

Bolivia

Ethnicity in Bolivia

Group selection

We identify the following politically relevant ethnic groups in Bolivia: The **Aymara, Guarani and other eastern indigenous groups, Quechua**, and **Whites/Mestizos**. For this classification, the group of Guarani was included and merged with other very small ethnic groups from the eastern part of Bolivia. They unify themselves under one common political organization (Confederacion Indigena del Oriente de Bolivia, CIDOB), founded in 1982. Scholars often speak of the highland indigenous peoples and the lowland indigenous peoples, as their origin and lifestyle differ significantly (⁵⁰⁶), but this is not reflected in political organization. Population figures - as in almost all Latin American countries - are heavily debated. This coding relied on information given by the ILO (⁵⁰⁷) for the Quechua and Aymara groups, and on absolute numbers given by the Joshua Project website (⁵⁰⁸), based on information in the World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples (⁵⁰⁹), for the eastern/lowland groups. On the basis of these numbers, the indigenous peoples constitute about 59% of Bolivia's total population. Consequently, the size of the Whites/Mestizos group should be about 41%.

⁵⁰⁶ [Albo, 1992]

⁵⁰⁷ [ILO, 2014]

⁵⁰⁸ [Joshua Project, 2014]

⁵⁰⁹ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

Power relations

1946-1952

Indigenous people were excluded from political participation and suffering from discrimination (⁵¹⁰).

⁵¹⁰ [Reyes-Garcia et al., 2010]

1953-1981

The national revolution of 1952, led by a populist movement, determined a change in the formal social and political status of the indigenous people. Rights were given to them as in political participation, education, health and access to land. Most importantly, the right to vote for illiterates was already introduced in 1952 (⁵¹¹, 49). The Kataristas, an Aymara movement, emerged in 1974. Quechua and Aymara are considered powerless during this period, and Whites/Mestizos dominant. Guarani and other eastern indigenous groups are coded as irrelevant.

⁵¹¹ [van Cott, 2007]

1982-1992

Although the Kataristas (Aymara) gained influence in the peasant movement, their performance in elections was poor, never surpassing a 3% electoral threshold between 1979 and 1989 (⁵¹², 23). While the Whites/Mestizos are coded as dominant, all other groups are coded as powerless in this period.

⁵¹² [Gray Molina, 2007]

1993-1997

In the legislative period from 1993 to 1997, one of the various Katarist parties, the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Katari Liberacion (Revolutionary Movement of Liberation Tupac Katari - MRTKL) became the coalition partner of the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), providing the newly elected government with an indigenous vice president, Victor Hugo Cardenas. Even though this was the first time in Bolivian history that an indigenous person assumed office on one of the highest political levels, Cardenas and his MRTKL could neither count on the full support of the indigenous population (the MRTKL has its roots in the left, the MNR in the right political spectrum) nor was he able to substantially influence the government's politics (disregarding ideological concepts such as "social and cultural pluralism").

There are two important exceptions: The first is the reform of the educational system in which Cardenas played a crucial role (⁵¹³, 70); the second is the passage of a new law in 1994 (Ley de Participacion Popular) that gave local indigenous communities more independence from the traditional political parties and permitted the local participation of indigenous people. This kind of decentralization led to the creation of more successful indigenous parties. Due to the realization of these two reforms and also taking into consideration the important formal position of the vice president, we decided to code the Aymara group as "junior partner" for this period. The other indigenous peoples remain powerless, and whites are "senior partner". The coding also distinguishes between two periods, one from 1993-1993, where none of the groups enjoy regional autonomy. Between 1994 and 1997, after the passage of the new law, the Quechua, Whites/Mestizos and Aymara enjoy regional autonomy.

⁵¹³ [Albo, 1992]

1998-2005

Whites/Mestizos are again dominant and the Aymara powerless.

2006-2019

In 2002, indigenous parties gained some influence on the national level and in December 2005, Evo Morales (Socialist Party) won the absolute majority of votes and became the first indigenous president of Bolivia, being reelected in 2009 with an absolute majority. Evo Morales "brought to power representatives of those who had been excluded" (⁵¹⁴), even though only four of the appointed ministers

⁵¹⁴ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008]

were indigenous. A new constitution was approved which provides new power at the departmental, municipal and regional areas, as well as in the newly created indigenous autonomous areas.

After the Socialists had dominated the presidential elections of 2014 the party faced surprisingly strong headwinds in the subnational elections of 2015. It gained four out of the nine governor posts but important departments and municipalities were won by the opposition (⁵¹⁵: 34; ⁵¹⁶: 11; ⁵¹⁷; ⁵¹⁸). Because the resource-rich department of Santa Cruz is governed by opposition leader Ruben Costas Aguilera, whites are also coded as having regional autonomy. All groups except for the Guarani are coded as having regional autonomy.

The rich eastern departments, dominated by "Bolivians" (whites and mestizos), claim to be autonomous departments in order to protest against the loss of power. The lowland indigenous peoples, which live in the eastern departments, still do not have access to political power and continue to be dominated by the these departments' old elites.

Currently, given the actual power of the Socialists, interest groups and movements allied with the party can count on much better representation of their interests in political decision-making (⁵¹⁹: 12; ⁵²⁰: 51). However, the relationships of these actors with the Socialists are complex and appear to be defined by different issues and sectors rather than by the traditional cleavage of the initial period of the Morales administration (⁵²¹: 29; ⁵²²: 386, ⁵²³: 51).

The common goal of the indigenous peoples used to be to challenge the hegemonic power of the old mestizo elites. Increased demand for indigenous autonomy was answered by those elites with intensified claims for departmental autonomy in order to maintain power in the resource-rich region of "media luna" (⁵²⁴: 379). Today, division among different indigenous groups is becoming more apparent as their fundamental interests tend to collide on several issues. The Aymara and Quechua, backed by the MAS, tend to support economic development and land distribution that favors their peasant activities and criticize that indigenous lowland communities own vast amounts of territory without cultivating most of it. These lowland groups, in turn, strongly oppose activities that cause environmental damage or interfere with their goal of territorial self-determination (⁵²⁵: 50). A famous example of this newly emerging cleavage is the conflict over a road construction project in the Isiboro Sicure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS), which was backed by Morales and the benefiting Coca Producers' Federations but strongly opposed by former indigenous supporters of the MAS (⁵²⁶: 12; ⁵²⁷: 129).

The status of the Guarani is inferior to that of other indigenous peoples. The government's increased support for the peasant sector, agri-business elites, the extractive industry and related infrastructure projects in the Eastern lowlands has further weakened political influence of the Guarani and other eastern indigenous groups (⁵²⁸:

⁵¹⁵ [Alberti, 2016]

⁵¹⁶ [BTI, 2016]

⁵¹⁷ [El Pais, 2015]

⁵¹⁸ [Noticias de Bolivia, 2015]

⁵¹⁹ [BTI, 2016]

⁵²⁰ [Rousseau and Hudon, 2017]

⁵²¹ [BTI, 2016]

⁵²² [Delgado, 2017]

⁵²³ [Rousseau and Hudon, 2017]

⁵²⁴ [Delgado, 2017]

⁵²⁵ [Rousseau and Hudon, 2017]

⁵²⁶ [BTI, 2016]

⁵²⁷ [Postero, 2017]

⁵²⁸ [Radhuber, 2015]

103). Those ethnic groups remain “powerless” at the national level. As an answer to the neglect of their interests by national politics as well as regional governments the Guarani increased their efforts in establishing autonomous governments (⁵²⁹; ⁵³⁰: 158). However, given the local scope of these institutions, they are not coded as having “regional autonomy” during this period.

⁵²⁹ [IWGIA, 2017]

⁵³⁰ [Postero, 2017]

2020

The year 2019 in Bolivia was marked by conflicts and frictions. Evo Morales was enabled to re-run for the October 2019 elections, although a fourth presidential term is forbidden by the 2009 constitution and was even voted down by the the people in a binding referendum in 2016. However, the Constitutional Court ruled in 2017 that Morales’s bid for reelection is legitimate using unconvincing arguments. Thus, the election campaign has already been conflict-prone at the start and became increasingly polarized throughout the year of 2019. The decision by the Supreme Electoral Court in December 2018 to accept Morales as a presidential candidate for the elections in 2019, for example, has led to immediate protest and roadblocks throughout the country (⁵³¹; ⁵³²). In the elections of October 2019, Evo Morales was declared the winner, although irregularities and electoral manipulation were evident. This triggered mass protests and violence, resulting in the deaths of at least 30 people. After Morales lost the support of the military and police force, he and several other top officials resigned in November 2019 (⁵³³).

⁵³¹ [BTI, 2020]

⁵³² [Freedom House, 2020]

⁵³³ [Freedom House, 2020]

On 13 November 2019, Jeanine Áñez Chavez, a senior senator and highest-ranking official in line of succession without resignation, was declared interim president until new elections could be held (⁵³⁴; ⁵³⁵). Áñez’s interim government has been accused of running a vindictive takeover by far-right white-skinned politicians against indigenous people’s interests (⁵³⁶). The transitional cabinet sworn in by Áñez on 14 November 2019 did not include a single indigenous person. In a second ceremony on 15 November 2019, the indigenous woman Martha Yujra Apaza was sworn in as the culture and tourism minister - the sole indigenous minister of Áñez’s government (⁵³⁷). Thus, the coding of the year 2020 changes quite a bit from the previous period. While the Whites/mestizos are coded as dominant, all indigenous groups (Aymara, Quechua, Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups) are coded as powerless.

⁵³⁴ [Freedom House, 2020]

⁵³⁵ [Human Rights Watch, 2020]

⁵³⁶ [International Crisis Group, 2020]

⁵³⁷ [Collins, 2019]

2021-

Due to Coronavirus, the presidential elections of 2020 were postponed twice, but were finally held on 19 of October 2020. In a landslide victory, receiving more than 55 per cent of the vote in the first round, Luis Arce and David Choquehuanca of the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) party were elected as president and vice-president. This showed a remarkable return of Morales’s MAS party, that also won in six of the country’s nine departments. The party thus se-

cured the control of the national executive and the absolute majority in both chambers of the parliament. Amongst other things, the vote reflected the poor performance of the interim government. Arce and Choquehuanca could convince with their positive agenda to fight the coronavirus, hunger and income insecurity, and could convince many economically and ethnically disadvantaged. Arce was Minister of Economy and Public Finance under Morales, and oversaw many of Bolivia's successful economic policies and represents the urban left. Choquehuanca is an indigenous Aymara and was Morales's foreign minister from 2006 to 2017. He is seen as an important figure of the MAS, an indigenous and rural activist, as well as an intellectual. Before the elections Arce promised that they would not allow Morales to participate in the new government (⁵³⁸, ⁵³⁹). Out of the 17 Ministers, only one has an explicit indigenous identity, namely Sabina Orellana, a Quechua, who was named Minister of Culture, Decolonization, and Depatriarchalization (⁵⁴⁰, ⁵⁴¹). With Arce as president, a mestizo, and many cabinet ministers also belonging to the ethnic group of Whites/mestizos, they are coded as senior partner from 2021 onward. The Aymara are coded as junior partner, as the vice-president Choquehuanca belongs to this indigenous ethnic group. The Quechua are also coded as junior partner due to the position of Sabina Orellana as Minister of Culture. The Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups are coded as powerless.

⁵³⁸ [Zilla and Andrade, 2020]

⁵³⁹ [International Crisis Group, 2020]

⁵⁴⁰ [Aliaga, 2020]

⁵⁴¹ [Nodal, 2020]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia

From 1946 until 1952

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.41	MONOPOLY
Quechua	0.31	DISCRIMINATED
Aymara	0.25	DISCRIMINATED
Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups	0.03	DISCRIMINATED

From 1953 until 1981

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.41	DOMINANT
Quechua	0.31	POWERLESS
Aymara	0.25	POWERLESS
Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups	0.03	IRRELEVANT

From 1982 until 1992

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.41	DOMINANT
Quechua	0.31	POWERLESS
Aymara	0.25	POWERLESS
Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups	0.03	POWERLESS

From 1993 until 1993

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.41	SENIOR PARTNER
Quechua	0.31	POWERLESS
Aymara	0.25	JUNIOR PARTNER
Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups	0.03	POWERLESS



Figure 86: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1946-1952.



Figure 87: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1953-1981.



Figure 88: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1982-1992.



Figure 89: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1993-1993.

From 1994 until 1997

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.41	SENIOR PARTNER
Quechua	0.31	POWERLESS
Aymara	0.25	JUNIOR PARTNER
Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups	0.03	POWERLESS

From 1998 until 2005

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.41	DOMINANT
Quechua	0.31	POWERLESS
Aymara	0.25	POWERLESS
Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups	0.03	POWERLESS

From 2006 until 2019

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.41	JUNIOR PARTNER
Quechua	0.31	JUNIOR PARTNER
Aymara	0.25	SENIOR PARTNER
Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups	0.03	POWERLESS

From 2020 until 2020

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.41	DOMINANT
Quechua	0.31	POWERLESS
Aymara	0.25	POWERLESS
Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups	0.03	POWERLESS

From 2021 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.41	SENIOR PARTNER
Quechua	0.31	JUNIOR PARTNER
Aymara	0.25	JUNIOR PARTNER
Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups	0.03	POWERLESS



Figure 90: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1994-1997.



Figure 91: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1998-2005.

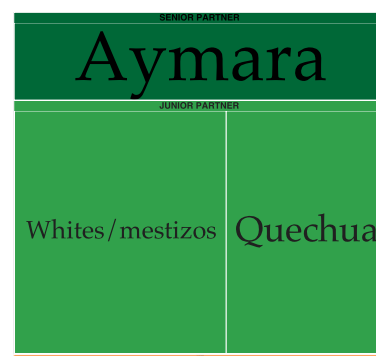


Figure 92: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 2006-2019.



Figure 93: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 2020-2020.



Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Bolivia

From 1946 until 1952



Figure 95: Map of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1946-1952.

Group name		Area in km ²	Type
Whites/mestizos		1 086 605	Statewide
Quechua		318 322	Regional & urban
Guaraní and other eastern indigenous groups		186 549	Regionally based
Aymara		91 214	Regional & urban

Table 33: List of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1946-1952.

From 1953 until 1981

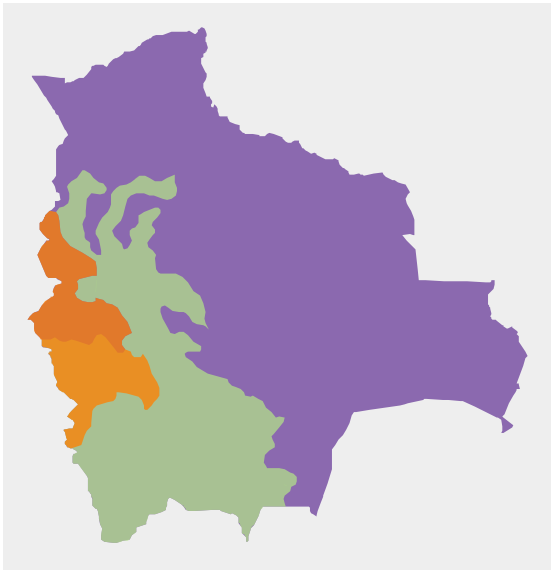


Figure 96: Map of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1953-1981.

Group name		Area in km ²	Type
Whites/mestizos		1 086 605	Statewide
Quechua		318 322	Regional & urban
Aymara		91 214	Regional & urban

Table 34: List of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1953-1981.

From 1982 until 2021



Figure 97: Map of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1982-2021.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Whites/mestizos	1 086 605	Statewide
■	Quechua	318 322	Regional & urban
■	Guaraní and other eastern indige- nous groups	186 549	Regionally based
■	Aymara	91 214	Regional & urban

Table 35: List of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1982-2021.

Conflicts in Bolivia

Starting on 1946-07-17

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Bolivia	Popular Revolutionary Movement	Whites/mestizos	1946-07-17	No	Yes, from EGIP	No
Government of Bolivia	MNR	Whites/mestizos	1952-04-08	No	Yes, from EGIP	Split
Government of Bolivia	ELN		1967-03-30			