

There are good reasons why Chile is winning COVID vaccine race



BY ANDRES OPPENHEIMER
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Though Latin America is lagging far behind the United States and Europe in getting COVID-19 vaccines to its people, one country in the region stands out for its success in obtaining vaccines ahead of its neighbors — Chile.

In fact, Chile already has surpassed China, Germany, France, Spain and many other countries in vaccinating its population.

Before we get into what Chile did right, let's look at the data. According to Oxford University's Ourworldindata.org's daily

database of COVID-19 vaccinations around the world, as of Feb. 10 Chile had administered 5.6 vaccine doses per 100 people.

By comparison, Germany has given out four vaccine doses per 100 people, China 2.8 per 100 people, Brazil 1.8 per 100 people, Argentina 1.1 per 100 people and Mexico only 0.6 per 100 people. Israel has given out the most vaccines in the world, followed by the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

"Chile's vaccination campaign is impressive!" tweeted Oxford University researcher and Ourworldindata.org founder Max Roser. He added a chart showing that, if we just measure the percentage of vaccinations per population over the past week, Chile ranks No. 1 in the world, followed by the United States.

In absolute numbers, by

Feb. 10, Chile had vaccinated 1.1 million people. Comparatively, Mexico, which has six times Chile's population, has vaccinated 724,000 people, and Argentina, which has more than twice Chile's population, has vaccinated 513,000 people, according to the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center.

It's a coincidence that Chile has been able to get so many more vaccines than its Latin American neighbors: It is, by far, the most globalized country in the region.

While several Latin American populist leaders rant against the free market and globalization, Chile — despite growing domestic protests against its economic model — has maintained its largely successful free-trade system.

Chile's international trade connections, or at least the outward-looking

mindset of its government, helped it get COVID-19 vaccines much faster than Mexico, Argentina, or Venezuela, whose inward-looking leaders barely know the outside world.

Chile's health minister, Enrique Paris, told me in a telephone interview that his country has already signed deals to get almost 36 million vaccines for the country's 19 million population. They include 12 million vaccines from China's Sinovac laboratory and millions from Pfizer and AstraZeneca.

"Our goal is to have 80 percent of the eligible population vaccinated by June 30," Paris told me.

Rodrigo Yañez, Chile's vice minister of trade, told me that Chile was able to buy more vaccines because it started ordering them earlier than other countries. But Chile's free-trade agreements undoubtedly helped, he added.

Chile has 29 major trade agreements, including free-trade agreements with the United States, the 28-country European Union, China, Vietnam and Australia.

"We have a huge network of international contacts," Yañez told me. "When the pandemic started, we already had many key foreign officials in our Whatsapp apps."

It would be simplistic to say that Chile did better because it has a center-right government, while Argentina, Mexico and Venezuela have done so badly because they have left-of-center or leftist leaders. Although it may not last — Chileans have voted massively to change their constitution, and nobody knows what the outcome of such changes will be — Chile has had forward-looking, globalized leftist governments.

Former President Ricardo Lagos, of Chile's Socialist Party, was a champion of globalization and one of Latin America's best presidents in recent times. Former President Michelle Bachelet, also of Chile's

Socialist Party, was somewhat less enthusiastic about the free market, but signed several free-trade agreements around the world.

Chile's current president, Sebastian Piñera, a Harvard Ph.D. in economics and billionaire entrepreneur who already has been president from 2010 to 2014, is the epitome of a globalized leader. Like Lagos and Bachelet before him, Piñera speaks several languages and knows many world figures from even before he became a politician.

Piñera's popularity rate in Chile plummeted last year, amid protest by Chileans demanding a larger share of Chile's economic progress. It's unclear whether he will regain it, but this much is clear: Fueled by its economic openness and global trade connections, Chile is winning the regional race for COVID-19 vaccines.

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Trump isn't the only one on trial. Senate Republicans must make a case for their actions



BY SCOTT MARTELLE
Los Angeles Times

With former President Trump's second impeachment trial under way in the Senate, the nation's attention is, once again, drawn to a man who craves it like a drug.

But the focus really ought to be on the members of the Senate, on us as a nation and on whether we are capable of using the tools the Constitution set out to protect the democracy from a president — any president — who abuses the power granted by the people to serve his own interests.

The impeachment trial is about what Trump did with that presidential authority, but it also offers yet another chance for the mechanisms of democracy to do what they are supposed to — check and balance.

Trump was impeached by the House for, in essence, fanning the flames of discontent by attacking the legitimacy of an election he lost and encouraging his backers to descend on Washington, D.C., to disrupt the certification of the Electoral College vote.

That's not a policy dispute. That's not the regular machinations of politics, no matter how cynical it can get. And Trump's incitement conflicted with a fundamental element of a mature democracy: the peaceful transfer of political power.

It was thuggery. It was an attempted coup, a failed effort to use the might of a mob to stop the confirmation of election results.

Our infamous red-blue divide has moved far beyond our different views about the role of government and into the realm of self-identity, race, regional differences and financial status.

Trump exploited that divide by positioning himself as the leader of people who feel the country is changing in ways they don't like. It is the politics of resentment, interspersed with delusion. And even

with Trump back among the ranks of everyday citizens, the politics he exploited remain potent.

Yet, this impeachment should not be an issue of party politics and party loyalty. This should be about what we are as a democracy and whether our vaunted constitutional safeguards are worth the paper they were inscribed upon.

Unfortunately, the outcome of the Senate trial seems to be a foregone conclusion. The necessity of holding a rogue president accountable for his abuses is being overwhelmed by Republican senators' fear of their own electorates — members of which heeded their president's call to action and physically invaded the Capitol five weeks ago — and by a poisonous embrace of party loyalty ahead of political responsibility.

Fortunately, Trump's failure to win reelection — and he did lose an election that was not, to use his word, rigged — was an example of how the mechanisms of democracy are supposed to work.

The nation saw who and what Trump was as a president and rejected him not only in the nonbinding national popular vote (which he also lost four years ago), but in the Electoral College, the only vote that really matters.

But as Trump's second impeachment trial proceeds and Senate Republicans once again close ranks to protect him, we seem fated to watch part of the checks-and-balances regime fail.

Interestingly, the reason for its failure will echo the excesses Trump indulged in to spark the two impeachments in the first place — a failure by too many senators to understand the responsibilities of the offices to which they have been elected, and a failure to live up to the oath they took to "bear true faith and allegiance" and "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic."

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Los Angeles Times



Getty Images

The coronavirus pandemic has isolated exploited and vulnerable children from teachers and other responsible adults.

FBI agents died helping exploited children. We, too, must join the fight



BY AMANDA G. ALTMAN
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The recent shooting deaths of two FBI agents executing a warrant on an alleged child sexual predator is a grim reminder that such crimes against children are far too prevalent. Now, as we struggle in a global pandemic that is making it exponentially harder to keep children safe from these predators, it is more important than ever that our community steps up to join Kristi House's efforts to end this scourge.

FBI statistics show that one in every five children logging on to electronic devices will be sexually solicited.

As COVID-19 continues to keep many children from attending school in person and participating in other activities, we are seeing an unprecedented spike in the use of electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets and computers, making children more susceptible to online predators. Furthermore, efforts to stop the pandemic's spread have isolated children, creating fewer opportunities for

schoolteachers, daycare workers and other professionals to identify and report signs of exploitation and abuse.

Because of the pandemic, the nonprofit Kristi House, Miami-Dade County's only nationally accredited and state-recognized children's advocacy center, has modified its services and programming. It is offering, among other things, virtual therapy and a series of new webinars, workshops and resources customized to address today's needs.

Unfortunately, child sexual exploitation and abuse are difficult topics to discuss.

Nobody wants to believe it is happening here, to children, in our neighborhoods.

The fact is that one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually assaulted before their 18th birthday. Approximately 62 percent of all human-trafficking victims were born and raised in our communities.

Together with Kristi House, members of this community must make a more concerted effort to educate ourselves and our children about these dangers, specifically related to electronic devices.

As parents, relatives, neighbors and friends, we have a responsibility to protect children and monitor their use of mobile devices and technology.

Here are some important steps to further protect them:

- Children under 13 should not have social-media accounts. Monitor their computer use to ensure they have not created fake accounts.

- For children over 13, store their social-media usernames and passwords so you can log in and monitor communications.

- Uninstall unnecessary apps on devices before giving devices to your children.

- Make sure apps such as YouTube are in restricted mode or kids' mode. Tapping "Settings" in most apps lets you select "restricted" mode. On mobile devices, check "Settings," then "Screen Time," and select "Content and Privacy Restrictions" to block a variety of inappropriate content.

- Watch for warning signs. These include children spending large amounts of time online, particularly at night; finding pornography on their devices; children quickly exiting screens or turning off monitors when anyone enters the room; or children becoming withdrawn from family and friends.

- Get more proactive. If you're a teacher with a student who has fallen off the radar in the pandemic, consider calling their parents or guardians, or reporting it to the authorities as appropriate. If you're a

neighbor who sees unusual behavior in your neighbor's child, reach out and contact authorities for help.

Recognizing that it takes a village, Kristi House has compiled resources and created educational content to help people navigate these uncharted waters.

With four full-time education and outreach specialists on staff, we are providing educational webinars for adults and children on topics affecting them in the pandemic, ranging from internet safety to human trafficking and exploitation.

We also are providing support for families through COVID-19.

Kristi House also continues to help children who have suffered sexual exploitation or abuse, as well as their families, to heal from that trauma via our evidence-based therapeutic modalities and other services provided by our case managers and advocates. All services are free.

We must not let the deaths of Special Agents Daniel Alfin and Lauren Schwartzenberger, who dedicated their lives to stopping child sexual predators, to have been in vain. Instead, we must work together to continue their legacy of eradicating child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Amanda G. Altman is CEO of Kristi House.