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Height in eighteenth-century Chilean men: evidence from military records, 1730s-1800s

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Highlights

- The average height of a Chilean male was around 167 centimetres *c.*1730s-1800s.
- Chilean men were taller than men from most of Latin America and southern Europe.
- Chilean height declined by around 2-3 centimetres between the 1780s and the 1800s.

Abstract

This article provides the first height estimates for the adult population for any period of Chilean history. Based on military records, it gives an analysis of the average heights of male soldiers in the last eight decades of the colonial period, *c.*1730s-1800s. The average height of Chilean men was around 167 centimetres, making them on average taller than men from Mexico, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela, but of a similar height to men from Sweden. However, Chilean men were clearly shorter than men in neighbouring Argentina, the USA and the UK. Chilean height remained stable during the 1740s-1770s, but it declined by some 2-3 centimetres between the 1780s and the 1800s, in line with a fall in real wages due to increasing food prices and population growth.

JEL classification: I10, I12, I31, J15, N36.

Keywords: biological standard of living; physical stature; height; Chile; anthropometric history; eighteenth century.

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