

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 (⁴²⁷), 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 (⁴²⁸) for the Quechua and Aymara groups, and on absolute numbers given by the Joshua Project website (⁴²⁹), based on information in the World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples (⁴³⁰), 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%.

⁴²⁷ [Albo, 1992]

⁴²⁸ [ILO, 2014]

⁴²⁹ [Joshua Project, 2014]

⁴³⁰ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

Power relations

1946-1952

Indigenous people were excluded from political participation (⁴³¹).

⁴³¹ [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 (⁴³², 49). The Kataristas, an Aymara movement, emerged in 1974. Quechua and Aymara are considered powerless during this period, and Whites/Mestizos dominant.

⁴³² [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 (⁴³³, 23).

⁴³³ [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 (⁴³⁴, 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 "junior partner".

⁴³⁴ [Albo, 1992]

1998-2005

Whites/Mestizos are again dominant and the Aymara powerless.

2006-2017

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" (⁴³⁵), even though only four of the appointed ministers 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.

⁴³⁵ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008]

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 (436: 34; 437: 11; 438; 439). 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 (440: 12; 441: 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 (442: 29; 443: 386, 444: 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 autonomies was answered by those elites with intensified claims for departmental autonomy in order to maintain power in the resource-rich region of "media luna" (445: 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 (446: 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 benefitting Coca Producers' Federations but strongly opposed by former indigenous supporters of the MAS (447: 12; 448: 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 (449: 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 (450; 451: 158). However, given the local scope of these institutions, they are not coded as having "regional autonomy" during this period.

⁴³⁶ [Alberti, 2016]

⁴³⁷ [BTI, 2016]

⁴³⁸ [El Pais, 2015]

⁴³⁹ [Noticias de Bolivia, 2015]

⁴⁴⁰ [BTI, 2016]

⁴⁴¹ [Rousseau and Hudon, 2017]

⁴⁴² [BTI, 2016]

⁴⁴³ [Delgado, 2017]

⁴⁴⁴ [Rousseau and Hudon, 2017]

⁴⁴⁵ [Delgado, 2017]

⁴⁴⁶ [Rousseau and Hudon, 2017]

⁴⁴⁷ [BTI, 2016]

⁴⁴⁸ [Postero, 2017]

⁴⁴⁹ [Radhuber, 2015]

⁴⁵⁰ [IWGIA, 2017]

⁴⁵¹ [Postero, 2017]

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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



Figure 76: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1946-1952.



Figure 77: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1953-1981.



Figure 78: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1982-1992.

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

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 2017

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



Figure 79: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1993-1993.



Figure 80: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1994-1997.



Figure 81: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1998-2005.

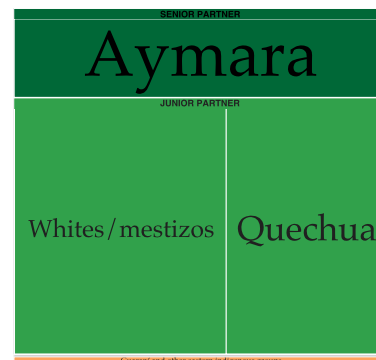


Figure 82: Political status of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 2006-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Bolivia

From 1946 until 2017

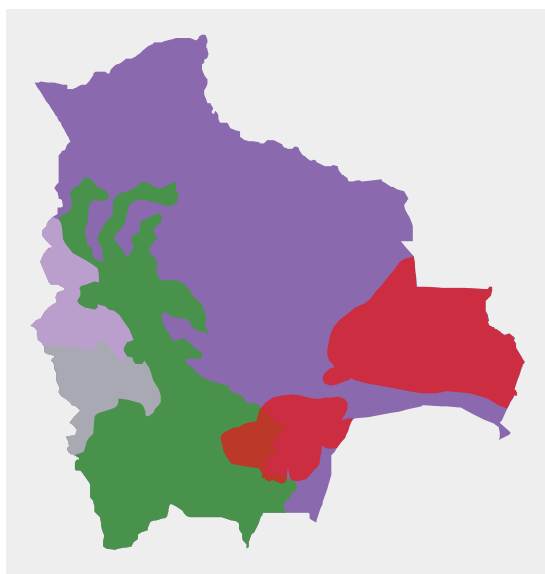


Figure 83: Map of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1946-2017.

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 27: List of ethnic groups in Bolivia during 1946-2017.

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			