteria of specific employers and their direct bosses.

Another issue has to do with the gender gap regarding the type of topics assigned, especially when considering that Chile is a country of natural disasters, and that it recently experienced a wave of protests. One of the editors said:

We need to have a cultural change. That is a reflection we have done within this medium. For emergencies, when you think about who to send, you think of a man. In this medium there are more women than there are men, and we sent men to cover the protests. We have a debt there.

## (F9) Gender equality in media content

0 POINTS

The difference in sources and roles assigned to men and women is noticeable in Chile. This issue concerns academia and several entities. Despite available guidelines, it is still not apparent in the journalistic profession.

Data from the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) (2015) shows that in both written and television media, 68 per cent of news subjects are men and 32 per cent are women. Separated by type, in television, 35 per cent of

the news subjects are women and 65 per cent men, and in print, only 23 per cent are women against 77 per cent men, as news subjects. Table 3 highlights the professions of sources called to speak on the news. There, we can see that women surpass men only in less-qualified positions.

**Table 3** Occupation of news subjects in Chilean media, by gender (per cent)

Occupation	Female	Male
Police, military, paramilitary, militia, fire officer	0	100
Sportsperson, athlete, player, coach, referee	0	100
Health worker, social worker, childcare worker	0	100
Criminal, suspect, no other occupation given	0	100
Lawyer, judge, magistrate, legal advocate, etc.	9	91
Businessperson, executive, manager, stockbroker	10	90
Government, politician, minister, spokesperson	16	84
Government employee, public servant	20	80
Office or service worker, non-management worker	22	78
Academic expert, lecturer, teacher	30	70
Science or technology professional, engineer, etc.	33	67
Activist or worker in civil society organisation, NGO, trade union	33	67
Student, pupil, schoolchild	38	63
Doctor, dentist, health specialist	50	50
Media professional, journalist, filmmaker, etc	50	50
Other, only as last resort & explain	50	50
Villager or resident – no other occupation given	58	42
Tradesperson, artisan, labourer, truck driver, etc	67	33

Source: GMMP, 2015

Hudson’s (2016) research, analysing the presence of women as sources in traditional Chilean media in 2014–2016, coincides with this. In her research, the ratio between male and female sources is 4:1, and she concludes there is considerable inequality in the representation of women in “hard news”. This, according to Hudson, corresponds not only to journalistic cultures, but also to the general reality of the country. Table 4, in such regard, compares media presence with the participation of men and women in three different areas of coverage.

**Table 4** Coverage area of news source, by gender (per cent)

Area	Female participation	Female media presence	Male participation	Male media presence
Politics	21.58	20.40	78.42	79.60
Economics & business	12.32	10.40	87.68	89.60
Science & technology	41.36	32.20	58.64	67.70

Source: Hudson, 2016

Zurita Prat (2017) studied newspaper covers and found that 77 per cent portrayed men, and only 18.4 per cent women; 4.6 per cent portrayed both genders. This study also highlighted how women appear slightly more often in tabloid covers than legacy media. As for topics, covers where women appeared frequently include politics, show business, crime news, and society. Men appeared in covers related to politics, sports, crime, and international news. It is important to consider it was an election year, and that the president of Chile was then Michelle Bachelet, which may explain the prominence of women in politics.

The main role given to women in Chilean media is representing popular opinion, as well as giving their personal experiences, against authority roles – such as spokesperson or expert – which are often accorded to men (GMMP, 2015).

**Table 5** Role of news subject by gender (per cent)

Role	Female	Male
Spokesperson	16	84
Expert or commentator	24	76
Eyewitness	47	53
Personal experience	57	43
Popular opinion	64	36

Source: GMMP, 2015

Antezana Barrios (2011) identifies feminine roles within Chilean news shows; for women presenters, roles are “the professional woman” and “traditional lady”, while as sources, the roles are “the female victim”, “sensual woman”, and “professional woman”. This represents a rather limited framework for roles, where the male gaze dominates.

Coverage of women in Chilean media has also been a concern for academia. One of the focuses has been the coverage of femicides, where Antezana Barrios and Lagos Lira (2015) analyse a narrative associated with these stories. They demonstrate how violence against women is normalised in the search to justify

the culprit's actions in the story, questioning the woman's autonomy. The same researchers studied the coverage of abortion in Chile (Antezana Barrios & Lagos Lira, 2019) where, equally, the press frames women negatively.

Gender equality in media coverage is a concern for several entities in Chile:

- UNESCO, in conjunction with Chilean universities, published the handbook *Por un periodismo no sexista: pautas para comunicar desde una perspectiva de género* [For a non-sexist journalism: Guidelines to communicate with a gendered perspective] (Alberti Garfias et al., 2010).
- The government also published a guide for non-stereotypical communication (SECOM & SERNAM, 2016).
- The collective of women communicators *Mujeres en el medio* [Women in the media], together with the Gender and Equality Observatory, published *Guía de definiciones y prácticas periodísticas para medios no sexistas* [Guide of definitions and journalistic practices for non-sexist media] (Gutiérrez González & Maureira Martínez, 2018).
- The National Television Council commissioned a study about good gender practices on the international level (Lagos Lira, 2010) and published a guide with advice on how to medially deal with subjects of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The National Association of Women Journalists created a handbook to promote gender equality in media (ANMPE, 2020).
- The NGO *Hay Mujeres* [There are Women], seeks to increase the participation of women experts in media.

The information extracted from the interviews shows these efforts are yet to permeate newsrooms. There are no policies in this regard, and it is up to each editor and journalist to choose sources, with them prioritising the balance of different political tendencies over other efforts, such as women's representation.

## (F10) Misinformation and digital platforms (alias social media)

2 POINTS

Having teams dedicated to fact-checking is still an emerging process within the Chilean journalistic routine. The social protests of 2019 promoted and accelerated the establishment of these practices.

A key consequence of the 2019 protests in Chile was a wave of misinformation. The seven categories of information disorder identified by the NGO First

Draft (2019) were present in content shared from and about the protests. With people starting to use the term “fake news” in daily conversation, fact-checking as a journalistic genre had important growth: from 2 active fact-checking projects, there was a jump to 17, among them professional newsrooms, and both university and independent initiatives. The fact-checkers behind these projects recognised the urgent necessity of the context (Núñez-Mussa, 2019). At the time of writing this report, 13 of them were still active.

In parallel, the media began to introduce fact-checking practices for their published content with more intensity than ever before, as they were particularly observed and questioned about their coverage of the protests. “Everyone was seeing intentionality where there was none. Our challenge was very hard, because people were very angry”, mentioned one editor. At the same time, the media continuously received user-generated content, especially audiovisual material. Because of this, there was special preoccupation with monitoring television channels, due to a previous case where a station, after the 8M march, had shown out-of-context images corresponding to archive footage.

Despite all the precautions taken by the media after the 2019 protests, part of the audience expressed an attitude of distrust towards the content. The most notorious example was one video, sent by users and broadcast by the public channel, which showed an intentional fire being set on the door of a bank. This video was widely disputed by other media, social media, and the national journalism association, even though the channel broadcast a verification process of it.

Some sections of the media have established handbooks with protocols to prevent the publication of misinformation, and they made temporary changes to their teams, in order to dedicate more journalists and time to this work. For instance, one organisation increased its internal fact-checking capacity from one to four people exclusively, with a policy of not publishing anything without passing through this process. After the four most intense months, two of these four people continued their work as fact-checkers. A similar experience was seen across all media organisations, with some variations. One journalist said: “We started to take fake news seriously during the 2019 protests. After a few days, we created a fact-checking team, which not only produced publishable articles, but also verified any dubious information received in the newsroom”. All the interviewed editors argued that they preferred losing a scoop over publishing content that is not fact-checked, and that they care, especially, about content received from social media.

## (F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 1 POINT

The protection of journalists is irregular, depending on each employer and on the context.

As of 2020, Chile occupies the 51st place out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index from Reporters Without Borders (2020). According to the index, Chilean journalists are “vulnerable”, both regarding the protection of their sources, and when reporting certain issues like corruption cases or the Mapuche conflict. The report adds that in 2019, after the social upheaval, several journalists were attacked while they were covering the protests. The interviewed editors and journalists corroborated that they implemented measures such as reporting with mobile phones instead of microphones and cameras, without identifications linked to their media, and parking their cars away from the events. One journalist stated:

There were a lot of aggressions against us since the protests started. There were colleagues who were grievously upset by this, and as a result, the media’s administration organised workshops with psychologists. There were cathartic moments in the team chat group. Some of them were very affected by the comments they received in social media.

Reactions to these attacks, whether they happened in person or online, varied (as mentioned in Indicator F8 – Rules and practices on internal gender equality, the same happened with sexual harassment, with decisions to back up journalists depending on employers and higher command positions). Referring to sources calling to criticise their coverage, a journalist commented, “Many times you do not find out about this, but the editors defend you”. In some media houses, when the work of one journalist is in question, the medium publishes other content backing up the previous work. In other cases, concerning well-known journalists, the organisation would give them space to defend themselves on air or in the paper, may simply not react or, alternatively, the journalist could do it through their personal social media accounts.

One interviewed editor reported that she takes special care to back up her journalists, because when she was a reporter, she experienced being attacked on social media and by sources, at the time feeling she did not receive the support needed: “Other journalists defended me personally”. Another editor, at the command position, considered that support means taking no part in criticising the journalist. Meanwhile, another editor reflected on this and commented: “Maybe we should begin taking care”.

Two editors mentioned they saw zero contribution in making available the opportunity to have comments made on their websites, both disabling that section and using the same adjective for them: “vicious”. One said: “We used to have a journalist dedicated to moderating comments, but a few years ago we

decided to close comments altogether”. There is also consensus from journalists and editors on their view that the national journalism association, under their current administration, is an entity that attacks rather than protects them.

### *Dimension: Equality / Interest Mediation (E)*

(E1) Media ownership concentration national level 1 POINT

A highly concentrated market with media holdings.

For the last decade, media concentration in Chile has been a topic of concern for academics and observers of the industry (see also Del Valle-Rojas et al., 2011; Godoy, 2016; Guerra, 2019; Mayorga-Rojel et al., 2010; Monckeberg, 2009; Sunkel & Geoffrey, 2002). This became one of its defining characteristics, and as a result, Chile stood out among other Latin American countries in this aspect (Becerra & Mastrini, 2017), particularly for print, although it also demonstrated high indexes of concentration in the television market. Noam (2016) measured the concentration of the market share among the top four firms and found that Chile ranks 4 of 30 countries, with over 90 per cent concentration. In the same study, for the Herfindahl-Hirschmann Index – measuring market concentration, going from most to least concentrated in all media markets – Chile ranks 11 of 30 countries. Within this analysis, Chile has a little over 3 points out of 10, in a range going from 2.5 upwards; this is considered a high level of concentration.

As for plurality of content, the Noam Index (Noam, 2016) gave Chile less than 2 points, placing it 14th among 30 countries, from most to least pluralistic (the index ranges 0–10; the higher the number, the lower the pluralism).

As for cross-concentration, that is to say, actors being present in more than one media industry, the Power Index – combining the results from Herfindahl-Hirschman Index, concentration ratio of the four largest firms, and Noam Index – shows that Chile ranks 12 among 30 countries, with an index close to 4 out of 10. Additionally, the study shows that the country has over 60 per cent foreign ownership in its media market and less than 10 per cent public ownership.

The 1980 Constitution forbids state monopoly for media and allows the entrance of private companies to the television market. The law “on freedom of opinion and information and the exercise of journalism” (Ministry Secretary General, 2013) includes pluralism as a value and defines it. This law establishes the liberty of different actors to edit, establish, and sustain media organisations or companies and allows foreign property for radio within a maximum of 10 per cent participation. Exception is granted as a principle of reciprocity if, in the country of origin of the investor, a Chilean can access the same or higher property of radio stations or television channels. Owners of media houses have

not followed this rule strictly, as in the case of radio stations bought by the Prisa group, without any subsequent sanction (Anguita Ramírez & Labrador Blanes, 2019). There is also a duty to be transparent and account for changes in ownership of media to the Office of the National Economic Prosecutor. This, as opposed to the Tribunals for Free Competition, was established as the entity in charge of ensuring free competition in the case of media companies after a modification to the original law.

The law “enabling the introduction of digital terrestrial television” (Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications, 2014) modified the National Television Council and accords the entity a role of safeguarding the inner plurality of the television system. Further, it understands the radio-electric spectrum as a national good, and therefore, not attributable to one person: concessions are temporary, and the State must be paid for their use. This law does not allow an owner to have more than one national open access television concession in VHF, except for the public channel. However, they can also opt to own a digital land-based signal UHF. For everything else, the media market falls under the law for free competition.

Advertising investment has, during and since 2018, dropped for every form of media, except digital outlets, where there was an increase. Table 6 shows that most advertising in the market is concentrated in digital media, followed by open access television (AAM, 2020).

**Table 6** Advertising share by media, 2018–2020 (per cent)

Media	2018	2019	2020
Television	28.8	27.3	25.3
Paid television	8.9	6.4	5.8
Newspapers	14.9	11.6	9.6
Magazines	1.3	0.6	0.3
Radio	8.8	8.7	8.1
Street	14.4	14.8	14
Cinema	0.5	0.3	0.2
Digital	22.4	30.2	36.6

Source: AAM, 2020: 4

The Chilean media market has among its main actors several media holdings, shown in Table 7.

**Table 7** Chilean media holdings

<b>Holding</b>	<b>Media and other companies</b>
Edwards Group and El Mercurio SAP	<p><i>Print:</i> El Mercurio (newspaper, supplements, &amp; magazines); Las Últimas Noticias (tabloid); La Segunda (evening newspaper); HoyxHoy (free newspaper)</p> <p><i>Book Publishing:</i> El Mercurio Aguilar</p> <p><i>Online:</i> The digital version of the print newspapers &amp; magazines; Emol; SoyChile</p> <p><i>Radio:</i> Digital FM; Positiva FM; Radio Universo</p> <p><i>Regional newspaper companies:</i> Gestión Regional de Medios S.A.; Empresa El Mercurio de Valparaíso S.A.; Empresa Periodística El Norte S.A.; Sociedad Periodística Araucanía S.A.; Diario El Sur S.A. (See Table 8 for each regional newspaper.)</p>
Consortio Periodístico de Chile (Copesa)	<p><i>Print:</i> newspaper (La Tercera)</p> <p><i>Online:</i> LaTercera.com and its online products; LT Pulso; Paula; Icarito; Culto; Mouse; Glamorama; Biut; LaCuarta.com</p> <p><i>Radio company:</i> Grupo Dial</p> <p><i>Radios:</i> Duna 89.7; Paula</p> <p><i>Distribution company:</i> Meta S.A.</p>
Bethia Group (72.5%) and Discovery Inc. (27.5%)	<p><i>Company:</i> Megamedia</p> <p><i>TV:</i> Mega</p> <p><i>Cable TV:</i> Mega +; Etc...TV (70% belongs to Megamedia and 30% to Etc... medios)</p> <p><i>Radio:</i> Infinita; Carolina; Romántica; Tiempo; Disney</p>
Luksic Group	<p><i>TV:</i> Canal 13</p> <p><i>Cable TV:</i> 13 C; REC TV</p> <p><i>Online:</i> 13.cl; T13.cl; Ar13.cl; Factormujer.cl; Horizonte.cl</p> <p><i>Shop:</i> Bazar 13</p> <p><i>Streaming apps:</i> 13 Now; T13 móvil; Tele13 Radio</p> <p><i>Radio:</i> Tele13 Radio; Oasis; Play; Sonar</p> <p><i>Podcast:</i> Emisor Podcasting</p>
BioBio Comunicaciones S.A.	<p><i>Radio:</i> BioBio Concepción; BioBio Santiago; El Carbón; San Cristóbal FM; Punto 8</p> <p><i>TV:</i> BioBio TV; Canal 9 BioBio TV</p> <p><i>Online:</i> BioBio.cl; Página 7</p> <p><i>Print:</i> La Tribuna (newspaper)</p>
Prisa Group	<p><i>Company:</i> Iberoamericana Radios Chile</p> <p><i>Radios:</i> Imagina; Concierto; Futuro; Pudahuel; ADN; RadioActiva; Rock&amp;Pop; FMDos; Corazón; Los40</p>
Warnermedia	<i>Cable TV:</i> CNN Chile; TNT Sports
ViacomCBS	<i>TV:</i> CHV
Albavisión	<i>TV:</i> La Red; Telecanal; Telecanal Talca; Telecanal Santa Cruz
TVI Group	<i>Cable TV:</i> Via X; Via X 2; ARTV; Zona Latina

*Comments:* Excluding those owning just one or two media, independent of their role within the market.

*Source:* based on public information

Considering the whole of the media market, the Bethia Group concentrates most of the advertising (with 30–40%), followed by the Luksic Group (10–20%), the Edwards Group and Copesa (both 5–10%), and the Prisa Group (0–5%) (FNE, 2019), representing how one key actor leads the proportion of total advertising in the realm of television and radio products.

If we consider media markets separately, for newspapers, *El Mercurio* has an average circulation of 123,687 copies throughout the week, surpassing its competitor, *La Tercera* (weekly average of 77,478 copies) by a wide margin (Valida, 2018); this is even bigger after Copesa reduced its circulation in 2021. However, regarding newspapers, there has been a change in the business model. Both Copesa and El Mercurio SAP began boosting digital subscriptions in 2019, making them compete with other free and independent actors. Therefore, there is an absence of sufficient data to precisely understand the role they play within the digital market regarding readership and subscriptions.

In 2016, the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index for television market shows a concentration of 2,314. This is significantly high considering that the Justice Department and the Federal Trade Commission in the United States declare that a market is highly concentrated when it reaches 2,500. An explanation for this is the emergence of Bethia Group as a strong actor in a market facing an economic crisis and taking a big share of the audience and the advertising (Julio, 2017). The contents offered by television channels are equal, without any of the channels going over 20 per cent (CNTV, 2020b). Among the cable companies, the market is shared between Vía Trans Radio Chilena – VTR (34.2%), Movistar (21.3%), DIRECTV (18.9%), Claro (13.5%), and others (12.2%) (Julio, 2017), demonstrating a competitive marketplace.

For the radio market, Prisa Group received the largest number of radio commissions at 10, twice as much as the Bethia Group's 5, and, thereby, concentrating the most. This is consistent with investment in advertising. While Prisa has a higher investment, between 30–50 per cent, the two larger groups competing in radio, Bethia and Luksic, hold between 10–20 per cent. The Chilean Communications Company was not included in Table 7 because it only owns Radio Cooperativa, with 10–20 per cent of investment, followed by Copesa, with 5–10 per cent. Finally, BioBio and El Mercurio SAP account for 0–5 per cent of the advertising market. Regarding audiences achieved by each of these companies' radios, there is an equal percentage relationship, but Copesa exchanges its position with the Chilean Company of Communications (FNE, 2019).

The native digital landscape has a variety of actors of different scales, like Ciper Chile, Interferencia, El Dínamo, El Mostrador, El Desconcierto, Cambio 21, and so forth. This, alongside others with print and digital outlets like The Clinic and El Periodista, nevertheless, provides a diversity of ownership in the media market.

## (E2) Media ownership concentration regional level 2 POINTS

One company dominates newspapers, but media ownership is diversified at the regional level.

Chile has 16 regions. In the newspaper market, among the 63 periodicals identified for this report, 34 belong to the regional newspaper network of El Mercurio SAP; of these, 21 are directly owned by it and for the rest, it acts as an advertising agent. If we consider only the newspapers owned by El Mercurio SAP, through its local companies, it holds 33 per cent of the regional print market – it is the only one to achieve this level of concentration. A network of online news outlets called Soy Chile, one per region, complements its print publications.

For television, the public channel TVN has a network of nine regional offices: Antofagasta, Atacama, Coquimbo, Valparaíso, O'Higgins, Maule, Bío-Bío, Araucanía, and Austral. These units provide information to the central station in the capital and broadcast their own news programmes. This means that it is the only transversal actor present in several regions of Chile with local content.

The media holdings with higher impacts on the market, such as Bethia and Luksic Groups, have put their efforts in products with a national vocation, leaving space for entrepreneurial projects in different regions, whether from individual efforts or small groups whose focus is to develop content about what happens outside Santiago. The profiles are diverse. There are advertising firms that also own radio channels, start-ups like Mi Voz – a network of citizen journalism outlets focused on each region – and bigger companies like BioBio Comunicaciones. The latter is very strong in the BioBio Region, with its newspaper, television, and radio channels. It has expanded its brand to Santiago and is steadily becoming one of the most trusted brands for news consumption at the national level, as shown in the *Reuters Institute's Digital News Reports* (Fernández Medina & Núñez-Mussa, 2019, 2020). CNTV and Subtel allow the concession of regional and low-range stations, bringing considerable diversity to the media map with small projects.

**Table 8** Regional products of Chilean media holdings

Holding	Media and other companies
Grupo Edwards and El Mercurio SAP (north to south)	<p><i>Regional newspaper companies:</i> Gestión Regional de Medios S.A.; Empresa El Mercurio de Valparaíso S.A.; Empresa Periodística El Norte S.A.; Sociedad Periodística Araucanía S.A.; Diario El Sur S.A.</p> <p><i>Newspapers:</i> La Estrella de Arica; La Estrella de Iquique; El Mercurio de Antofagasta; El Mercurio de Calama; La Estrella de Antofagasta; La Estrella de Tocopilla; La Estrella del Loa; El Diario de Atacama; La Estrella del Huasco; El Líder de San Antonio; El Mercurio de Valparaíso; La Estrella de Quillota; La Estrella de Valparaíso; Crónica Chillán; El Sur; La Estrella de Concepción; El Austral, el diario de la Araucanía; El Diario Austral, Región de los Ríos; El Austral, el diario de Osorno; El Llanquihue; La Estrella de Chiloé</p> <p><i>Associated newspapers:</i><sup>a</sup> El Día; El Ovallino; El Andino; El Observador; El Trabajo; El Rancagüino; El Centro; La Prensa; La Tribuna; Las Noticias; El Divisadero; El Pingüino Multimedia; La Prensa Austral</p> <p><i>Online:</i> SoyChile (21 websites with local content from north to south)</p> <p><i>Radio:</i> Digital FM; Positiva FM</p>
Madero (north)	<p><i>TV:</i> Desierto de Atacama TV</p> <p><i>Radio:</i> Radio Madero (four press centres: Antofagasta, Copiapó, La Serena and Santiago)</p>
BioBio Comunicaciones S.A. (south)	<p><i>Radio:</i> BioBio Concepción; El Carbón; San Cristóbal FM; Punto 8</p> <p><i>TV:</i> Canal 9 BioBio TV</p> <p><i>Print:</i> La Tribuna (newspaper)</p>
SC Comunicaciones (north)	<p><i>Radio:</i> Caribe FM; Alegre FM; Estación FM; FM Éxitos</p>
Cadena 33 (north)	<p><i>Radio:</i> Festiva; Pedro León Gallo; Regional</p>
CNC Medios (north and centre)	<p><i>Radio:</i> Canal 95; FM Plus; FM Quiero</p> <p><i>Online:</i> El Mensajero</p> <p><i>TV:</i> Antofagasta TV; Televisión Regional de Chile</p>
Red Mi Voz (north to south)	<p><i>Online:</i> El Morrocotudo; El Boyaldía; El Nortero; El Quehaydecierto; El Observatodo; El Martutino; El Paradiario14; El Rancahuaso; ElaMaule; El ConceCuenta; La oPiñón; El Naveghable; El Vacanudo; El Repuertero; El Magallanews</p>
Diarios Comunes (north)	<p><i>Online:</i> El Comunal; El Serenense; El Vicuñense; El Coquimbano; El Paihuanino; El Andacollino; El Hurtadino; La Perla del Limarí; El Montepatrino; El Punitaquino; El Combarbalino; El Canelino; El Illapelino; El Vileño; El Salamanquino</p>
Diarios en Red (north to south)	<p><i>Online:</i> 14 news websites</p>

*Comments:* Excluding the public channel TVN.

<sup>a</sup> Associated with the network of El Mercurio, though not owned by the company

*Source:* based on public information

## (E3) Diversity of news formats

2 POINTS

A media landscape that achieves innovation, but it is still at an early stage as for the variety of formats and consolidation of the same.

In the domain of the printed press, publishers dedicated to producing magazines have closed down, leaving fewer actors in the market. Among these actors, we can highlight independent projects that diversify the informative landscape. For instance, *The Clinic* is an exceptional case for the formats it offers, including combinations of interviews, narrative journalism, and high-quality investigations along with humorous content like jokes, caricatures, and memes discussing current political events.

El Mercurio SAP is the main actor in the domain of the printed press. *El Mercurio* newspaper includes several specific content supplements. Some are published daily, and give coverage to economics and international affairs, alongside other supplements published on weekends, which dwell deeper into topics such as culture, interviews, and long-form political reporting. In addition, they also publish several magazines on diverse topics exclusive to subscribers like current events, long-form journalism, decoration, women, and traveling. However, in 2020, to decrease costs, the magazines have been adapted into supplements inside the newspaper. In 2019, the newspaper implemented a paywall on its website, providing access to a digital version of the printed edition and some exclusive content, such as a newsletter. Additionally, the company has an evening newspaper, a tabloid, and the largest network of regional newspapers in the country, as well as owning other products such as FM radio stations and an informative web outlet, *Emol*, which functions as a parallel newsroom and presents news, audiovisual content, services, and multimedia specials.

Meanwhile, the Copesa group in 2021 closed several print products and reduced the circulation of its main newspaper *La Tercera* to weekends and only in two of the country regions: Metropolitan and Valparaíso. However, it is propelling a large variety of digital products. Under the brand *La Tercera*, it includes sub-brands offering quality articles on evening news, reporting, in-depth interviews, and columns. They are also known to develop more niche products. For example, they have a women-targeted outlet, a website about the geek world, one about culture, a site for economic reporting, another for science, sports, and practical guides for daily life, among others. To access this content, one needs a digital subscription. They have different newsletters for each product, a daily podcast, and some audiovisual productions. Its focus on digital outlets follows the line of multiplatform media, where there are some consolidated experiences. Notable among them are the news products from Tele13, the news brand of Canal 13. This offers mobile online transmission, integrating content from radio and television. Additionally, *Pauta.cl*, a project born out of a multimedia logic, with an FM radio channel as the main axis for

its content, is also transmitted in an audiovisual format. This format is privileged for some interview programmes. It also has a web outlet with original content, repeating what has been broadcast, alongside a daily newsletter.

It is important to distinguish between informative radio channels – which include news departments with journalists on the streets, and news shows throughout the day – and others specialising in columnists, interviews, and news analysis that include conversation panels in the mornings and evenings. The first type is offered by Cooperativa, BioBio, Agricultura, and University of Chile's own station; all of them also have conversational spaces. Meanwhile, channels that only have columnists, interviews, and panels are offered much more widely in FM.

The *Digital News Report* (Fernández Medina & Núñez-Mussa, 2019) shows that 38 per cent of those surveyed listened to podcasts on a monthly basis. Within this category, notable attempts have been provided by independent initiatives such as Las Raras Podcast and Relato Nacional, which produce audio narrative chronicles.

Luksic Group, owners of Canal 13 and its radio channels, have promoted this format, first with podcasts depending directly on the stations, then with *Emisor Podcasting*, a platform offering more specific content. Cooperativa launched its first podcast site in 2020; this functions independently from the content broadcast on the radio station using different formats, such as documentary chronicles, not often heard in daily coverage.

Open access television offers informative content constituting 20.6 per cent of the total programming, equivalent to 9,543 hours of broadcasting (news shows compose 95% of this offering) (CNTV, 2020b). In addition to television reporting and dispatches with daily information, news shows have increasingly become more extensive, where different formats share the same airtime: columns by specialised journalists and analysts or in-depth reporting, for instance. These specific sections often have a team of professionals dedicated to its development. A similar thing happens with sections dedicated to travelling and lifestyle, with pieces that border on documentaries. On Sundays, sports sections also have their own shows. In addition, news shows present in-depth interviews, where interviewees vary from experts to relevant public figures.

In other non-fiction formats, conversation shows occupy 19 per cent of total programming, subdivided in the following formats: group conversation (34.4%), interview (32.6%), opinion (14%), services and orientation (12.5%), forum-debate (3.7%), and commentary (2.7%) (CNTV, 2020b). Morning shows are additional to these. After the 2019 protests, they shifted from entertainment to news content, with politicians, news presenters, and specialists participating in conversation panels about the topics of the daily agenda.

Cable television has two national channels (*CNN Chile, 24 Horas*) that offer 24/7 news and varied shows including interviews, reporting, and discussion

rounds about different topics like health, sports, inclusion, economics, international issues, and so forth. Alongside, there is also a cable channel depending on Mega, which combines informative content with a variety of shows and movies.

As for web outlets, there is a large assortment of independent, university, and foundation projects offering columns, reporting, and interviews, including long-form investigative journalism. The most prestigious is the Centre for Investigative Journalism (Ciper, for the initials in Spanish), a referent for watchdog reporting. It has added to their content a section with columns written by university professors to share their academic works. Interactivity, design, and user experience, whether by time or resources, are still better achieved in media that depend on companies, such as Grupo Copesa, or in university media.

One of the most relevant developments in improving diversity of news formats has been the increasing number of fact-checking projects in the country. Before 18 October 2019, there were two regular fact-checking projects, one being *El Polígrafo*, a section within *El Mercurio*, and the other being *Factchecking UC*, belonging to the School of Communication at Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. After the protests, between university, independent, and media initiatives, there were a total of 17 projects verifying information, emerging due to the need to combat misinformation during the unrest (Núñez-Mussa, 2019).

#### (E4) Minority/Alternative media

2 POINTS

There are media and initiatives for several specific communities, but usually they are born out of those same groups and tend to be niche.

According to data from the Immigration Department of the Ministry for the Interior and Public Safety (2020), the number of visas granted between 2000 and 2006 was under 50,000. It started to grow from 2012 (107,372) and reached a peak of 438,222 visas in 2018; however, it decreased to 328,211 in 2019. This has had an effect on the creation of new communities within the country. Between 2000 and 2019, the largest number of visas were granted to immigrants from Peru (27%), followed by Venezuela (18%), Colombia (13%), and Haiti and Bolivia (both 11%).

Among migrant media, immigrants have found a space to talk to their own diasporas within the country with independent media projects, such as community channels, low coverage radios, and printed newspapers. All these projects are self-managed, whether by individual initiatives, or by groups with diverse motivations, such as answering to the discrimination they have received in the country, giving information to newcomers, or sharing their migrant experiences (Yévenes Vivianco, 2018). For instance, the Haitian community has various independent initiatives: the radio channel Konbit FM, broadcasting in Spanish

and Creole; a television show within the local channel in the district of Quilicura; the YouTube channel ANYTV, which is produced, edited, and presented by a Haitian for other migrants; and a weekly show in Universidad Austral de Chile's [Austral University of Chile's] radio, an initiative created by young people from this Caribbean nation.

Media received criticism for being discriminatory against Haitian migration coverage (Dorsainvil, 2019). In order to correct that criticism and promote integration, some mainstream outlets took measures, such as Copesa's former tabloid *La Cuarta*, which hired a Haitian anchor for a news show posted on their website. The morning show *Bienvenidos*, meanwhile, had a sociologist who had immigrated from Haiti for almost five months on their panel.

Since 2015, the self-sustained radio Charanga Latina from Antofagasta – created by a young Colombian entrepreneur – exists in the north of Chile. It was originally online, but has since moved to FM, alongside a mobile app. It is financed through dance events under the brand of the radio, which has a team of nine people. They have declared that only 30 per cent of their audience is Chilean (Yévenes Vivianco, 2018). Another relevant case is *El Vino-Tinto*, a politically oriented newspaper founded in 2016 and developed by a team of professionals for the Venezuelan migrant population. It prints 5,000 copies per edition and is distributed at 85 points throughout Santiago. It also has a web version.

One of the oldest projects for migrants and tourists is the newspaper *The Santiago Times*, printed 1991–2014. It was born as a hobby for its creator and became the only medium to publish Chilean news entirely in English. According to their website, it has employed journalists who then moved to Reuters and *The New York Times* (The Santiago Times, 2020). After an economic crisis, a crowdfunding campaign assisted the publication in finally returning as a web outlet in 2016.

Concerning accessibility practices, The National Service for the Disabled, under the Ministry of Social Development and Families, is an entity that advises the media about good accessibility practices, among other functions. All open access television channels have sign language interpreters. The Regional Association of Television Channels has a news programme transmitted by 23 stations, with a guideline for inclusive topics, and with a co-anchor who uses sign language. The same project has a parallel website with an accessible configuration for users with diverse needs. The cable channel *CNN Chile* has in its regular programming a conversation programme called *Conciencia Inclusiva*, which approaches in each episode a topic related to disability, incorporating testimonies and specialists.

There is not a complete census of alternative media in Chile. During the 2019 protests, lists of recommended independent media were distributed, among them the project Piensaprensa and the collective Red Estudiantil de

Información [Student information network], formed by university students. In addition, there is an organised network of alternative media: Red Alternativa de los Pueblos [Alternative Network for the People] that unites 18 media projects, all self-managed, varying from radio stations and programmes to newspapers, websites, magazines, and news agencies. The initiatives are rooted in collectives of diverse sizes and NGOs. For sustenance, some ask for funding from their own followers. A few projects have professional journalists. The network's collaboration is evident in the case of radio programmes, as they are transmitted by other stations. Despite some members of the network working with printed editions, their main means of communication is the Internet. Their sites are hosted in different platforms with diverse levels of professionalisation, starting from blogs to websites with more advanced designs. The sites combine original content with articles extracted from other sources.

This network's media projects coincide with its anti-capitalist agenda, as expressed through their editorials. For example, Radio HumedaLes and Radio Agüita says their existence is an answer to the concentration of media and a criticism to how mainstream media covers the issues concerning the network, like indigenous peoples, human rights, environment, feminism, and social justice. These are the topics where the different projects converge; some initiatives, meanwhile, have greater emphasis on only some. For example, Radio HumedaLes defines itself as a lesbian feminist radio programme; the newspaper *El Pueblo*, with a Marxist bent, stresses areas related to ideological education. One of the most common topics for the network is the situation of indigenous people. For instance, the radio programme Ayni presents contents in Aimara and Quechua. Among the ethnic groups existing in Chile, the most relevant is the Mapuche people, who have taken part in a historical conflict with the Chilean State for their autonomy, territories, and political representation. Members of the network are particularly critical of the way legacy media covers Mapuche people, arguing that it creates a narrative of criminalisation. The most significant project in this respect is *Mapuexpress*, formed in 2000 as a website by Mapuche professionals. What distinguishes them is their publications have communities as their direct source, through releases about their activities and problems. There have been other similar initiatives, which have since disappeared, while *Mapuexpress* has been running steadily for 20 years (*Mapuexpress*, 2020).

Alternative media is usually not in Santiago, but in cities to the north and south of the country. The focal points for local conflicts are in regions further away from the capital. Therefore, offices of these projects outside Santiago means their priority is local issues, and in-depth coverage of indigenous and environmental topics. Alongside the network, some projects are also associated with other initiatives with similar profiles. Outside the network, meanwhile, the channel *Mata o te Rapa Nui*, broadcast from and for Easter Island in Rapa Nui language, is worth mentioning for their focus on local issues.

(E5) Affordable public and private news media 2 POINTS

Subscriptions to the main printed and digital newspapers are expensive for the average salary, but the rest of the media are affordable for the people

In 2020, Chile's average income per month is CLP 573,964 (EUR 620), and the gross domestic product per capita is CLP 12,478,712 (EUR 13,481) (INE, 2019).

The national newspapers from the two largest companies, *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, established paywalls in 2019 and gave a greater emphasis to their subscription model. An annual digital and print subscription to *El Mercurio* costs CLP 164,900 (EUR 178) in Santiago, while outside the capital prices vary between CLP 171,610–214,400 (EUR 185–231) in different regions, mostly due to shipping costs. A digital-only subscription costs CLP 149,390 (EUR 161); therefore, for Chileans with an average income, it is expensive and not an accessible medium. *La Tercera* offers a yearly print and digital subscription for CLP 77,880 (EUR 88) and digital-only subscriptions for CLP 47,880 (EUR 43), both of which are also relatively high for a Chilean earning average wages (all prices consulted in 2020).

Open access television and radio channels are free and there is no special usage tax, beyond the fact that the state funds the public channel in a combined model with advertisement. Within available companies, access to only cable or satellite television can cost from CLP 23,000 (EUR 25). However, they are usually sold as a single pack with Internet or phone services. These companies offer both 24/7 national news channels, *CNN Chile* and *24 Horas*, and international reference brands such as CNN and the BBC, but only in English. Overall, these are more accessible for average-earning Chileans.

Different companies offer fixed and mobile Internet connections. The cheapest fixed Internet plans are around CLP 20,000 (EUR 22) per month, and the most economic mobile plans are nearly CLP 10,000 (EUR 11) per month (2020 data). This provides access to a large variety of informative online media, which are, with some exceptions, free to access for all content. Mobile Internet, being the most economical, is also the most widely used.

(E6) Content monitoring instruments 1 POINT

There is more than one external instance, which functions in a case-by-case manner, but media do not self-monitor permanently for the citizenship.

In Chile, the national associations of radio, television, and printed press, grouping most commercial mass media organisations in the country, forms the Chilean Federation of Media. It is an entity that includes an ethics council for the media, comprising experts and academics. Since 1990, the council has

ruled over cases concerning the media that are part of the Federation. In case a majority of the council members rules against a medium, it must publish that resolution publicly. There is no constant monitoring of content, which is resolved on a case-to-case basis. In addition, there is the National Council for Television fulfilling functions of media monitoring. First, they do so by supervising content through complaints about what is deemed inappropriate by audiences or the council, which may imply an economic sanction for the broadcaster and even the suspension of transmissions. Second, they present public studies about the state of the television industry, its content, and the consumption of it. The National Journalism Association has a National Ethics and Discipline Tribunal, as well as Regional Ethics and Discipline Tribunals, which investigate complaints against collegiate journalists. In case they do not belong to this institution, the journalist in question is expected to volunteer for scrutiny. The sanctions are related to the participation of the questioned professional within the organisation (for further details, see Indicator E7 – Code of ethics at the national level). With the objective of informing the advertising industry, the Chilean Association of Advertising and the Association of Media Agencies also gather data and observe the Chilean media.

There are also private monitoring companies with services providing press reports on topics, public issues, and organisations. They also inform companies, media, and institutions regarding audiences in order to make commercial decisions. In addition, survey agencies and think tanks sometimes gather data about the media. Meanwhile, universities carry out studies which are later translated into public reports and academic publications.

#### (E7) Code of ethics at the national level

1 POINT

There is more than one entity in charge of media ethics; however, they are not relevant referents for the daily exercise of journalism.

The most common ethical framework for the Chilean media is the Freedom of Opinion and Information and Exercise of Journalism Act (Ministry Secretary General, 2013). Promulgated in 2001, it established the rights and duties for the exercise of journalism in the country. For instance, it assures the right to keep sources a secret, provides a regulatory framework for media ownership and functioning, and gives journalists the right to clarify and rectify. There is also a section that affects the exercise of journalism by establishing a regulatory framework for infractions, criminal offenses, responsibilities, and how to proceed in these cases; it also has a concrete definition of defamation.

This act, however, does not incorporate ombudspersons, ethical tribunals, or other content-regulating organisations, which happens only on the level of

televised contents with the law creating the National Council for Television (Ministry of Interior, 2017). Modifications of the law over the years have given this entity the role of overseeing what is broadcast on television, with the possibility of receiving complaints from citizens and fining the broadcasters. The mission of the council, among other aspects, is to promote pluralism and respect for the diversity of society. In practice, some content effectively accumulates complaints and fines; the concerned stations pay the fines and some programming is adapted or cancelled, but the latter is unusual.

Another entity working with media ethics in Chile is the Ethics Council of the Federation of Media (Ethics Council, 2020), created by the Association of Radio Broadcasters of Chile, National Association of Television, and the National Press Association. This institution advises on the content published or broadcast by the three federated entities. While it can analyse cases from different media organisations, their main objective is self-regulation, with an emphasis on prevention. They receive complaints through their website and their sanctions are moral – they publish the resolution of the case in the same medium where the content was originally published. This council avoids judgment except for cases where ethical violations are evident.

Furthermore, the National Journalism Association (Colegio de Periodistas, 2020) is an association with voluntary membership, where every journalist in Chile can participate. It has its own ethics code, whose norms only apply to collegiate journalists, and if broken, might lead to sanctions after an evaluation from the corresponding Ethics and Discipline Regional and National Tribunals. However, in the interviews, journalists and editors unanimously declared they did not consider this entity as a referent, since it attacked journalists more than supporting them. However, a representative of the national journalism association said about their code of ethics:

I would like to believe that the document is used in newsrooms. However, honestly, I know that it is not. When we receive ethical complaints, we enquire with journalists if they have read our guidelines and most often, they are not familiar with them. Maybe the older generations knew it better.

As for professional development, alongside universities offering undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in journalism, there are several extending and continuing education programmes for professionals. There is also a network of journalists, which promotes conversation and workshops about the professional exercise, and the National Association of Women Journalists, which organises events and activities.

## (E8) Level of self-regulation

1 POINT

Internal self-regulation exists associated with a culture shared by journalists and editors within a medium, with clear dogmas, but are rarely written down.

Like with news selection, use of stylebooks guiding daily editorial decisions also varies between media organisations. Of these organisations, three declared possessing them; two of these considered them relevant, whereas both the editor and journalist of the third said they had not read it.

In every case, there was awareness on the part of the interviewees about the concept of editorial guidelines containing the medium's mission, and therefore, its philosophy. The interviewees said they learnt it by immersing themselves in its culture, where the shared ethos is defined. According to the interviews, it was evident that new journalists acquired the culture through conversations with their colleagues and editors, by working in the newsroom, as well as through their own understanding of the organisation they worked in. In the interviews, this culture is evident in phrases that sound like statements of principles extracted from an official document:

- As a principle, we have to believe in our workers.
- We do not consider a stylebook, because we tend to trust our journalists.
- Since we are not witnessing everything we inform on, we use the word “conditional” a lot, so it is understood that it is developing news. We take care of the language we use. We also do not state the exact numbers for people who participate in protests.
- Something unchanged in the past 20 years is our role as a watchdog. We oversee power, not a political colour.
- Without necessary investigation and information, certain topics like sexual abuse are not published.
- Working in this medium is a personal choice.
- We will always defend public institutions, private property, and representative democracy, not a dictatorship of the minorities.
- To accuse an authority, there must be a legal conviction or information that present a non-biased reasonable assumption about lack of honesty.
- I ask to see the advertising, because they have to be coherent with my editorial guidelines.
- We do not cover issues to indulge ourselves in – this is journalism.
- We are pro-democracy. We have guidelines for clarity that we are not worried about making transparent to the audience.

- The audiences are the ones to judge.
- This is not activism; it is journalism, and journalism is a professional information service.
- The only boundaries are ethics.
- My boundaries to not do something are: if they asked me to lie or if I was forced to interview someone who incites hatred or discrimination.
- We all function with our own ethical views on journalism.
- My view is similar to the medium's editorial guidelines, and that happens to us journalists who work here.

Therefore, there is self-regulation within a shared culture between journalists and editors. Even not using a stylebook, for two editors, appeared to be a gesture of professional trust, attributing a negative connotation to the document. Thus, ethics are in large part defined in the formation and personal experience of each professional.

## (E9) Participation

2 POINTS

There are limited instances for citizen participation in media, and editors are critical of the quality of the discussion provided by the audiences.

Newspapers and news outlets incorporate traditional features like letters to the editor and opinion columns. These go through a selection and editing process within the organisations. “We check the newspaper’s mailbox regularly. We have a journalist in charge of this and our other social media communities online”, explained an editor.

Meanwhile, radio stations stand out for being the most inclusive when it comes to citizen’s voices. For example, Radio BioBio airs calls from listeners narrating events as witnesses around the city, such as traffic problems. The radio stations also use WhatsApp audio messages after careful scrutiny by the team in charge. “All audio messages go through two filters, first by a producer and then by an editor. We care about length as well as language. We select those that express an opinion, and leave out those that send insults”, said a journalist from Radio Cooperativa.

WhatsApp and phone calls are also a news input for media, especially when it comes to photos and videos; however, editors fear misinformation. The checking and processing of such content is more important for editors and journalists than running after an exclusive; therefore, it is not aired without going through several checks and filters. Editors are also very critical of participation through

comment sections in the news. According to them, these do not add any value to the conversation, but instead contribute to attacks and polarisation (see Indicator F10 – Misinformation and digital platforms). One of the editors admitted that this was a gradual ride from early optimism to disappointment. Therefore, even if some media have kept theirs – usually associated with a social media platform integrated into their website – they are becoming less common within news websites or are exclusive for registered users, as it happens in *Emol.com*, or for subscribers, as in *LaTercera.com*.

The views are similar regarding social media. For the interviewed editors, they are certainly platforms for diffusion, but not for conversation and the generation of a community with audiences. “Social media is poisonous”, said an editor. “What the audience comments on has no impact on internal decisions”, stated another. These sentiments are understandable, because recent research has confirmed that people who comment on news in Chile often have an uncivil profile, are angry, and use these spaces to express their anger (Saldaña, 2019). Generally, the comments are not deliberative and lack evidence to support their arguments. There is also an abundance of fictional names and identities (Rosenberg, 2018).

Certain digital projects like *El Líbero* and *Interferencia* have a community philosophy towards their readers. Sometimes subscriptions give access to exclusive content, by organising meetings with editors and journalists, or by asking for voluntary economic support to sustain the medium, as does *Ciper Chile*; however, they usually function under a passive-audience logic, with no participation of the readers in the content offered. One exception is *Base Pública*, which organises citizen encounters to raise issues that may later become articles.

The media outside the capital incorporates users more widely through local radio stations and television channels. They effectively become permanent content generators, also through the Citizen Newspaper Network, *Mi Voz*. However, they are less of a journalistic organisation and more about citizens’ participation, with a tendency towards opinion over information (Puente & Grassau, 2011).

## (E10) Rules and practices on internal pluralism

1 POINT

There are no rules for internal pluralism, but there are opportunities for deliberation. In any case, in a polarised scenario, the issue of inner pluralism generates tension.

The Chilean media does not have policies or programmes regarding internal pluralism. It was clear from the interviews that journalists considered it was possible for them to express their ideas, while being aware of working in a place with specific editorial guidelines. They agreed on professionalism, being

above personal convictions, keeping in mind that professionalism could mean different things in diverse contexts.

As mentioned earlier, editorial decisions are made in meetings where journalists can participate or, more generally, in dialogue with editors; therefore, it is the editor's responsibility to create opportunities for deliberation.

The 2019 protests created a tense scenario within media organisations (see Indicator F5 – Company rules against *internal* influence on newsroom/editorial staff). There were different opinions between younger and older journalists, with the latter considering their younger colleagues as sacrificing their objectivity when covering the protests, turning into activists. At the same time, the younger group thought that certain directives – such as not focusing on police violence – compromised their journalistic ethics. As there was more than one way of understanding professionalism in the face of certain events, this accounted for internal pluralism in a polarised scenario becoming the elephant in the room for the Chilean media.

Meanwhile, recent research focusing on television stations (Saéz et al., 2020) concluded that internal pluralism was weak in Chile, with stations lacking programmes on opinions and debates, and diversity of sources and issues was scarce.

### *Dimension: Control / Watchdog (C)*

(C1) Supervising the watchdog “control of the controllers”

2 POINTS

There are different instances to oversee whether the media fulfils their journalistic function.

There is academic research that observes journalists' actions, including how they exercise their role as watchdogs within the Chilean context (see also Hellmueller & Mellado, 2016). In this regard, it has been universities dedicating themselves to observing in what way the profession is undertaken, publicising their results both within academic circles and as analysis in media themselves, in the form of columns or interviews. In this regard, after the October protests, *Ciper Chile* published, in their section Academic Ciper, a series of columns by academics from different universities that presented a critical view on how current events are covered in Chile.

Two more systematic projects throughout the years have been initiatives from Universidad Alberto Hurtado [University Alberto Hurtado], through its School of Journalism, which in 2008 founded the website *Puroperiodismo.cl*, dedicated to covering topics regarding Chilean journalism, as well as opinion columns. At the same time, the University created the Prize for Excellence in

Journalism, which is the yearly instance that establishes a canon for what is considered good journalism on a national level.

Since 2017, Chile has been a part of the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report*, whose local partner organisation is Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. The results of the report are shared and commented upon by editors in the industry and later translated into articles, as well as conversations on Twitter.

There are independent observatories, and on both Twitter and Facebook, there is continuous conversation without any formal structure about the performances of journalists, in which professionals in the industry, academics, and audiences participate.

The National Press Association has a magazine in which it informs on issues regarding journalism; the National Council for Television has commissioned reports and panels to approach media-related topics; and the National Journalism Association publishes critical messages about journalism. Some other media houses, additionally, cover their competition's performances, but this is rare.

## (C2) Independence of the news media from powerholders

2 POINTS

The industrial view encompassing the Chilean media system has led to its property becoming mainly corporate. However, there are views about politics and society that reach the people in charge of the newsrooms.

Media in Chile functions as an industry; therefore, there are no restrictions regarding who can own one or more media organisations in the country, independent of their trajectories or political and public affiliations. That, however, has an exception with foreign ownership. This context has led to the ownership of larger legacy media houses belonging to holdings (see Indicator E1 – Media ownership concentration national level) in charge of businesspeople whose main profile tends to be commercial, but not exempt from views on politics and society.

Previously, the system of legacy media had more variety. For many years, the Catholic Church and Pontifical Catholic University of Chile owned a competitive television channel now owned by the private holding, Luksic Group. There are still some actors in the media that do not belong to the corporate world, the most important example being the Chilean State owning the public channel, Televisión Nacional del Chile. Its financing, however, is acquired through advertising, adding it as another competitor to the market. Additionally, the three largest universities in the country also own FM radio channels.

This industrial quality of Chilean media allows for people of different backgrounds, influences, and agendas to be visible, be partners, or participate in the boards of several media organisations. For example, a channel owned by Warnermedia and recently acquired by Viacom CBS was previously the property of the current President, Sebastián Piñera. There are other examples of people in politics involved in media projects: former treasury minister during the dictatorship, Hernan Büchi, is now a partner in the online outlet *El Líbero*; and former education minister and daughter of the first transition president, Mariana Aylwin was a founding member of the online outlet *El Dínamo*.

In other cases, the affiliation could be indirect, or merely an affinity. However, there are circles of power with strong influence over the media. For example, Radio Cooperativa, which does not belong to the Christian Democratic Party, are transparent about the fact that their editorial guidelines lean towards it, determining the coverage they do of the said collective. Another case is *El Mercurio*, whose owner in the 1970s, the late Agustín Edwards, lobbied the administration of Richard Nixon for a military coup, and they divulged the regime's ideas in their pages. However, after the return of democracy, the newspaper has, over the years, won prizes for excellence in their journalistic endeavours. Despite their conservative editorial guidelines, they also employ journalists not necessarily sharing their political views.

The journalists interviewed were not naive about the media industry's reality. They knew very well they must exercise their professional ethics even within projects where owners and boards have a specific perspective or agenda. However, they defended their capacity to report freely. A journalist summed this up:

I have never seen intervention. I have never considered how owners would or would not react, when reporting on a topic. We know who owns the media where we work. I would not write an article against their companies, because I have common sense. I understand, from my colleagues who cover economic issues, that there are no restrictions for writing about the companies they own.

There is a law protecting the exercise of journalistic freedom and the integrity of sources (Ministry Secretary General, 2013). The interviewed editors in charge of newsrooms defended the quality of their work, but they recognised there are calls and pressure on them, because the owners or the members of the board might not always share their expectations. However, how that pressure is exerted, and how influential it is, varied according to each medium and the way in which each director executes their role, whether as a mediator or as a counterpart (see Indicator F5 – Company rules against *internal* influence on newsroom/editorial staff). One director said:

There has always existed pressure over the directors or editors-in-chief. We get calls and try to balance things out. I would lie to you if I said that these

calls had no influence. They do not happen every day and they are not how topics are decided. I try to do good journalism.

Another editor explained: “I do not ask the board whether to publish or not. They advise”. While this pressure does exist, journalists declared this was not a problem when doing their daily work. They mentioned that owners trust directors to safeguard the journalistic work and that they were in charge of protecting the journalists’ freedom to report, and therefore, the pressure was of an assimilated nature. One journalist made a statement that summarised a common view among the interviewees:

Nobody forces you to report against your beliefs; we have a work contract that can be broken in any moment. I have never seen people forced to write against their personal political beliefs. I have personal political views and they are not an impediment to cover a politician who does not represent me.

Additionally, smaller independent projects, which function online and combine reporting and opinion pieces, also exist. Their inner structures imply that owners are part of the newsroom. Therein, a more clearly partisan political agenda can be observed, especially becoming more visible in polarised periods, such as election season.

### (C3) Transparency of data on leading news media 2 POINTS

By law, every media publishes information about their ownership, but only a few give more details.

All media organisations constituted in Chile are legally obliged to publish the name and address of the legal representative or owner, as well as the director responsible for content, in a visible place (Ministry Secretary General, 2013). It is also compulsory to disclose detailed information about the medium’s ownership for whoever requests it, and in case this doesn’t happen, any person can denounce the medium in question. Additionally, Chile has a Transparency Law forcing public organisations to make their information available to citizens. As a result, the public television channel has its financial status, salaries, and management board data displayed on its website. Such details are not readily available for private media, unless they voluntarily decide to make it public. The information is irregular within the corporate websites of each medium, usually with a commercial objective, rather than for reasons of transparency. A recent study on the television industry rated the public channel TVN as the most transparent, followed by CHV, Mega, and Canal 13, especially regarding economic information (López-López et al., 2019).

Regarding print media, all publications must register with the National Library, which also functions under transparency laws, thereby making this another way to access ownership information. However, this process needs a specific request, and receiving an answer can take several months. A similar thing happens with every change in the ownership of a medium, which must be informed to the National Economic Prosecutor, an entity that also answers to the law.

No other entity constantly monitors the ownership of media, except for individual efforts by researchers and academics.

(C4) Journalism professionalism 1 POINT

Although professional education is high at the university level, the work scenario is precarious, offering little time and resources for journalists to improve their skills.

To be a journalist in Chile, one must possess a university degree valid in Chile or be legally “recognised” as a journalist (Ministry Secretary General, 2013). Since the latter is rather subjective, there are no particular restrictions to professional practice, while it is mainly a professional field supported in higher education.

The first journalism school in Chile started in 1953 at University of Chile. In the 1960s, under the influence of the International Centre for Higher Education in Journalism for Latin America, a formative model was introduced with a bachelor’s degree in Communication. This incorporated content about journalism, public relations, and advertising that is still used today (Mellado & Hanusch, 2011). In Chile, there are currently 43 journalism programmes throughout the country in different modalities: evening, morning, and those directed to people with bachelor’s degrees in other areas. Sometimes there is more than one programme per university across private and public institutions (Mifuturo, 2020). The number of programmes offered has increased greatly since 1985, hand in hand with the growth of private universities (Délano et al., 2007). In addition, within the field of communications, there is an increasing number of postgraduate programmes with specialised courses, master’s degrees, and three doctoral programmes.

Professionalisation, too, has grown, with 50 per cent of journalists holding a title in the field in the 1960s, to 70 per cent in the 1970s. The last available study (Mellado, 2014) shows that 86.2 per cent of working journalists had studied this specific degree at university, and 92.5 per cent had a professional degree (6–9% had a master’s degree) (Cabalin & Lagos Lira, 2012; Mellado, 2014). The number of these programmes is still growing.

According to Cabalin and Lagos Lira (2012), journalists do not value their previous formative academic learnings, but understand it as a formal step needed

to access the industry, where the “real” learning happens. While journalists criticised their formative education, they were unable to detail what these gaps are. They were also critical about what they considered deficiencies in their colleagues’ training, for example, a lack of general knowledge.

To achieve their degrees, students are obligated to undertake a professional internship in a journalistic medium; some cases consider two internships, including one linked to corporate communications. Mellado and Hanusch (2011) conclude that those who work in journalism and public relations share common values but fulfil different roles. The report by Mellado and colleagues (2015) about the profile and expectations of journalism students shows that as they advance in their academic degrees, while most of them maintain their interest in working in media, there is also an increase in expectations of working for corporate communications or as academics.

Since Chile’s return to democracy, the professionalism of the country’s journalists has been in question, given the previous 17 years of dictatorship, when censorship and state intervention in the media occurred alongside self-censorship and independent media that worked clandestinely. Such a history has, therefore, created a legacy of questionable practices. This critical view of journalism has been reflected in concerns of academia about professionalism and performance of journalists, with research interrogating their routines, values, practices, and the systemic elements that model these (Gronemeyer, 2002; Lagos & Cabalin, 2013; Otano Garde & Sunkel, 2003). This gained ground during the 2019 protests, with columns written by academics as well as declarations to the media (see also Aguilar, 2019; Lagos & Faure, 2019; Salinas & Cabalin, 2019). Two letters signed by professors of journalism from University of Chile and the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile criticised the coverage of the protests.

Regarding ethics, while the interviewed journalists considered it an important value, Mellado (2014) showed that only 43.3 per cent of journalists affirmed ethical principles that cannot be transgressed, independent of situations. In the same study, journalists said that if necessary, they would use ethically questionable practices, for instance hidden cameras and microphones. In addition, Lagos and Cabalin (2013) show that each professional interprets ethics differently.

Journalists inhabit what is considered a precarious market (Lagos & Cabalin, 2013; Lagos & Faure, 2019), where routine is more important than innovation. Here, creativity is not a shared value, let alone being the most relevant, from the perspective of information professionals (Gronemeyer, 2002). Digital outlets have gradually created an innovative space, but it is still in early stages. An example of this is the fact that the Award for Excellence in Journalism gave its first prize for digital innovation in media as recently as 2020, and decided not to keep the category in 2021. While development of narrative multimedia tools has not been the main contribution of digital media in Chile, online

outlets have moderately reinforced the role of watchdogs, which is weaker in legacy media (Elórtegui Gómez & Mellado Ruiz, 2019). *Ciper Chile* represent an important case. While the organisation had not made much use of multimedia resources for years, it was reputed for publishing impactful and thorough investigations. After an audience survey, it took a decision to make its website more user-friendly, which was complemented with a call for economic support from readers, in order to function as a foundation.

Mellado (2014) exposes that participation of journalists in the National Journalism Association is 13.5 per cent, corroborating the negative view that all interviewees reported about this entity. Participation in other associations, as of 2012, was 14.5 per cent. A representative of the National Journalism Association, in turn, recognised they face a critical situation regarding new adherents:

Our professional formation is individualistic; we are not trained to do teamwork. Colegio de Periodistas has more than 60 years and close to 6,500 journalists in its historic membership. We are aware that we are going through a representation crisis. Colleagues only come to us when their job is at risk. The media, as a whole, is not aligned with our agenda, for example, regarding our call for a new media law.

The Chilean Network of Journalists, founded in 2013, provides professional development opportunities to journalists through workshops as one of its main tasks. As of 2020, it counts 353 individuals as members, while 561 people have attended their workshops (Red de Periodistas, 2020); this is very low considering that every year, about 1,000 journalists graduate from universities (e.g., 907 journalists graduated in 2018) (Mifuturo, 2020). In 2005, practicing journalists numbered 10,768, and on the assumption of about 850 graduates a year on average, was projected to reach 22,492 active journalists in 2020 (Délano et al., 2007).

Employees of the media are active within internal unions, grouped under the Chilean Confederation of Media Unions and the Federation of Television Unions, which make pronouncements about labour practices that media workers consider unfair, both at administrative and editorial levels. In 2019, the union in Radio BioBio organised a strike with a public demand for improvements to their work conditions; among their reasons was the fact that some journalists were working 65-hour weeks, when the law establishes that workweeks cannot exceed 45 hours. This case received support from other media unions, the National Journalism Association, journalists, and editors, all of whom agreed this represented the general reality of all media organisations in Chile (El Desconcierto, 2019). Sometimes, such actions generated internal controversies. An editorial case occurred after the 2019 protests in the newspaper *La Tercera*, where a journalist claimed the director had made them sign an article they had not researched themselves and with which they did not agree, considering it

imprecise. The newspaper recognised this later and erased the journalist's name from the article. The story became public by the newspaper's union, which denounced this as a common practice; however, the medium's editors wrote another letter in response, denying these accusations (El Dínamo, 2019). This pitted one group's word against another's.

### (C5) Journalists' job security

0 POINTS

Academics describe work conditions as "precarious". Wages are low. The crisis faced by this industry has enhanced this situation.

In a media system that functions under market logic, an industrial crisis directly affects working conditions of journalists. Massive firings of journalists have become more frequent in the last few years. This has been a consequence of industry decisions, such as closing magazines, merging work teams from two media houses within one holding, and externalising production of content and other services to third-party companies.

Meanwhile, academia has reported for years that this is a work sector with "precarious" conditions when it comes to working hours, salaries, and benefits from employers. Instead of improving, such a situation has become worse (Lagos & Faure, 2019; Lagos & Cabalin, 2013), with journalist unions becoming news subjects in 2019 (El Desconcierto, 2019; El Dínamo, 2019). The employment rate of journalists in the first year after graduating is 71.9 per cent, while it is 81.3 per cent in the second (Mifuturo, 2020). Of these persons, 80 per cent have a full-time contract, 60 per cent long-term contracts, and 24 per cent fixed term, while some do not have any formal contract (Mellado, 2014). While these numbers seem high, it must be noted that not all graduate journalists work in media, but in other fields such as corporate communications. There are editors who, in the interviews, agreed on the difficulty of retaining journalists who, after two or three years in a media house, decide to start working in communication agencies, because they have better work hours, contracts, and conditions, in addition to higher wages.

Journalists' salaries grow slowly. In their first year after graduation, without considering income tax or other deductions such as health insurance and pensions, gross average monthly income is CLP 681,896 (EUR 746); the fifth year after graduating, it reaches CLP 1,061,515 (EUR 1,160) (Mifuturo, 2020). Lawyers, by comparison, earn an average income after graduating of CLP 1,073,253 (EUR 1,174) in the first year, reaching an average of CLP 1,896,175 (EUR 2,073) (Mifuturo, 2020) the fifth year after graduating.

(C6) Practice of access to information

2 POINTS

There is a law for freedom of information, but under 50 per cent of journalists evaluate it positively. Specific knowledge is required to use it effectively.

Evaluation by journalists regarding information access from institutions is unfavourable. Just 38.3 per cent of institutions were evaluated positively about their willingness to share information, 42.3 per cent for the reliability and precision of the given information, and 32.8 per cent for timely delivery of said information. This resulted in an average of 37.8 per cent positive evaluations. Since 2007, the curve has been changing, with the lowest average at 30 per cent and the highest at 44 per cent (ANP, 2019).

The journalists interviewed confirmed the difficulty of accessing certain sources and having to go through the bureaucracy of communication managers. After the 2019 protests, it was particularly difficult to obtain data from the police. The perception of journalists about access to information in the last five years also varied. It registered only one relevant improvement, in 2009, when the law about public information access was enacted (widely known as Transparency Law) (ANP, 2019; Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications, 2014). This law created the Council for Transparency, an autonomous institution that enforces these regulations. The legislation advocated for websites of public institutions to have permanent access to their information – what is called “active transparency”. At the same time, it gave citizens the right to access this information; therefore, one can make transparency requests to which every organisation must respond, unless there are reasons meriting secrecy or reservations about the information. This tool, although meant for every citizen, is only fully effective with certain knowledge of its workings. Therefore, journalists have been educating themselves on how to use it, as well as learning strategies so the information they receive is most useful and readily usable. Because the actual information delivery is slow, even through this process, it is mainly used by journalists working in investigative and long-form journalism, and less frequently in daily work.

This explains the fact that, in an evaluation of 12 mechanisms to obtain public information, the use of this law is only at seventh place. Journalists evaluate other tools as more efficient ways to access public information: direct consultation with sources, formal interviews, and direct communication through WhatsApp and similar mobile applications (ANP, 2019). However, when evaluating specifically this law as a tool, after 35 per cent positive evaluations within its first year of enactment, these dropped to as low as 28 per cent until 2015. However, it later saw a constant improvement in its evaluation until 2017, which has sustained at 41 per cent for both 2018 and 2019 since then.

## (C7) The watchdog and the news media's mission statement

2 POINTS

There is a certain notion about the watchdog role of journalism, but this tends to be relegated to specialised units or specific practices within daily coverage, where other roles are more dominant.

The watchdog role is not predominant in Chilean political journalism, where the interventionist, infotainment, and civic roles are more dominant (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2016). In legacy media, in general, there are teams with specialised journalists who have dedicated a large part of their careers to this type of work. Some editors continue to sustain these teams as serving essential aspects of their editorial work as well as their mission within the medium. For teams who work in daily coverage and do not develop long-term investigative journalism, both journalists and editors said they see tools to develop this type of role through interviews and journalistic questioning. In other cases, this may be through analysis and opinion pieces. In any case, the informative function is privileged to that of overseeing.

The perceptions of journalists and the audience, however, differed. The 2020 *Digital News Report* presented that 66 per cent of Chilean journalists agreed that the media “monitor and scrutinize the powerful”, while only 36 per cent of the audience agreed with that very sentence (Kalogeropoulos & Fletcher, 2019). “My topics are very informative, there are no serious accusations”, said one journalist who covers the government. An editor commented that their main function is overseeing power, but as they do not have an investigative unit, when they have information that is critical of conflicts of interest, it is often published with less development. This is done with a view to impact the agenda of other media houses that will potentially follow the story through.

Although the ecosystem of digital media is wide and varied, recent research shows that in this medium, at least moderately, there is a greater manifestation of the watchdog role than in legacy media (Elórtegui Gómez & Mellado Ruiz, 2019; Mellado et al., 2018). This can be explained by projects that are born or developed in an environment linked to investigation journalism. While *Ciper Chile* is one example that stands out, there are also other independent projects, new fact-checking initiatives born after the 2019 protests (Núñez-Mussa, 2019), and university media publishing work of students putting investigation techniques taught in their classes into practice.

(C8) Professional training

2 POINTS

There is a large offer for journalists, but their work conditions do not allow them to specialise as much as they would want to.

Cabalin and Lagos Lira (2012) show that 68 per cent of journalists considered they needed more preparation, with 93.9 per cent valuing continuing education. Additionally, 57.4 per cent developed professionally through workshops within their own medium of practice, and 25.6 per cent undertook a specialisation programme. According to Yez (2011), 59.3 per cent of journalists said they have not been part of any specialisation course provided by their company. Although numbers differ, continuing training and development are, yet, rare.

Development opportunities for journalists have increased with universities offering master's degrees and specialisation courses in specific aspects of the profession, such as investigative journalism, fact-checking, social media, narrative journalism, or written journalism. While these programmes usually have schedules compatible with a regular workweek, they are expensive. Nonetheless, there has been an increase in instances of continued development and training for practicing journalists. Continuing education programmes in universities bring in guests and offer free or low-cost seminars. The Network of Journalists in Chile has focused on offering cheap workshops with tools for reporters. However, 59.8 per cent of journalists declare that their long workdays do not allow them the time to pursue specialisations (Cabalin & Lagos Lira, 2012).

(C9) Watchdog function and financial resources

1 POINT

There are some media houses that produce investigative journalism, but they have decreased for economic reasons.

The reduction of journalistic newsrooms due to economic crises faced by the media has been to the detriment of investigative journalism. However, some media houses maintain these teams, as they are highly valued. Many have outsourced this to production companies, and in some other cases, the work of freelancers is published. Still others dismantled their investigation units for economic reasons. An editor reflects on this reality:

We started as a medium that did a lot of investigation, but now we can't, because it is expensive. In 2018 the last people who worked there, left. Now we have a fund to buy articles by freelancers whom we know and, in whose criteria, we trust.

*Ciper Chile*, the Centre for Investigative Journalism in Chile, has grown their section of opinion columns. By becoming a foundation, it uses crowdfunding

from its readers to finance high-quality investigations. A problem is that such long-form journalism with potentially high political and social impact, but independent of advertising, is also harder to monetise. But such constraints also open opportunities for non-corporate media houses to develop. An example of this is University Diego Portales, which in 2020 inaugurated a Centre for Journalistic Projects and Investigations, including books and web projects developed by both professionals and students.

## Conclusions

This is the first time that Chile participates in the Media for Democracy Monitor, and it does so in a moment of political and social transformations countrywide, where reflections about the democratic role of media have become extremely important. As can be discovered by the parameters offered by this report, several criticisms faced today by media from both academia and citizens are exclamation points for systemic problems that have been warned of for years.

Freedom of and access to information in Chile is geographically wide in distribution, with national and regional media, in addition to their traditional platforms, being also available through the Internet. While media consumption is indeed frequent, audiences are also critical, exacerbated by the social movement and coverage of protests. This led journalists to take measures to protect themselves when reporting on the protests.

Internal and external pressures exist, coming from issues regarding the ownership and commercial model of media; even so, journalists defend their freedom. There are lacunae in gender equality policies and reflection on stories covered and sources used (since they mainly consult political and official sources); this usually responds to the daily agenda with a he-said/she-said logic. A positive effect of the protests, however, has been a strengthening of fact-checking as a practice.

Concentration is one of the characteristics of the Chilean media system; nonetheless, regional and alternative media contribute to diversity, although with impact on limited audiences. These are also, however, spaces where the audience's voice is better represented. This contrasts with national media where citizen participation is usually seen with suspicion.

Self-regulation is based on journalists' personal ethics and each medium or organisation's internal culture. The latter, and the journalist-editor relationship, are what determine how the internal pluralism within these organisations develops. Such a structure is fragile if one considers that, during the 2019 protests, there was tension between journalists and editors. External ethical codes are irrelevant for daily work, especially the one from the National Journalism Association, which is seen, under its current administration, to be a political entity that does not represent professionals.

A watchdog role is not one most common in Chilean journalism, but there are media houses that value their investigative areas, in addition to projects that are dedicated to developing investigative journalism. However, economic crisis faced by the media have weakened investigative journalism teams and initiatives. The national economy has also impacted work stability, with massive layoffs occurring quite frequently in recent times. While journalists usually have university education, work conditions of low wages and little free time make further specialisation difficult. It is common for younger journalists to leave the media to work in corporate communications after a few years of exercising the profession.

This report allows us to see there are parameters indicating that the media in Chile, at present, continues to face strong challenges with regard to democracy, ranging from the structure of the media system to inner practices of newsrooms.

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