

Bolivia Smart Card



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Army Ranks

Cabo PFC	Sargento 2° CPL	Sargento 1° SGT	Sub-Oficial Inicial SSG	
Sub-Oficial 2° SFC	Sub-Oficial 1° MSG	Sub-Oficial Mayor SGM	Sub-Oficial Maestre CSM	
Subteniente 2LT	Teniente 1LT	Capitán CPT	Mayor MAJ	
Teniente Coronel LTC	Coronel COL	General de Brigada BG	General de División MG	General de Fuerza LG

Overview

- ◆ Population: approximately 10.5 million
- ◆ Capitals: La Paz (government); Sucre (legal)
- ◆ Sparsely populated: five people per square mile
- ◆ 3rd largest coca producing country in the world
- ◆ “Indigenous” majority country
- ◆ High income disparity between rich and poor

Coca production in Bolivia finances criminal activity and affects security in other South American nations, principally Brazil. President Evo Morales, who is of indigenous (Aymara) descent and was once a coca grower himself, supports the cultivation of the coca leaf for traditional indigenous uses, although not for the production of cocaine. Efforts to eradicate coca in some areas has led to confrontations with coca farmers. In 2012 the United Nations reported that coca production fell in Bolivia for the first time since Morales took office in 2006.



Morales wearing a coca leaf necklace

International Relations



Regional: Bolivia lost land in the Chaco region after a war with Paraguay in the 1930s. Bolivia’s attempts to regain land access to the Pacific Ocean lost to Chile in 1884 after the War of the Pacific (cemented later in a 1904 treaty) have gone largely unheard. Though not to the point of armed conflict, the loss remains a sore spot for many Bolivians. “The Day of the Sea” is a Bolivian holiday that remembers those who fought in the war, but also symbolizes the hope for sea access once again.

U.S.-Bolivian: Though Bolivia is a strong economic partner through trade with the United States, political relations have been strained since President Morales has been in office. The U.S. cut military aid to the nation in the mid-2000s for its reluctance to ban coca cultivation. Later in 2008 Bolivia expelled the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and U.S. Ambassador after Morales charged that they were undermining the Bolivian government. The DEA had been operating in Bolivia for decades.

‘Plurinational State’

Bolivia has the largest “indigenous,” or Amerindian, population of any other South American country (roughly 55-60%).

The **Wiphala banner** (left in image) is a symbol of Andean indigenous communities. A variation of the flag of the Inca Empire, it now flies around the country and is often accompanied by its co-national flag (right in image).



Author: Banderas de Bolivia
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Many indigenous peoples (the most numerous being the Quechua and Aymara) have preserved their languages and traditional practices, though some have chosen to adopt the Spanish language and some cultural and religious practices into their lives.

Morales’ 2009 Constitution defined Bolivia as a ‘**plurinational state**’ recognizing, for example, 36 official indigenous languages. Over half the population speak Spanish, 20% speak Quechua, and 15% speak Aymara.

Military

The armed forces include the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines. The Navy and Marines operate mainly on Lake Titicaca, a body of water shared with Peru. Currently, the military is heavily involved in coca eradication and counter-narcotics efforts.

The Army maintains both internal and external security roles, performs nation-building and civic actions, and is a protector of the nation’s democratic institutions. In 2010, the army was declared an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, socialist, and communitarian institution. The Army is deployed in six regional groupings: La Paz, Sucre, Tarija, Potosí, Trinidad, and Cobija. There is compulsory military service for 1 year at the age of 18 for men and women.

Army total force: 32,300. 25,000 conscripts; most are indigenous. Conscripts receive training in their units. **Language barriers** exist between the mostly Quechua- and Aymara-speaking enlisted and Spanish-speaking officers.

NCOs and warrants are recruited after their conscription and then complete specialized training. Officers are trained (for 5 yrs.) at Bolivia’s military college, upon graduation are commissioned as 2LTs.

Geography and Regions

Bolivia is commonly divided into three geographic regions: the Altiplano, the Yungas, and the lowland regions (also known as the Half Moon, or *Media Luna*). The lowlands are further split into the Amazon and the Chaco. There is a notion that there are “Two Bolivias,” each with its own separate worldview and aspirations. Most of the people of the lowland regions (*cambas*) are of European or mestizo (mixed indigenous and white) ancestry and tend to support economic development projects and believe their region to be the economic engine of the country. In contrast, highlanders (*collas*) of western Bolivia-whom are mostly of indigenous descent-are influenced strongly by traditional practices and values.



El Alto is La Paz’s poorer, neighboring city, made up mostly of indigenous rural migrants. These cities hold the largest concentration of Aymara in Bolivia.

The Yungas region is a subtropical area on the eastern slopes of the Andes. Its rugged terrain supports the cultivation of coca leaves. While it is legal to grow coca in some areas, eradication efforts have occurred in others. The majority of Bolivia’s coca is cultivated in Yungas, principally in the department of Cochabamba. The Yungas has the majority of Bolivia’s African descended population, who are the descendents of imported slaves during the Spanish colonial period. 25-30% of the population lives here.

“World’s most dangerous road,”
Yungas



Quechua Family,
Yungas



The Amazon region (Oriente) makes up about two-thirds of Bolivia’s territory. It is isolated and largely unpopulated due to lack of roads and infrastructure. The region is mainly inhabited by indigenous South Americans such as the Chiquitos, Mojos, and Yuracarés.



The Chaco region is a sparsely settled area rich in petroleum resources, holdings large enough to satisfy national demands. It is an extremely flat, large, alluvial plain. The Guaraní Indians are prominent in this region.

More than 60% of the population resides in the Altiplano in western Bolivia (high plains region between the two Andes mountain ranges). The Altiplano is on average 12,000 feet above sea level and high altitude sickness is a danger there. This area’s population is predominantly Aymara, while the Quechua population resides mostly in the valleys of the eastern Andes in the cities of Cochabamba, Sucre, Tarija, and Potosí.

Social Challenges

Bolivia is the poorest country in South America. Roughly two-thirds of the population lives below the poverty line and one-third (mainly indigenous, rural farmers) live in extreme poverty. Rural areas lack infrastructure and resources for education and health, although the situation is improving through national and international development projects.



Rural Village, Altiplano **Contaminated water** leads to many cases of cholera and hepatitis. Tap water is boiled, but in some rural areas wood is scarce and gas and electricity may be unaffordable. Other diseases include yellow and dengue fever and malaria. Malnutrition also affects a significant portion of the population.

Bolivia has the lowest literacy rate in South America, though rates vary from urban to rural areas and by gender. Bolivian women, on average, are less educated than men; in rural areas, this is more pronounced. Education is free and compulsory up the age of 14, but for economic reasons many children in rural areas forgo school to work.

The Family/Gender Roles

Traditionally, **the extended family** has been the main social support system in Bolivia. The raising of children is a collective effort, whereby uncles, aunts, grandparents and godparents all take part. The father is the head of the household and main decision-maker. Domestic activities are in the mother’s realm, such as raising and educating their children on their native tongue and cultural traditions as well as preparing the home.

Machismo or male dominance is found in Bolivia, and is sometimes represented by aggressive male behavior and abuse towards women.

Women contribute to the economy by selling agricultural goods, farming, or weaving. In urban areas, it is becoming more common (and expected) for women to work outside the house. Though active in the work force, women are often not treated as professional equals to men, maintain secondary business roles, and may have to work hard to gain respect.



Customs, Communications, and Etiquette

- ◆ Strict time schedules are not usually adhered to, unless they are for business or formal social events.
- ◆ When greeting, shake hands firmly.
- ◆ Bolivians maintain little personal space when conversing; backing away will likely cause offense.
- ◆ Inquiries about another’s family members are polite ways to start conversations. Stay away from topics such as race, poverty, or the United States’ drug policy in Bolivia.
- ◆ Maintain eye contact, looking down or away demonstrates dishonesty and a lack of interest.
- ◆ When visiting a home, address everyone in the group upon entrance and exit.
- ◆ Use utensils when eating, even when eating fruit.
- ◆ Follow the norms for proper dress in Bolivia, they will vary depending on region, gender, ethnicity, etc.
- ◆ Do not wear indigenous clothing, this is considered inappropriate behavior for foreigners by all Bolivians.
- ◆ Do not take pictures of indigenous Bolivians unless given permission.
- ◆ Do not use the term “Indian” (or “*Indio*”); this is considered racist. Use “indigenous” (or “*indigena*”).

- ◆ Show respect by using titles. It is common to address Bolivians by a title before either their first or last name. “*Don/Doña*” is a title used before a first name to show great respect. Use a little Spanish: it will be much appreciated, even if it is flawed.

<i>Buenos días</i>	Good morning
<i>Buenas tardes</i>	Good afternoon
<i>Buenas noches</i>	Good evening
<i>¿Cómo estás?</i>	How are you?
<i>Señor/Señora</i>	Mr./Mrs.
<i>Señorita</i>	Miss
<i>Licenciado</i>	College graduate
<i>Mucho gusto</i>	Pleased to meet you

- ◆ To say “no” the hand is raised and twisted quickly from side to side, with the palm facing outward. “No” or “there isn’t any” is expressed in another way by facing the palm outwards and shaking the index finger side to side, with the other four fingers closed.

- ◆ Negotiations will have a slow pace. Formal (written) contracts will not be final until all points within them are agreed upon. The highest official will make the final decisions in negotiations.

Rapport Building Tips

Rapport is built through ***understanding, respect,*** and ***mutual trust.***

Understanding a culture will aid greatly in rapport building efforts, and should begin before deployment through studies and while in-country through observation and speaking with the people.

Respect is a reciprocal commodity, and can be built with Bolivians through generosity, sharing, and reciprocity. Kindness and concern for the other’s welfare are also ways to show respect, as well as reflect empathy.

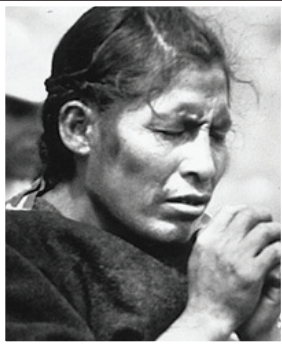
Mutual trust is built over extended periods of time. Bolivians build trust by getting to know one another, which is necessary before any business will be done.

Rapport can also be nurtured through enthusiasm, a positive attitude, and respecting a counterpart’s age, rank, status, and experience. Assessing yours and others’ perceptions will also enable effective communication and rapport-building.



Religion

Bolivia has no official state religion. The majority of Bolivians are Catholic: over 80% identify themselves as such. The remaining population is mainly Protestant. There is also a sizable population that claims no religion.



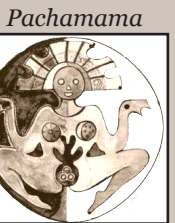
During the Spanish conquests of the area of Bolivia in the 1530s, Catholic priests began converting the indigenous peoples of Bolivia, though many have retained their beliefs, practices, and traditions and mixed them with Catholic ones.

In recent times, Church leaders have helped mediate between indigenous groups and the government for issues such as education and health care reforms and land rights conflicts.



Pentecostal and Evangelical numbers increased in the 1960s, and Mormons began building churches in Bolivia in the 1970s. Mennonites and Jews also have a presence in Bolivia.

The Incas separated their world into three realms: the celestial and the outer and inner earth. All had deities associated with them. The Inca **sun god** (*Inti*) is represented by a golden disc with a human face. The **earth mother** (*Pachamama*) is a deity of the inner earth realm and is still revered today. The **Cult of the Virgin Mary** is popular in Bolivia, where devotion to *Pachamama* and the Virgin intersect.



The “**ch’alla**” is an indigenous ritual used to bless houses, cars, and other items that participants own or wish to own. The ritual may include the sprinkling of holy water or liquors on the item to be blessed, and is often accompanied by alcohol consumption and coca leaf chewing (practiced in other rituals as well).

The “**Diablada**” during Oruro’s Carnaval venerates the patron saint of miners. Indigenous narratives, figures, and history combine with Catholic beliefs, as represented in the image of the Devil, or *Tío* (Uncle) to Indians. For them, the *Tío* occupies the mine underworld.



Diablada “Devil Dances”

Race, Ethnicity, Caste, and Class

Bolivian society has a marked, yet permeable, socioeconomic hierarchy where class, culture, and racial characteristics all play important parts in defining where a Bolivian stands in relation to others. Increasing one’s wealth, adopting “Western” cultural customs and dress, speaking Spanish, and shedding indigenous cultural markers are some ways non-whites may increase their social status.

Ethno-racial composition of Bolivia

Blancos (whites)	9%
Mestizos (mixed indigenous & European)	30%
Quechua	30%
Aymara	25%
Other indigenous groups; Afro-Bolivians	6%

While the countryside is predominantly poor and indigenous, urban areas hold the majority of the European-descended economic elite. There are biases between these more western-oriented elites and indigenous **campesinos** (peasant farmers), who prefer to live according to their traditions. Many elite tend to believe these indigenous peoples should assimilate into more modern ways of life and leave tradition behind.

Whites are lighter-skinned than Indians or mestizos. The majority are urban **criollos** (descendants of Spaniards) and other European immigrant communities. *Criollos* have maintained their elite socioeconomic position since the colonial period. Whites dominate administrative and business positions, speak fluent Spanish, and wear Western clothes.

Mestizos have more command of and a preference for Spanish than the indigenous population, and have largely adopted cultural practices of urban elites. Bolivians of indigenous descent may assert they are mestizo to avoid discrimination.

“**Cholos**” are individuals of indigenous descent who are urbanizing, adopting Western lifestyles, and will speak some Spanish. Generally, the term—which may be seen as disrespectful—is used to denote an individual that is in a socioeconomic transition from “Indian” to mestizo.



The **Quechua** and **Aymara** often arrange themselves into ayllus—kin-based communities who share communal lands—headed by a council of elders and a chief. *Female (chola) clothing*

There are numerous dialects and subgroups of the Quechua. The largest populations of Quechua live in the cities of Cochabamba and Sucre. The social organization of the Aymara people varies by region, but is typically defined by patrilineal, extended-family households. Many smaller indigenous groups inhabit eastern Bolivia.



Example of male indigenous dress

Afro-Bolivians are found in the Yungas region in the department of La Paz and number around 10,000.

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