

# **South American Superpowers Still Struggle: Gender Inequality in Argentina and Chile**

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## **Abstract**

*This article examines the ongoing inequality that women in Argentina and Chile continue to face. Argentina and Chile were both formally governed by right-wing authoritarian regimes and transitioned into democratic governments in the 1980's and 1990's respectively. Both nations are some of South America's largest economies in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) and they are also some of the most urbanized countries in the continent. The two nations have made great strides in the political rights and political representation of women, but unfortunately economic inequality and violence against women persists. This article utilizes various approaches of ethical decision-making to analyze the severity of gender inequality in the two nations and concludes by proposing possible solutions to the ongoing situation.*

## **I. Introduction**

While many nations across the world have become more egalitarian with every decade, gender inequality persists across the world. Many women in industrialized countries enjoy the same rights and freedoms as men and are treated equally in their day to day lives and in the eyes of the law. On the other hand, billions of women across the world continue to be treated as second class citizens.

The quality of a woman's life, and the policies that govern it, are determined by a factor completely out of her control: where she was born. This article analyzes gender inequality in Argentina and Chile. Latin America as a region has undergone remarkable political, social, and economic change in the past century; there have been incredible advancements for women in recent decades in many Latin American countries, including Argentina and Chile.

However, women in these two nations continue to face gender-based struggles and unequal treatment. In 2022, Argentina was the third largest economy in Latin America & Caribbean and Chile the fifth largest, yet Argentine and Chilean women encounter many obstacles that prevent them from freely participating in the labor market like men do.<sup>1</sup> Both nations have very high levels of female representation in their national governments, but they struggle to pass legislation that protects women and guarantees their equal treatment. This article will assess the political, social,

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank (2024).

and economic situation for women in Argentina and Chile, by analyzing various indicators of equality and the impact of recently passed policies for women in both countries.

Proceeding this introduction, Section II summarizes some recent literature about gender equality, gender policies, and female political participation in Argentina and Chile. Section III provides some socioeconomic background for the two countries by analyzing the GDP per capita, life expectancy, and literacy rates since 1990. Section IV analyzes some key data pertaining to population growth and gender equality. Section V provides an ethical analysis of current gender policies and their success using various ethical lenses, followed by some conclusions provided in Section VI.

## **II. Brief Literature Review**

There is a substantial amount of literature about women's issues and women's rights in Argentina and Chile. There have been many notable achievements in women's rights and political participation in both countries since they transitioned to democracies in the late 20th century, which are spotlighted in the literature. Sutton (2019) and Franceschet (2008) focus on Argentina, Staab (2010) and Franceschet (2001) focus on Chile, and Mooney (2007) and Waylen (2000) focus on both countries. In all the literature, the authors provide a historical background of women's socioeconomic and political standing in both countries, highlight the notable achievements that have been made in recent decades, and list some of the current struggles that women continue to face in the two nations.

- Sutton (2019) analyzes the “human rights frame” that Argentine reproductive rights activists utilize, providing a historical, political, and social background to support their argument that this framework is advantageous to reproductive rights advocates. The authors note that Argentina has enacted many progressive sexual and reproductive rights laws in the past two decades, but historical and social influences have made it difficult to legalize abortion. At the time of publication, abortion was illegal with very few exceptions in Argentina. Despite this, the authors highlight that an estimated 522,000 abortions were performed annually, which were often unsafe and disproportionately harmed marginalized groups of women.
- Franceschet (2008) evaluates Argentina's 1991 gender quota law, which requires that political parties nominate women to at least 30 percent of all elected positions. The authors found that while the gender quotas increased the number of women in the Argentine Congress, they ultimately have not increased the power of women in Argentine government. Since the 1991 law has been enacted, a significant number of women's rights bills have been introduced in the country, but female legislators continue to face difficulty passing these bills into law and encounter unique gender-based struggles because of the quotas.
- Staab (2010) explores Chile's social policy investments and their impact on women and children, specifically focusing on the increased investment in early childhood education. The author argues that the increased investment in childcare gives Chilean mothers the opportunity to enter the workforce but emphasizes that inequality in the job market continues to limit the opportunities available to women. Staab highlights the importance of creating social policies that specifically address the needs of women in order to significantly reduce gender inequality in Chile.

- Franceschet (2001) focuses on the Chilean women’s movement and women’s representation in the political arena since Chile’s 1990 democratic transition. The author argues that democratic transitions present a window of opportunity for women to challenge the gender hierarchy within politics, but that the Chilean women’s movement missed the window. Franceschet argues that as a result, Chile’s newly established political parties serve as barriers to women in politics. The author highlights that since 1990 there has been a significant increase in the number of women in politics due to factors like gender quotas, but conservative Chilean social norms make it difficult for women in politics to enact legislation that promotes gender equality and feminist issues.
- Mooney (2007) focuses on the concept of “militant motherhood,” where women use motherhood to enact political and social change outside of the domestic sector, and its effects on women’s political participation in Argentina and Chile. The author provides historical background on militant motherhood in both countries and how women utilized it to protest the government or military regimes in power. Mooney argues that militant motherhood created solidarity among women of various socioeconomic classes and increased women’s political participation in both Argentina and Chile.
- Waylen (2000) focuses on the role of gender in the process of democratization that took place in Argentina and Chile in the late 20th century and provides a gendered analysis of their political institutions. The author lays out a historical background of the democratic transitions that occurred in the two countries and the role that women’s movements played in the transition. The author highlights that the political participation of women in both nations has increased since reestablishing democratic regimes, but that social and cultural norms still present challenges for women who wish to participate in politics.

### III. Socioeconomic Background

To fully understand the social and economic inequality that women in Argentina and Chile encounter, it is necessary to understand the recent socioeconomic history of both nations. Argentina underwent a period of democratic transition from 1982 to 1983, after being controlled by a military regime from 1976 until 1983.<sup>2</sup> Chile underwent a democratic transition from 1988 to 1989, ending the violent military regime of General Augusto Pinochet that had controlled the government since 1973.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the 20th century, citizens of both nations suffered great human rights violations under military rule.

According to the World Bank (2024), Argentina is an upper-middle income country and Chile is a high-income country. Argentina has a population of 47 million people. Chile has a population of 18.7 million people.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, Argentina was the third largest economy in Latin America & Caribbean, while Chile was the fifth largest.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1 shows the purchasing-power parity (PPP)-adjusted GDP per capita, in constant 2017 international dollars, for Argentina and Chile from 1990 to 2022. While both countries have experienced GDP per capita growth since 1990, there has been more consistent and substantial

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<sup>2</sup> Freedom House (undated-a)

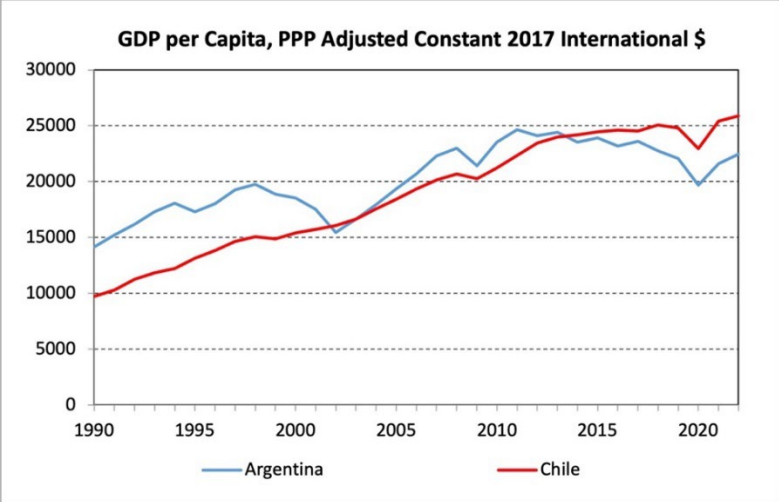
<sup>3</sup> Freedom House (undated-b)

<sup>4</sup> World Bank (2024).

<sup>5</sup> World Bank (2024).

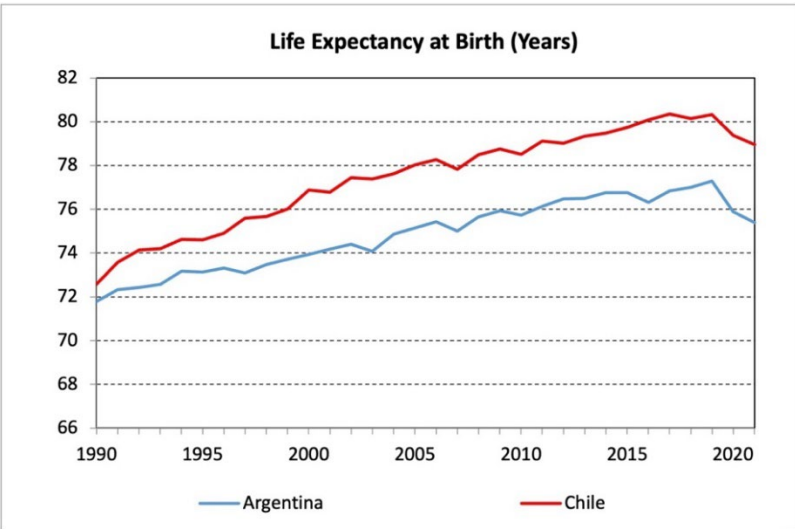
growth in Chile, both in absolute value and in relative terms, compared to Argentina. From 1990 to 2022, Chile’s GDP per capita grew 167 percent, from \$9,701 to \$25,886. Argentina’s GDP per capita grew 59 percent, from \$14,136 to \$22,461. As evident in Figure 1, Argentina experienced a devastating economic recession from 1998 to 2002 because of its poor fiscal policy, unsustainable public debt, and decline in capital flows, among other institutional and political factors.<sup>6</sup> Argentina continues to struggle with economic instability, with a severe annual inflation rate of 124 percent in 2023.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 1: PPP-adjusted GDP per capita in Argentina and Chile, 1990–2022**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

**Figure 2: Life Expectancy at Birth in Argentina and Chile, 1990–2021**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

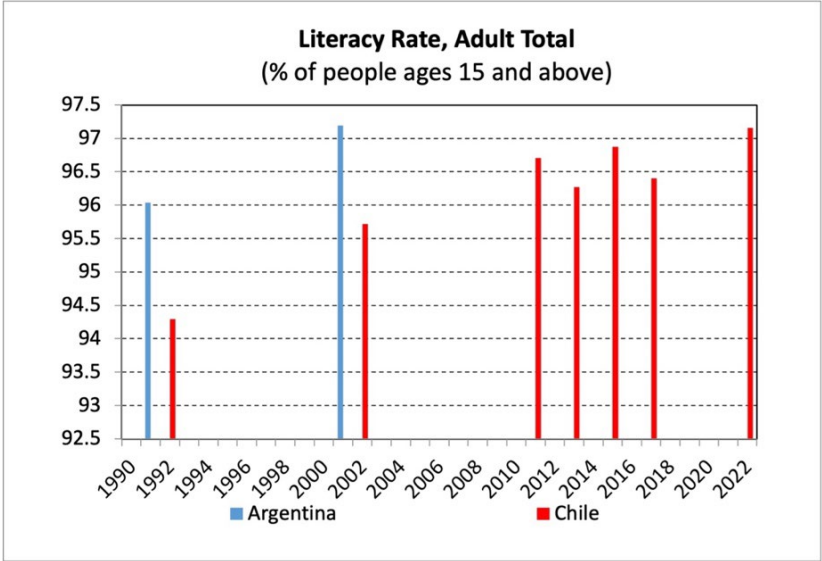
<sup>6</sup> International Monetary Fund (2003).

<sup>7</sup> World Bank (2024).

Figure 2 shows life expectancy at birth in Argentina and Chile between 1990 and 2021. While life expectancy has increased in both nations, life expectancy has increased significantly more in Chile, and the discrepancy in life expectancy between the two nations has grown during this period. Between 1990 and 2021, Argentina’s life expectancy increased from 71.8 years to 75.4 years (a 3.6-year increase). During this period, Chile’s life expectancy increased from 72.6 to 78.9 years (6.3-year increase). In 1990, the Chilean life expectancy was 0.8 years higher than the Argentine life expectancy. By 2021, the life expectancy in Chile was 3.5 years higher than in Argentina.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 3 shows the adult literacy rate in Argentina and Chile for all available years, starting in 1991 for Argentina, and 1992 for Chile. There is limited data on the adult literacy rates for both countries, especially for Argentina, where the last year data is available is 2001. This makes a comparison of the two countries nearly impossible. Despite the limited data, Figure 3 seems to indicate literacy has been higher in Argentina than in Chile. In the early 1990s, Argentina’s literacy rate was 96.0 percent, while Chile’s was 94.3 percent. A decade later, Argentina’s literacy rate increased to 97.2 percent, while Chile’s increased to 95.7 percent. Chile’s literacy rate seemed a bit volatile in the 2010s, though ultimately reaching 97.2 percent in 2022, which was Argentina’s literacy rate some twenty years earlier.

**Figure 3: Adult Literacy Rates in Argentina and Chile, all available years**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

**IV. Analysis of Facts**

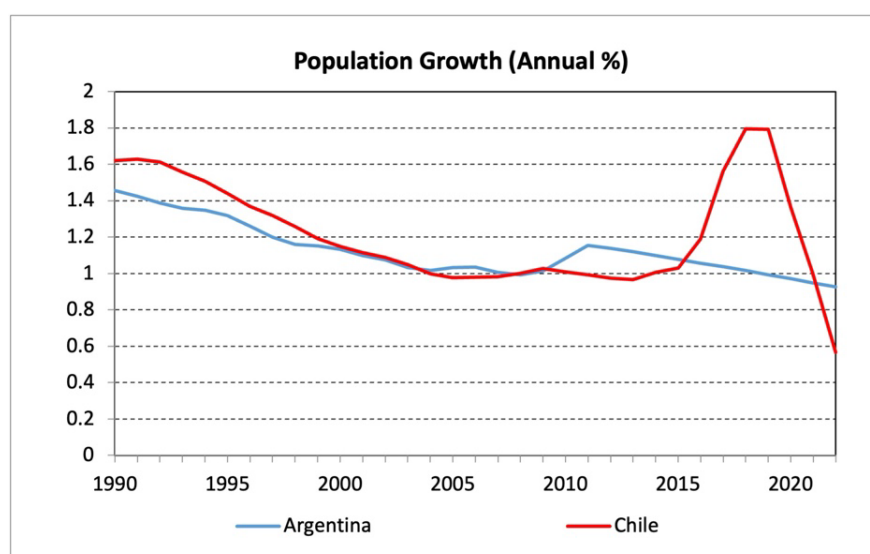
This analysis of facts is divided into three subsections. Section IV.1. analyzes population growth, total fertility rates, adolescent fertility rates, and contraceptive prevalence. Section IV.2. examines female labor force participation, the proportion of women in parliament, and the Women Business and the Law Index. Section IV.3. examines some educational data from Argentina and Chile by analyzing the female adult literacy rate and secondary school enrollment.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank (2024).

#### IV.1. Population Growth, Total Fertility, Adolescent Fertility, Contraceptive Prevalence

In 2022, Argentina had a population of 46.2 million and Chile had a population of 19.6 million.<sup>9</sup> While the populations of both countries continue to grow every year, annual population growth in both nations has mostly decreased since 1990. Argentina's annual population growth has decreased from 1.46 percent annually to 0.93 percent annually between 1990 and 2022. In both countries, annual population growth decreased rather steadily in the 1990's and 2000's, but there have been some oddities in the data in the past 20 years as shown in Figure 4. In Chile, annual population growth between 1990 and 2022 decreased from 1.62 percent to 0.57 percent. Notably, Chile experienced a period of exceptional annual population growth between 2014 and 2018, when annual population growth increased from 1.01 percent up to 1.80 percent.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 4: Population Growth in Argentina and Chile, 1990–2022**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).<sup>11</sup>

As annual population growth has decreased in both Argentina and Chile, so has its fertility rate, shown in Figure 5. Notably, the fertility rate in both nations has decreased below a replacement fertility rate of 2.1 births per woman. Between 1990 and 2021, Argentina's fertility rate fell from 3.03 to 1.89 births per women. During the same period, the Chilean fertility rate fell from 2.58 to 1.54 births per women.<sup>12</sup> As analyzed in the next section, educational reforms and increasing access to contraception can be attributed to the significant decline in fertility rates in both countries since 1990.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> World Bank (2024).

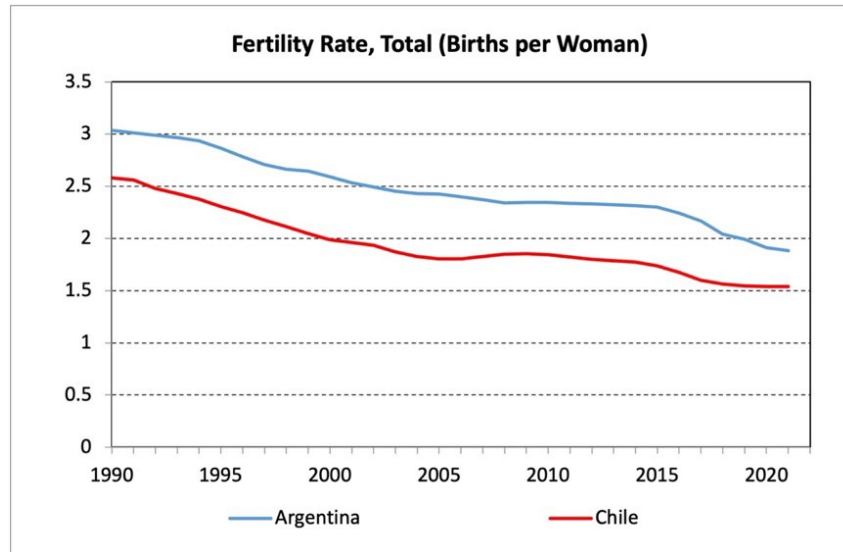
<sup>10</sup> World Bank (2024).

<sup>11</sup> According to World Bank (2024), Argentina's 2010 population growth rate was  $\approx 0.26$ , which does not make sense. The 2010 value graphed in Figure 4 is the average of Argentina's 2009 and 2011 population growth rates.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank (2024).

<sup>13</sup> Constance (2024).

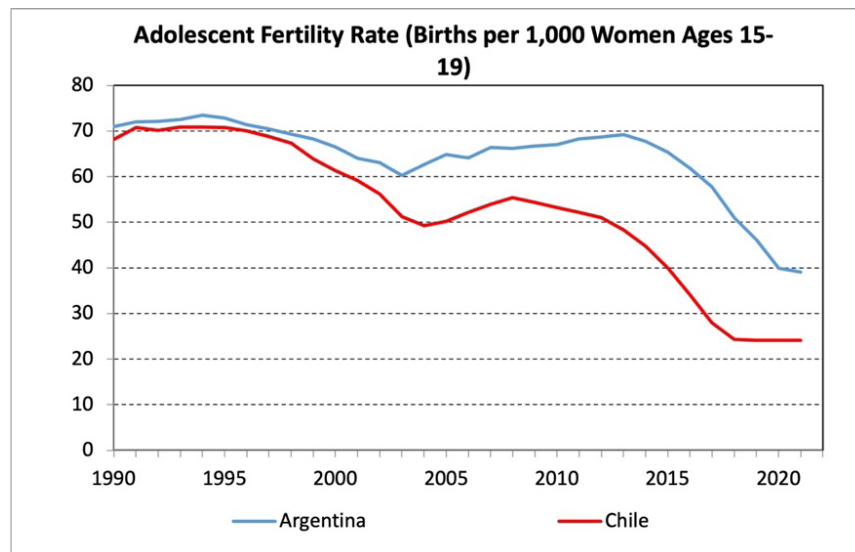
**Figure 5: Total Fertility Rate in Argentina and Chile, 1990–2021**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

The adolescent fertility rates in both Argentina and Chile, graphed on Figure 6 below, have also declined significantly between 1990 and 2021, although these decreases have fluctuated throughout the years. Between 1990 and 2021, Argentina's fertility rate decreased from 70.93 to 39.07 births per 1,000 adolescent women, while Chile's decreased from 68.18 to 24.08.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 6: Adolescent Fertility Rate in Argentina and Chile, 1990–2021**



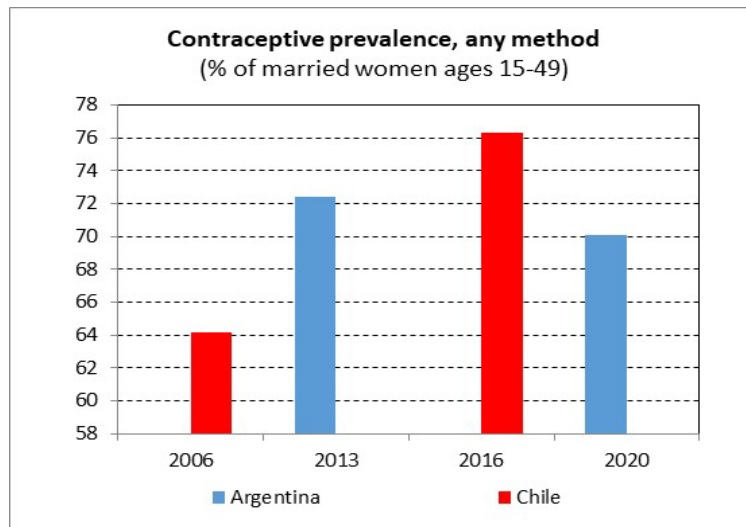
Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

<sup>14</sup> World Bank (2024).

In the case of Argentina, this decrease can be partially attributed to a 1993 educational reform that increased the age of compulsory schooling from 7 years old to 10 years old, and consequently raised school enrollment rates. Alzúa and Velázquez (2017) found that this reform increased school enrollment rates by a range of 2.6 percent to 3 percent, and that every percentage point increase in the enrollment rate reduced the teenage fertility rate by 2.4 to 3.3 births per thousand. Similarly in Chile, a 2006 educational reform that made secondary education, 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, compulsory can be attributed to the decrease in adolescent fertility since then.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Figure 7 below demonstrates that contraceptive prevalence in Chile has increased since the late 2000's, which can also be accredited for the decline in the adolescent fertility.

Figure 7 shows contraceptive prevalence in Argentina and Chile. Unfortunately, there is extremely limited data on contraceptive prevalence in both countries; however, both countries have seen improvements in reproductive health care in recent years. In 2020, Argentina's Senate passed a bill that legalized abortion until 14 weeks of pregnancy. The procedure was previously illegal with exceptions only for rape or if a women's health was at risk.<sup>16</sup> In 2005, the Ministry of Health of Chile added emergency contraception to the National Formulary, which required all pharmacies to keep the drug in stock.<sup>17</sup> In 2017, Chile passed Law 21030, which allowed women access to abortion in limited circumstances such as rape, unviable pregnancy, or if a women's health was at serious risk.<sup>18</sup> Besides these exceptions, abortion remains restricted to all women in Chile today. These reproductive health care reforms may seem unremarkable to some, but they are on par with or progressive compared to the rest of Latin American.<sup>19</sup> While these major feats are worth celebration, both nations still have a long way to go in terms of providing equitable reproductive health care to their female citizens.

**Figure 7: Contraceptive Prevalence in Argentina and Chile, all years available**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

<sup>15</sup> Salinas and Jorquera-Santer (2022).

<sup>16</sup> Latourrette (2023).

<sup>17</sup> Guzmán, Seibert, and Staab (2010).

<sup>18</sup> Salinas and Jorquera-Santer (2022).

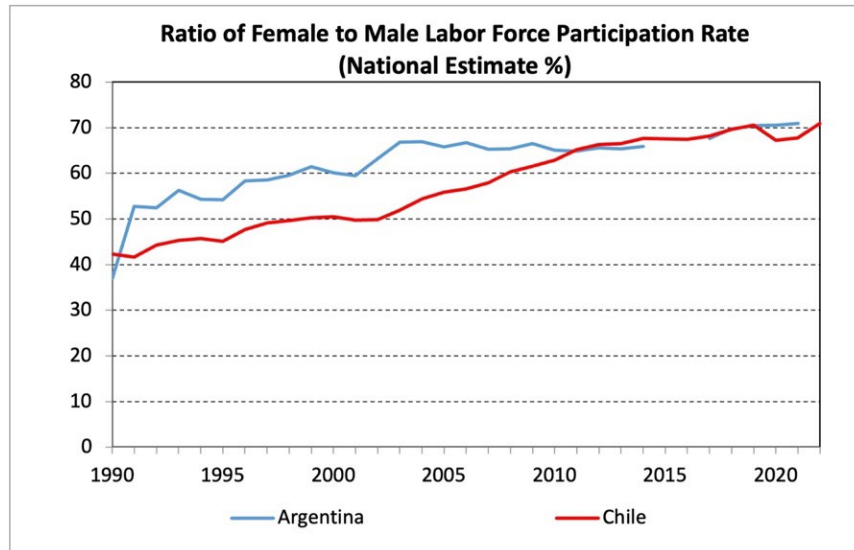
<sup>19</sup> Zissis et al. (2023).



#### IV.2. Labor Force Participation, Proportion of Women in Parliament, Women Business, and the Law Index

The ratio of female to male labor force participation rate, graphed on Figure 8 below, is calculated by dividing female labor force participation rate by male labor force participation rate and multiplying by 100. A country with a high ratio has low discrepancies in labor force participation rate between men and women. There has been a notable increase in this ratio in both Argentina and Chile; however, for different reasons. The Argentine ratio of female to male labor force participation rate between 1990 and 2021 increased from 37 percent to 71 percent, which is a 44 percentage points increase. The Chilean ratio between 1990 and 2022 increased from 42 percent to 71 percent, which is an increase of 29 percentage points. In Chile, this growth can be attributed to the increase in female labor force participation. In the case of Argentina, while there has been a slight increase in female labor force participation since 1990, the female to male ratio has increased because there has been a decrease in the male labor force participation rate.

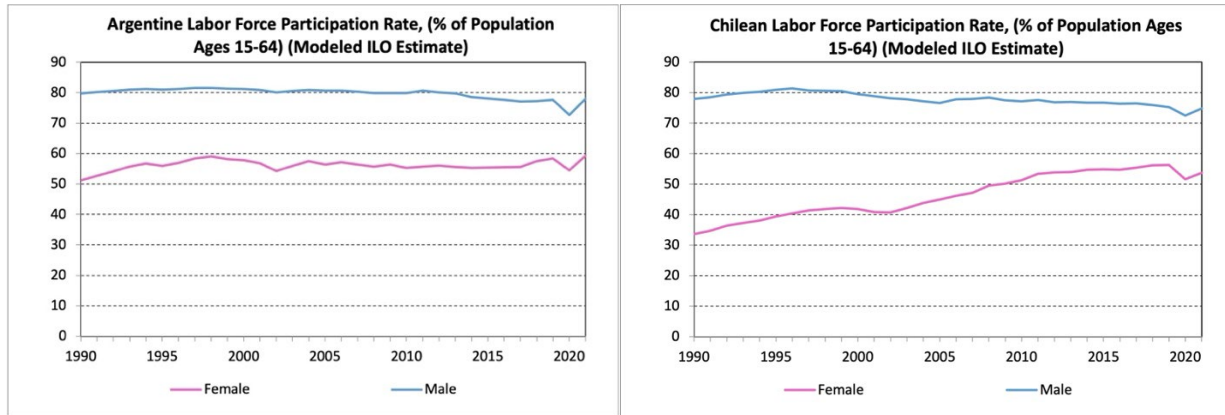
**Figure 8: Ratio of Female to Male Labor Force Participation ( percent), 1990–2022**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

Since 1990, the female labor force participation rate has increased in both Argentina and Chile, as shown in Figure 9 and Figure 10. There has been a much greater increase in female labor force participation in Chile than in Argentina; however, Argentina's 1990 rate was 17.47 percentage points higher than Chile's. The female labor force participation rate from 1990 to 2021 increased in Argentina from 51.16 percent to 59.27 percent, which is an increase by 8.11 percentage points, while the Chilean female labor force participation rate increased from 33.68 percent to 53.76 percent, which is a 20.08 percentage points increase. While the increase has been smaller in Argentina, it is important to note that the 2021 Chilean female labor force participation rate is only slightly higher than that of Argentina in 1990. An odd trend that can be seen in the Argentine data is that the male labor force decreased from 74.3 percent to 70.7 percent between 2011 and 2018. Additionally, the labor force participation rate in both countries decreased from 2019 to 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

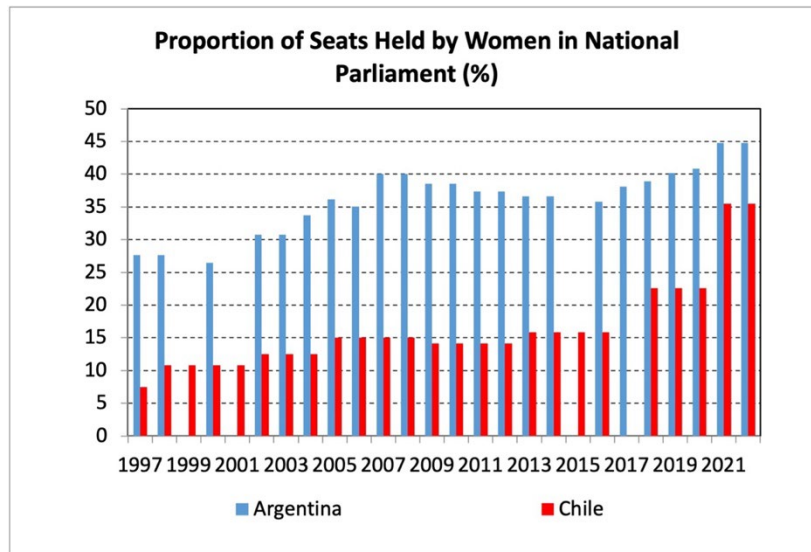
**Figures 9 and 10: Argentine and Chilean Labor Force Participation Rates, 1990–2021**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

Both Argentina and Chile have high levels of female political participation and female representation in the government, as shown in Figure 11, and have created reforms such as gender quotas to increase this participation. In 1991, Argentina passed the first law of its kind in South America that required 30 percent of all party candidates to be female. Unfortunately, scholars have found that women’s increased presence in Argentine politics has not increased women’s power to create legislation that benefits women.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the political power of women is continuously stifled by the structure of the Argentina government. Many important political offices, like cabinet ministers and governors, continue to be male dominated.<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 11: Proportion of Women in Parliament, 1997–2022**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

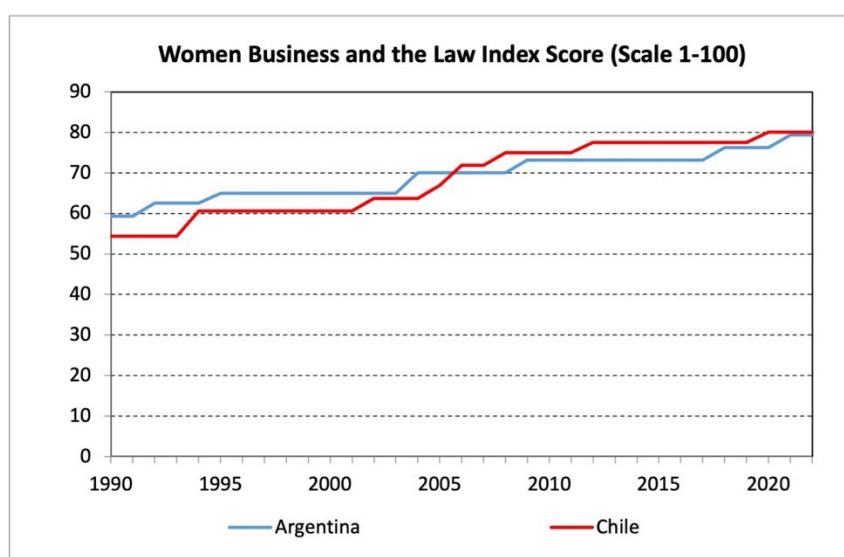
<sup>20</sup> Franceschet and Piscopo (2008).

<sup>21</sup> Djankov and Lehmann (2023).

Patriarchal norms remain strong in political systems throughout Latin America, greatly limiting the capabilities of female legislators. A similar situation can be seen in Chile. Many political parties in Chile have self-imposed gender quotas on their candidates, which has increased female participation in the political arena; however, social conservatism and the influence of the Catholic Church continue to serve as roadblocks for female politicians.<sup>22</sup>

The Women, Business and the Law Index (WBL), graphed in Figure 12, is calculated by taking the average scores of eight indicators, including mobility, workplace, pay, etc., with the highest possible score of 100. Both Argentina and Chile have seen substantial increases in the WBL scores since 1990. As of 2022, Argentina had a WBL score of 79.4, and Chile had a score of 80.0. For comparison purposes, the United States had a WBL score of 91.3.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 12: Women Business and the Law Index, 1990–2022**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

A report by the World Bank Group (2022a) found that Argentina’s score has the most room to improve in the category of legal equality for women, specifically by improving the laws that affect women’s decision to work and regulate women’s pay. Unfortunately, despite the increase in Argentina’s WBL score since 1990, the improvements among the eight indicators have, according to Djankov and Lehmann (2023), largely failed to empower Argentine women overall. Chile has the most room to improve legal equality for women in the same areas as Argentina listed above, in addition to marriage related constraints.<sup>24</sup>

### IV.3. Female Adult Literacy Rate and Secondary School Enrollment

Even though there is very limited data on adult female literacy rate in both Argentina and Chile, shown in Figure 13, it is clear that both nations have very high levels of female literacy rates. Both

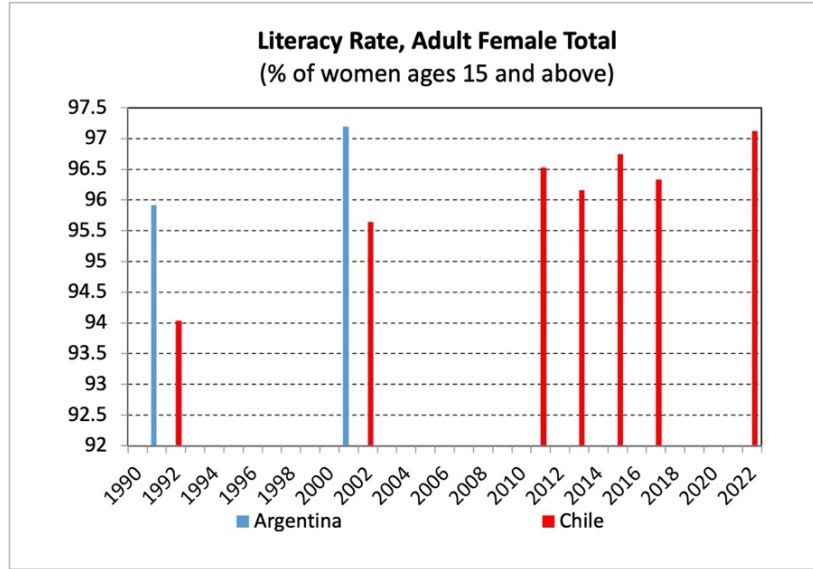
<sup>22</sup> Franceschet (2001).

<sup>23</sup> World Bank Group (2022c).

<sup>24</sup> World Bank Group (2022b).

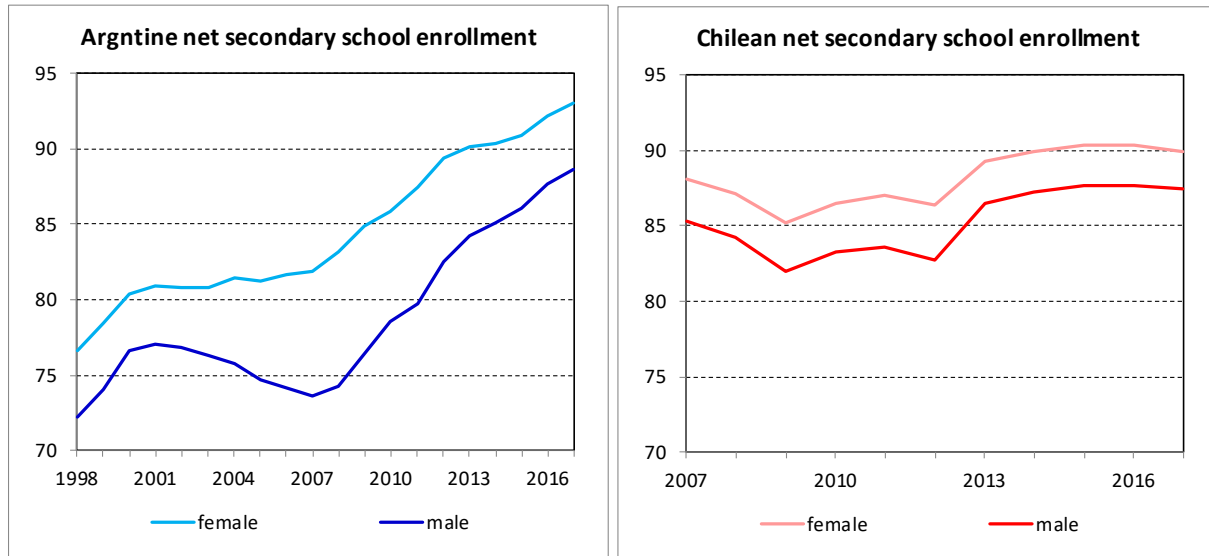
countries have literacy rates well above the 2022 global adult female literacy rate of 84 percent, which can be attributed to the education reforms that both countries have made since transitioning into democracies throughout the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 13: Female Adult Literacy Rate, years available**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

**Figures 14 and 15: Net Secondary School Enrollment in Argentina and Chile (percent)**



Source: Created by author based on World Bank (2024).

<sup>25</sup> World Bank (2019).

The data on Argentina's primary school enrollment rates is so limited that a comparison to Chile is ineffective; however, both countries have sufficient data on their secondary school enrollment rates, as shown in Figures 14 and 15. Interestingly, women in both Argentina and Chile have higher secondary school enrollment than men. A "reverse gender gap" in educational enrollment has developed in many Latin American countries throughout the past two decades, as women have higher enrollment rates and completion rates of secondary education.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, women's higher secondary school enrollment rates have yet to increase their labor force participation rates, which remain lower than the male rates in both countries, as was shown in Figures 9 and 10.

## **V. Ethical Analysis**

This Ethical Analysis examines first some ethical approaches of specific policies adopted to promote gender equality and analyzes then ethical perspectives on gender roles and gender inequality in Argentina and Chile.

### **V.1. Gender Equality Policies and Ethical Reasons**

Argentina and Chile underwent democratic transitions throughout the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after both countries were governed by oppressive right-wing military regimes. In Argentina, a military coup in 1976 removed the president at the time and established a military regime that lasted until 1983. Human rights violations and forced disappearances defined this era in Argentina history. It is estimated that 10,000 to 30,000 people disappeared during this time. After massive civil protests, the regime held elections that resulted in the election of President Raul Alfonsín, who transitioned Argentina back into a democratic state once again.<sup>27</sup>

In Chile, a military regime, led by General Augusto Pinochet, controlled the country from 1973 until 1989 when a free election replaced him. During this time, Pinochet's free-market policies contributed to economic growth and low levels of inflation; however, the country was defined by human rights violations and censorship under Pinochet rule. There are more than 35,000 cases of documented torture in Chile throughout the Pinochet era.<sup>28</sup>

Since the democratic transitions, both Argentina and Chile have had female presidents. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was the President of Argentina from 2007 to 2015, and Michelle Bachelet was the President of Chile from 2007 to 2010, and then again from 2014-2018. Unfortunately, despite having women Presidents, Argentina and to some degree also Chile fell short of creating policies that promote women's economic autonomy during this time.

Argentina did little to create policies that increase women's labor force participation rate, tackle the wage gap, or promote female entrepreneurship during Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's presidency. During her first term, Fernández decreased government spending on contraceptives and canceled federal safe sex programs to appease the Catholic Church and garner their support for reforms in other sectors.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the shortcomings of Argentina's first female president since its transition back to democracy, the country has passed a significant amount of legislation that has worked to reduced

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<sup>26</sup> Buitrago-Hernandez, Levin, and Rodríguez Castelán (2023).

<sup>27</sup> Freedom House (undated-a).

<sup>28</sup> Britannica (2018).

<sup>29</sup> Djankov and Lehmann (2023).

gender-based inequality and improve the social standing of women. Of these policies, the 1991 law that established 30 percent gender quotas among Parliamentary candidates and the 2020 law that legalized abortion in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy are some of the most notable. Using various lenses of ethical standards, one can see the ethical implications that these policies have had on Argentine women.

The parliamentary gender-quota law can best be analyzed through a justice-based lens of ethical standards.<sup>30</sup> This law was one of Argentina's first laws that provided both social and corrective justice to women by restructuring the institutions of government and correcting for past exclusion from governmental institutions. The 2020 law that legalized abortion, on the other hand, is best analyzed through a rights-based lens of ethical standards. This lens implies that human beings have certain rights based on their human nature, which include the right to reproductive freedom. Throughout recent history, Argentine reproductive rights activists have utilized a rights-based approach to garner public support for reproductive rights and enact change.<sup>31</sup>

Unlike in Argentina, promoting gender equality was a top priority for the first female Chilean President. During her presidency, Michelle Bachelet established the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality and created a law that requires 40 percent of Parliament candidates to be women.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, Bachelet faced many obstacles that stood in the way of creating more progressive policies, such as decriminalizing abortion.<sup>33</sup> These notable achievements that occurred during the Bachelet administration can be analyzed through the different lenses of ethical standards to best understand their ethical implications on Chilean women.

The creation of the Ministry of Women and Children, which supports policies that promote the economic interest of women and works to eliminate violence against women, can best be analyzed through the justice-based lens of ethical standards. This is the first governmental agency of its kind in Chile with the principal goal of establishing equal treatment of men and women. The Parliamentary quota law is also best analyzed through this justice-based lens of ethical standards. Much like in Argentina, this was the first law of its kind that aimed to establish social and corrective justice for the women in the country.

President Michelle Bachelet also adopted policies that improved women's labor force participation and status in the workforce but was frequently resistant to creating policies that would reduce gender-based wage discrepancies. Despite this, in 2009 Chile amended their employment law and committed to reducing the gender wage gap; however, this reform has faced criticism for failing to guarantee compliance.<sup>34</sup>

## **V.2. Ethical Perspectives on Gender Roles and Gender Inequality**

Suzette Mitchell (1994) outlines the three necessary requirements for an ethical approach to development for women: empowering women, addressing the strategic concerns of women, and including a gender analysis in development projects. Mitchell also highlights five different approaches to including women and development. Below, some of the most significant Argentine

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<sup>30</sup> Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (2021).

<sup>31</sup> Sutton (2019).

<sup>32</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner (undated).

<sup>33</sup> Semenova and Evdokimova (2021).

<sup>34</sup> Muñoz-Cabrera and Rangel (2018).

and Chilean reforms for women are analyzed using Mitchell's the necessary requirements and ethical approaches of development for women.<sup>35</sup>

Since re-establishing democratic governments in the late 20th century, both Argentina and Chile have established federal agencies dedicated to women's issues and services. In 2019, Argentina founded the Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity of Argentina, which oversaw women and gender-related policies. Unfortunately, the recently elected President Javier Milei dissolved the Ministry less than a month after his election, which poses a serious threat to the rights and security of women in the country.<sup>36</sup> Chile created a similar government agency, the National Women's Service, in 1991. The creation of both organizations can be analyzed through Mitchell's equity approach to women in development, which goes beyond economic equity and works towards achieving political, social, and cultural equality for women.

As mentioned throughout this article, both Argentina and Chile have established gender-quotas that require a certain percentage of parliamentary candidates, 30 percent in Argentina and 40 percent in Chile, to be women. These laws align with Mitchell's empowerment approach to women in development, as they attempt to increase the political power of women and enable them to create legislation that improves the social and economic standing of women. Unfortunately, several factors such as the structure of government in both nations, the Catholic Church's influence on public opinion, and a socially conservative culture continue to limit female political power despite these quotas.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Since 1990, both Argentina and Chile have made historical strides towards achieving gender equality. In both countries, population growth has slowed, and average fertility rates have decreased, indicating that women have become more empowered to make choices related to family planning. Women's literacy rates and secondary education enrollment rates have increased in past decades, which suggests that women now have more economic opportunities and rely less on men for survival. As a result of these educational achievements, women's labor force participation rates have increased in both countries. Additionally, women's influence in politics and policymaking has increased significantly. Both Argentina and Chile have seen an increase in the proportion of women in parliament and have elected female presidents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This article analyzed current policies, legislation, and programs that pertain to women's rights in the Argentina and Chile. It analyzed these efforts through various ethical lenses and approaches. The establishment of federal agencies dedicated to women's issues, the use of gender-quotas for parliamentary candidates, and the laws that have increased access to reproductive health care are all notable achievements that have aimed to create a more egalitarian society in Argentina and Chile. Unfortunately, the efficacy of these efforts continues to be challenged by a variety of factors, such as insufficient government funding, resistance from conservative citizens and political parties, and societal norms that limit women's political power.

Based on the various indicators of gender equality that have been analyzed throughout this article, it can be concluded that the social, political, and economic standing of women in Argentina and Chile is the most equal it has ever been. Nonetheless, both nations are still a longways away from

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<sup>35</sup> Mitchell (1994).

<sup>36</sup> Lopez Uribe (2024).

achieving true gender equality. Violence against women is an ongoing problem in both countries. 45 percent of Argentine women in relationships were victims of domestic gender-based violence in 2022.<sup>37</sup> 40 percent of women in Chile were victims of domestic violence in 2019.<sup>38</sup> Argentina's current President openly critiques and seeks to minimize women's rights, and abortion remains largely illegal for most Chilean women to this day.

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030 is the fifth goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>39</sup> While the world is not on track to achieve this goal, it is important not to overlook the progress that has been made. For Argentina and Chile to achieve gender equality, several things need to be done. Both nations must continue to invest in women, create and enact laws that protect women, include women in the policy making process, and work to establish new cultural norms to close the gender gap and equalize opportunities.

In recent years, Argentina has established programs that aim to reduce violence against women, and Chile has signed agreements with UN Women to include women in the policymaking process and strengthen women's economic autonomy.<sup>40</sup> Both countries are on their way towards achieving gender equality, but it is of the utmost necessity that citizens work to transcend the social and cultural norms that view women as secondary citizens. Women-led movements have enacted beneficial landmark changes in the recent history of both Argentina and Chile. Now, it is time for both countries to work towards establishing new cultural norms that acknowledge the work of women and treat them as equal citizens.

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<sup>37</sup> Ministerio de las Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad (2022).

<sup>38</sup> Inchauste, Bello, and Contreras-Urbina (2021).

<sup>39</sup> United Nations (2023).

<sup>40</sup> UN Women (2022).



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