

# WOMEN'S LIVES AROUND THE WORLD

A Global Encyclopedia

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## Bolivia

### Overview of Country

Bolivia is a landlocked country in South America sharing its border with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru. The geography and climate is varied, ranging from the cold, arid altiplano (highland plateau) region in the Andes Mountains to the hot, humid Amazon Basin's lowland plains. Of the 418,265 square miles (1,083,301 sq. km) of land within Bolivia, only 495 (1,282 km) is irrigated, and less than 3.5 percent is arable land (CIA 2014a). Despite the lack of suitable farming land, Bolivia is the world's third-largest producer of cocaine (Heritage Foundation 2015).

Bolivia is named after Simon Bolivar (1783–1830), also known as *El Libertador* (the Liberator) because of his work in the resistance and eventual overthrow of Spanish rule in Bolivia, Peru, and Gran Colombia (present-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama) (1811–1825). The two largest populations in Bolivia today are the Quechua (30%) and mestizo (30%) (CIA 2014a). The Quechua are Andean peoples living in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador. Today, there are many regional variants of the Quechua language, which has an ancient pre-Incan origin. Because it was the administrative language of the Incan Empire, it became the common language of the Spanish and Indians in the Andes region.

*Mestizo* is a term for any person of mixed indigenous and European ancestry. The Aymara are the second-largest indigenous population in Bolivia, making up 25 percent of the population (CIA 2014a). This indigenous group mainly resides in the Altiplano region of Bolivia and Peru. There are smaller populations of Aymara in Chile and Argentina.

The Aymara peoples were conquered by the Inca in the 15th century; however, they have been in an almost continual state of revolt since then, first against the Inca and then against the Spaniards who conquered the Inca. The remaining Bolivian population is identified as white. The 2009 constitution states that Spanish and all indigenous languages are official languages of Bolivia, and it lists 36 indigenous languages, including some that are extinct (CIA 2014a).

Most scholars identify ethnic, gender, and rural barriers to equality in education, health care, and jobs in Bolivia. For women and young girls in rural regions, the burden of restrictive agricultural and home duties makes it difficult for them to remain in school when they are young or to participate in government as adults (Gottardo and Rojas 2010). In 2006, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) found that access to education for rural girls had improved dramatically; however, keeping girls in school was a problem. Recent research found that the wage gap between ethnic groups was likely due to limited educational opportunities in rural areas rather than because of endemic ethnic discrimination in the workplace (Canelas and Salazar 2014).

The majority of Bolivia's population is urban (66.8%), and urban areas are growing by 2.18 percent each year. This is similar to China (2.85%) and nearly twice as rapid as the United States (1.14%) (CIA 2014a). An urban location does not guarantee a good education for Bolivian women. In fact, in 2009, 3 out of every 10 Bolivian women were illiterate, compared to 1 out of 10 Bolivian men (Harbitz and Tamargo). The gap widens when discussing indigenous women and men.

### Overview of Women's Lives

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) for Bolivia was 0.444 in 2014, which placed it at 94th out of 155 countries (UNDP 2015b). The GII is based on inequality in reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. Reproductive health is measured by the number of mothers who die due to pregnancy-related issues and the number of children birthed by adolescents. In Bolivia, for every 100,000 live births, 206 women die due to pregnancy-related issues, and for every 1,000 adolescents (ages 15–19), there are 78.2 births. Empowerment specifically refers to women's representation in government and participation in education at a secondary level or higher. Bolivian women hold 51.8 percent of the seats in parliament, and 47.6 percent

of adult women have attained a secondary or higher level of education. Economic activity references participation in the workforce; 64.2 percent of Bolivian women participate in the workforce (UNDP 2015a).

## Girls and Teens

Most children are expected to work. Almost 89 percent of all Bolivian children ages 7–14 contribute unpaid labor of some type to their families (Index Mundi 2015). In urban areas, this work can be in the home or outside of the home for wages. In rural settings, older girls will usually help care for younger siblings, participate in cleaning and cooking, and care for livestock or crops.

Whether by their own labor or wages earned outside the home, many women of all ages in developing countries make significant contributions to food security for their families. Women's participation in food production and economic security has negative and positive aspects for young women and children. The time children are expected to spend tending to chores or working for wages pulls them away from their studies and often removes them completely from school at an early age. One positive outcome for the work done by women is that it is considered valuable whether it consists of caring for the home and children, producing food through agricultural activities, or for working outside the home for wages and thus gives women a more powerful voice when making decisions that affect the family, especially decisions about education for their children (Valdivia 2001, 36). This ability to influence decisions made in the home provides an example to girls that they are not powerless.

## Education

The amount of education individuals attain is affected by many factors. Rural residents attended school for more years (9.23) than urban residents (7.43), and women attended school longer than men (8.24 versus 4.19 years) (UNICEF 2015). It is possible this is due to a need for urban residents and men to seek wage work from an earlier age.

The 1995 CEDAW report found that bilingualism was also a factor in educational attainment. The Bolivian government has experimented by providing instruction in the Guaraní language, the most prevalent aboriginal language in rural areas (42.6% of rural residents). With this change in delivery modality, girls, who were more likely to be monolingual than boys, were staying in school longer

even when from poverty-level families (CEDAW 1995, 5; UNICEF 2015)

Women in politics make social issues, mainly education and health, a priority, with expenditures quadrupling when women became involved in municipal government (Yanez-Pagans 2008). However, these increases in funding have not shown any significant changes in the health or education status of residents in these communities. Some suggest that the initiatives put in place do not yield short-term results because they are intended to be long-term goals (Yanez-Pagans 2008).

## Health

The average life expectancy for Bolivian men is 66.4 years, while women's life expectancy is longer, 72.1 years. This is 10 years shorter than women in the United States can expect to live. Overall, Bolivia's population is young. The two largest demographics by age are those 25–54 (37.08%) and those 14 and younger (32.36%) (CIA 2017).

By 1995, economic growth in Bolivia was still too slow to sustain social well-being. In an attempt to redistribute resources, the Bolivian government appropriated 25 percent of the national income to the municipal level for use in resolving local issues and in support of local populations (CEDAW 1995). Despite this redistribution, Bolivia still provides fewer resources for women and infant health than Costa Rica and Panama, two Latin American countries with similar gross domestic products (GDP) (just more than 61 billion each). For example, Bolivia spends 4.9 percent of its GDP on health, significantly less than Costa Rica at 10.9 percent or Panama at 8.2 percent. Possibly because of this national focus on health, both Costa Rica and Panama have lower maternal mortality rates at birth (40/100,000 and 92/100,000, respectively) and lower infant death during birth (8.7/1,000 and 10.7/1,000, respectively) than Bolivia (CIA 2014a).

## Access to Health Care

One factor barring Bolivian women from health care at all stages of life is lack of identity documentation, such as birth certificates or identity cards. In 2001 UNICEF found that 50 percent of births for children 12 months and younger had not been registered (UNICEF 2016). Poor and rural women most often are those without documented legal identity. A lack of legal identity makes these women virtual nonentities, with no access to health services

(CEDAW 2006). Lack of documentation increases the difficulties faced by ethnic groups, who often live in rural communities or on the fringes of urban centers (Harbitz and Tamargo 2009).

### Maternal Health

The greatest health risk to women in Bolivia is in reproduction and child care (UNICEF 2015). Most Bolivian women have their first child in their early twenties. The maternal mortality rate of 206 for every 100,000 successful births is high compared to the neighboring countries of Chile (22/100,000) and Peru (68/100,000) (World Bank Group 2015). The mortality rate for infancy death during childbirth is also high for Bolivia, with 39 children dying for every 1,000 live births, compared to 7 children in Chile and 20 in Peru. Bolivia's doctor-to-population ratio is similar to Chile and Peru.

### Diseases and Disorders

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), ischemic heart disease is the most common disease in Bolivia, and 7,400 Bolivians died of this disease in 2012. The majority of children under the age of five die from acute respiratory infections (16%) or premature births (15%) (WHO 2015b).

Another health concern is alcoholism. As of 2010, 7.8 percent of Bolivian males had consumed at least 60 grams of pure alcohol on at least one occasion in the past 30 days, while many fewer women had practiced recent heavy episodes of drinking—0.7 percent (WHO 2015a).

### Employment

Many scholars have noted the link between social injustice and economic injustice and the fact that these phenomena reinforce and amplify the effects of either injustice. Scholars also agree that ethnicity, gender, age, and other identity labels are political as well as cultural constructs that cannot be separated from an individual's economic reality (Fraser 1995; Harvey 1996; Paulson and Calla 2000). Since 2010, Bolivia's economic growth has been one of the highest in Latin America, and gas exports are providing stability for the larger economy; despite this, "half of all Bolivians live in poverty" (Heritage Foundation 2015).

The difference in wages between nondiscriminated groups and discriminated groups "leads to a smaller

labor force participation from the discriminated people and increases the demand for domestic production on in-home activities" (Canelas and Salazar 2014, 2). The greater the wage differential, the greater the incentive for women within discriminated groups to work at home rather than enter a wage market that is skewed against them. This decision is culturally acceptable, as it places indigenous women in the traditional role of caretaker for the home and children.

In Bolivia, women belonging to a discriminated group can earn wages nearly at parity with the average wage for a woman. This is counter to some research that shows women within discriminated groups have been unwilling or unable to enter the wage market because they find more value in the labor they expend within the home than the wage they could earn and so choose to not participate in the wage labor market. Additionally, barriers prevent Bolivian women in discriminated groups from entering the wage labor market. Because there are fewer women within the job market, wages for all women rise. Bolivia's majority population is indigenous. This has led to men's wages in some ethnic or other discriminated groups being more affected than women's wages within the same ethnic or discriminated group. In this situation, men's wages offer less profit above what they could earn by working at home than a woman's (Canelas and Salazar 2014).

Young children under 7 years of age are mainly the responsibility of women. According to Canelas and Salazar, "men are almost unaffected by the presence of children" (2014, 16). Each additional young child increases the value of women's work within the home and thereby decreases her incentive to work for wages. Regardless of whether a woman works outside the home for wages, on average, a Bolivian woman will spend 40 hours a week on domestic labor. Bolivian men who work for wages will contribute little to domestic labor. In cases where the woman works for wages, indigenous women spent less time working for a wage than nonindigenous women (Canelas and Salazar 2014). On average, nonindigenous women spent three additional hours each week performing wage labor. However, each group contributes the same amount of time to domestic duties.

Education plays a significant role in determining how domestic labor is split between men and women. As education allows women to compete for and hold higher wage jobs, their work outside the home often becomes more valuable than their domestic work; "education increases the bargaining power of women inside the households, which,

in turn, implies that in households where women are more educated, domestic tasks are shared in a more equitable way” (Canelas and Salazar 2014, 16). Education reduces the wage gap between discriminated groups and nondiscriminated groups, “especially for women. In this context, investing in women’s education becomes an effective tool for reducing gender and ethnic inequalities” (Canelas and Salazar 2014).

### Family Life

Traditional Andean civilizations are known for their gender complementarity social structure. The Aymara are one such Andean civilization, and their concept of *chachawarmi*, the union of a man and woman, where each contributes essential pieces of a social whole constructed through marriage. Often this is misconstrued as a basis for gender equity (Luykx 2000, 156). It is also through this union that each gender becomes a fully functioning member of the community. Individually, each gender is less than their potential as a spouse. As Rousseau explains, “The notion of individual equality is historically foreign to indigenous cultures that are grounded in community-based principles of justice and harmony” (2011, 22).

It is important to realize that no culture is static and that the Aymara, like all ethnic groups in Bolivia and elsewhere, have changed over time, sometimes radically. Colonialism and globalization are just two factors that continue to affect indigenous cultures. This includes changes to the Aymara understanding and manifestation of traditional concepts such as *chachawarmi*. Bolivia’s increasing urbanization is one of the main factors influencing evolving notions of *chachawarmi*. Migration to urban areas causes “disjuncture” between ideas about gender and daily life among indigenous peoples (Rousseau 2011, 22).

Some contend that machismo is very strong in Bolivia, where women are considered subordinate, restricting their social and work activities (*eDiplomat* 2015). This idea of machismo is a variant to the traditional concept of *chachawarmi*, which finds value only in the work done by women in the home, caring for children and performing subsistence agricultural activities. There is a link between traditional values and violence against women attempting to enter a nontraditional arena such as politics; the most violence against elected women takes place in urban centers with large Aymara and Quechua populations (Butters 2012).

### Politics

In 1980, Bolivia signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which defines discrimination against women and requires national action by party states. In 1990, CEDAW was ratified by Bolivia, making it legally bound to implementing its provisions and to submitting periodic reports to the United Nations (United Nations 2015; CEDAW 2006). Initially, judges and other Bolivian legal professionals were unaware of CEDAW, and this resulted in slow implementation. However, by 1995, the efforts of the Bolivian Office of the Under-Secretary for Gender Affairs to inform legal professionals about the convention and other forms of protection for women had resulted in a growing number of lawyers using the convention, and, by extension, judges beginning to include it in their judgments (CEDAW 1995).

Bolivia made several legislative attempts to place women in government in compliance of CEDAW (CEDAW 2006). The 1997 Quotas Act required proportional representation in the legislature. This was replaced with a new quota in 2004, which required one in every three nominations be for a woman. In both cases, there were no consequences for noncompliance, and both were only somewhat successful. In practice, the 2004 quota led to elections where candidates who were listed as women were in fact men, giving the gloss of gender equality to election results data (UN Women 2013). Bolivia ratified a new constitution in 2009 that includes gender equity changes in terminology; a recognition of the value of work within the home; mandates for an electoral body with gender parity; women’s rights to access, own, and sell land; and women’s rights over their sexual and reproductive health (Gottardo and Rojas 2010). In 2010, an affirmative action policy was instigated that more fully supported the principles of equity and parity within the electoral system; however, problems still exist in providing equal access to the voting process for both sexes and providing remedies for noncompliance (UN Women 2013).

Today, private and public violence against elected women remains a problem. In 2012, town councilor of Ancoraimes and a leading advocate for legislation to protect elected women from harassment as well as physical and sexual violence, Juana Quispe was murdered. At the time of her murder, she was in the process of filing a complaint against two male political leaders. She claimed these men were preventing her from being able to carry

out the duties of her office. Her murder remains unsolved. Unfortunately, she is not the only woman to suffer violence and even death because she wanted a participatory role for women in government. According to the Association of Female Councilors of Bolivia (ACOBOL), female politicians filed more than 4,000 complaints of harassment. They link this culture of violence to ideas of machismo present throughout the country (Butters 2012).

It is clear that many indigenous men and women have very different ideas of what is an appropriate activity for women. Many indigenous women who participate in public service, such as politics, social reform, or education, often will present themselves and their issues as indigenous rather than women's or indigenous women's issues. By refocusing the discussion on the value of indigenous cultures rather than on gender roles, the audience is often more receptive. Luykx believes the main reason for this is that *gender* has become conflated with *modern*, which in turn cannot be separated from perceptions of a social agenda that values only the new. In a country that prides itself on the value of indigenous tradition, modernity is seen as anathema. "This pattern has shown itself time and time again. If analysis of gender relations or critiques of sexual discrimination are viewed as infringing upon the valorization of indigenous culture, they are to be abandoned, or at least minimized" (Luykx 2000, 158).

Some believe that by promoting multiple concepts of gender relations and allowing individuals the freedom to choose how they want to structure their lives, be it around a modern or traditional concepts, Bolivia can find a way past the roadblock of gender equity versus valuing the traditional. Others see Bolivia's linking of "social reforms with neoliberal economics" as a promotion of individual autonomy by providing social reforms that give access to jobs, greater social status, and power to discriminated groups, including women and indigenous peoples, that allow them to make choices between traditional and modern (Paulson and Calla 2000, 116).

Current activists in Bolivia say the harassment continues because of the courts' reluctance to prosecute offenders. The latest legislation meant to protect women lists 15 types of violence against women and increased penalties (BBC 2014). However, the ACOBOL reviewed existing legislation and jurisprudence and found a "legal loophole in this area. Currently there is no specific definition of women's political rights, no legal definition of harassment and gender based violence and no mechanism

through which to report cases of harassment and gender based political violence" (Gottardo and Rojas 2010). The continuing violence, the burden of restrictive agricultural and home duties for rural women, and the greatest incidence of domestic violence of any in South America discourage many women from even attempting to participate in government (BBC 2014). The primary blocks to women's political participation are harassment and violence—issues that, unfortunately, neither the government nor the public acknowledges for discusses (Gottardo and Rojas 2010).

Despite continued assaults, Bolivian women are still putting themselves in the middle of politics, and the number of women in government continues to slowly increase. "In a ground breaking historical event, 47 percent of those elected to the Senate last December were women, 25 percent in the Chamber of Deputies and 30 percent in the Plurinational Legislative Assembly. And earlier this month Dr. Ana Maria Encina, ACOBOL's President, became the mayor of Santa Cruz, the second largest city in Bolivia, and the largest in terms of economic power" (Gottardo and Rojas 2010). President Morales's cabinet includes women in several key positions: minister of autonomy, Claudia Stacy Pena Claros; minister of communication, Amanda Davila Torrez; minister of justice, Sandra Elizabeth Gutierrez Salazar; minister of planning and development, Elba Viviana Caro Hinojosa; minister of productive development and pluralist economics, Ana Teresa Morales Olivera; and minister of rural development and lands, Nemecia Achacollo Tola. The six positions held by women in Morales's 2014 cabinet do not come close to parity, even at this level of government (CIA 2014b).

### Religious and Cultural Roles

Although an ethnically diverse country, Bolivia is 95 percent Roman Catholic (CIA 2014a). In the late 20th century, the Catholic Church took a more active role in Bolivian social issues. Despite this, the number of Protestant members has been growing since the late 20th century, and both Mormon and Baha'i religions have begun to find a home in Bolivia in the 21st century. Some indigenous religious activities and beliefs are still practiced, especially worship of the earth goddess Pachamama. The Catholic Church has attempted to assimilate indigenous religious beliefs and activities, with varying degrees of success (*eDiplomat* 2015).

## Issues

Andean culture groups, such as the Quechua and Aymara, are reacting to the concepts of *gender* and *indigenous* as polarizing terms that have been defined and imposed on them by people or organizations outside of themselves (Paulson and Calla 2000). Adding to the pressures creating the divide between gender and indigenous is the funding currently being used for gender issues among Andean people. Many indigenous people believe the funding and resources provided by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental agencies should be used for indigenous issues as a whole, rather than one segment of the culture. One example of the collision between gender and indigenous needs is found in the bilingual-intercultural education (BIE) program, which is often funded by nonindigenous NGOs or government agencies. A fundamental principle of BIE is respect for the beliefs and cultural practices of discriminated groups. These entities, along with funding and access to education, bring their culturally defined and deeply rooted ideas of what constitutes gender equality. As a condition of funding for financial and technical assistance for BIE programs, NGOs and government agencies will ask for a commitment to “gender equity,” which the indigenous people see as “a manifestation of cultural imperialism” (Luykx 2000, 153).

Today in Bolivia, gender discrimination, sometimes leading to violence inside or outside the home, is present in urban and rural settings among indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. According to CEDAW (2006), over 53 percent of women had suffered physical violence at the hands of their spouse, as compared to 27 percent of men, which is the highest rate of 12 Latin American countries. Machismo, an acceptance of aggressive behavior, and financial insecurity also contribute to intimate partner abuse. Society’s attitudes about such violence is changing in part due to press coverage and in part due to passage of Law 348, designed to protect victims and punish perpetrators (Shahriari 2015).

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## Brazil

### Overview of Country

Located in northeastern South America and facing the Atlantic Ocean, Brazil is the largest country in Latin America, with an area covering almost 3.3 million square miles. It borders all South American countries except Chile and Ecuador. It is the third-largest country in the Americas and the fifth-largest country in the world (CIA 2014). It is the largest Portuguese-speaking country in the world and the only one in the Americas.

Numerous indigenous groups with different languages and traditions thrived in the area before the Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral landed in Brazil in 1500. Rio de Janeiro became the capital of the Portuguese Empire in 1808, and during that same year, the government opened its ports to all nations, which enabled direct commercial interaction and resulted in an unprecedented accumulation of wealth. Brazil became independent from Portugal in 1822 and established a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary system. The military formed a republic in 1889, after the abolition of slavery in 1888. The populist president Getúlio Vargas rose to power in 1930 in response to the domination of large landowners and coffee growers. After an authoritative military regime led the country from 1964 to 1985, Brazil returned to civilian rulers. The federation is composed of the Federal District of Brasília, the capital; 26 states; and 5,564 municipalities.

The federal constitution of 1988, last amended in 2012, departed from authoritarianism and moved toward democracy. This constitution decreed the separation of the executive, legislative, and judiciary powers and created legal norms and parameters to institutionalize human rights, including the recognition of women's rights. It is