

Chile students' mass fare-dodging expands into city-wide protest

Tuesday 22 October 2019, by [BARTLETT John](#) (Date first published: 18 October 2019).

- **Thousands jump barriers in response to metro fare rise**
- **Police use teargas on protesters decrying rising cost of living**

Thousands of school and university students have joined a mass fare-dodging protest in [Chile](#), flooding into metro stations in the country's capital to vault turnstiles and vandalise equipment amid simmering unrest over the rising cost of living.

The campaign erupted when secondary school students began to jump barriers in groups following a fare rise on 6 October, which put Santiago's metro among the most expensive in Latin America at 830 pesos (\$1.17) during the rush hour. Bus prices also climbed as part of the changes.

CIENTOS DE ESTUDIANTES VUELVEN A TOMARSE LAS ESTACIONES DE METRO EN SANTIAGO DE CHILE PARA QUE LOS USUARIOS VIAJEN GRATIS TRAS EL ALZA DEL PASAJE QUE SUPERA 1 DÓLAR, UNO DE LOS TRANSPORTES MÁS CAROS DE LA REGIÓN. LLAMADOS A EVASIONES MASIVAS SE ESPERAN PARA LOS PRÓXIMOS DÍAS. pic.twitter.com/95rOk8rR70

— Paola Dragnic (@PaoladrateleSUR) [October 18, 2019](#)

The demonstrations have spread across the city, leading to [violent clashes between protesters and police](#), who have used teargas to disperse crowds on concourses and platforms.

Protesters have vandalized barriers and electronic turnstiles, and pulled emergency brakes on trains, affecting the more than 2.5 million passengers who use the metro each day. Police have made dozens of arrests and two officers were reportedly injured.

CHILE: Urgent/ Los Heroes Subway Station; chilean police runs, detains, beats, and gets into wagons to take out users who performed [#evasion](#)
This is going to end up badly pic.twitter.com/389MIMihbp

— PIENSA.PRENSA (@PiensoPrensa) [October 18, 2019](#)

"I understand that civil unrest exists, and that people rebel against certain conditions, but the path that they have chosen is the destruction of one of the greatest tools for social unity that we have [in this city]," said Chile's transport minister, Gloria Hutt. "It is incomprehensible that they would destroy a public service that benefits so many people."

Hutt also pointed out that the fare increase would not affect students, who pay a flat fare of 230

pesos regardless of the time at which they travel.

Chile's centre-right president, Sebastián Piñera, has confirmed that he is considering invoking Chile's State Security Law in an effort to quell the protests, a measure that would enable prison sentences of up to 10 years for protesters found guilty of public disorder.

The protests come amid growing discontent at living conditions in Chile, where salaries are the lowest of any country in the OECD bloc and many Chileans are forced to run up debts in order to pay basic living costs.

President Piñera's popularity has also suffered as unrest grows, with the latest opinion survey conducted by pollster Cadem showing that 55% of Chileans disapprove of his handling of government affairs - up from 45% at the beginning of the year.

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The Guardian

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