



ULANDSSEKRETARIATET – DTDA
DANISH TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

LABOUR MARKET PROFILE

Bolivia

2024/2025

This profile brings insights and useful information of the labour market's structure, status, and challenges in the country.



PREFACE

The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) is the development organisation of the Danish trade union movement.

DTDA's work is in line with the International Labour Organization's global Decent Work Agenda (DWA), which is based on its four pillars: creating decent jobs, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection, and promoting social dialogue. The overall development objective is to eradicate poverty and support the development of just and democratic societies by promoting the DWA.

DTDA collaborates with trade union organisations in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The programmes' immediate objective is to assist the partner organisations in becoming change agents in their own national and regional labour market context, capable of achieving tangible improvements in the national DWA conditions and the labour-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Labour Market Profile (LMP) provides a comprehensive overview of the structure, development, and challenges. It applies several central indicators addressing labour market aspects, including unionism, social dialogue, bi-/tri-partite mechanisms, policy development, legal reforms status' compliance with international standards, just transition, and 4IR.

National partner organisations provide annual narrative progress reports, including information on labour market developments, as part of programme implementation and monitoring.

National statistical institutions and international databanks, such as ILOSTAT and NATLEX, World Bank Open Data, the ITUC Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, the U.S. Department of State, and other internationally recognised labour-related global indexes, are used as sources of general (statistical) data and information.

Academia and media sources (e.g., national news) are used to research labour market issues.

The profile is regularly updated; the current version covers 2024 to 2025. Labour Market Profiles for more than 20 countries are available on DTDA's website: <https://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/>.

DTDA prepared the Labour Market Profile in collaboration with the Los Trabajadores de Educación Urbana de Bolivia (CTEUB), Confederación de Maestros de Educación Rural de Bolivia (CONMERB), and Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de la Salud Pública en Bolivia (CSTSPB). If any comments arise to the profile, please contact Mr Kasper Andersen (kan@dttda.dk) from DTDA.

The frontpage's picture is taken by Mr. Lars Bertelsen, displaying education in Bolivia.

Address:
Ulandssekretariatet
Islands Brygge 32D
DK-2300 Copenhagen S
Denmark
Telefon: +45 33 73 74 40
<https://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bolivia's economic growth has lost pace in recent years, and it is increasingly relying on public spending and experiencing stagnation in real minimum wage advances. The country is also one of the world's most vulnerable to climate risks, accelerating the displacement of low-skilled workers and challenging the development model, which depends on exports of agricultural products. The emerging agenda to ensure a just transition only recently started to tackle the critical impacts on job creation.

Although the labour market legal framework is updated regularly, national compliance with labour rights has deteriorated, and implementation has faded due to the widespread informal economy. For instance, at least half of Bolivia's relatively high number of children in hazardous child labour are below the legal age. Several trade agreements function with labour provisions, putting pressure on domestic legislation, with attention to platform work, green jobs, and child labour.

Social dialogue is fragile within the national tripartite institutional structures, as evidenced by massive strikes in recent years. At the bipartite workplace level, Bolivia has demonstrated a relatively high collective bargaining agreement coverage of workers, often restricted to wages. The trade union density rate fell due to a more politicised environment but turned more stable and landed at 12% of employees, reaching the intermediate level among neighbouring countries. There has been progress in the expansion and capacity-building of the labour inspectorate, including the new updated regulations. The labour dispute resolution system remains burdensome, and other alternative dispute resolution methods are disconnected systems.

Even though the economy creates jobs and boomed in one of the region's lowest unemployment rates, employment is generated among informal self-employed workers struggling with low labour

productivity. Climate migration is gaining weight on the flow, which resonates with the urbanisation upsurge, pushing towards a more balanced net migration with falling remittance inflow. The advanced legal framework for protecting Bolivian women workers is often not trickled down in practice due to informality, cultural heritage, and lack of awareness. Better-educated Bolivian youngsters put pressure on decent job creation and demonstrate one of the region's lowest Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) rates.

The Education Revolution reform has produced mixed results, with the education sector struggling to keep pace with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) demands. The education system faces a challenge in the school-to-work transition; for example, many need to be equipped for skilled jobs in urban areas. The country has a remarkably high vocational and technical enrolment rate, among the highest in the world, but Bolivian firms offering formal training lost tempo. Despite the potential for youth to thrive in the information and communication technology sector, the 4IR brings an emerging issue of more vulnerable contractual conditions that compromise labour rights (e.g., salaries, working hours, leave).

A remarkable upsurge in health insurance coverage happened, but health funds have lowered their quality and scope. Three out of five Bolivians are covered by at least one social protection benefit, slightly above the average in Latin America and the Caribbean. Although the universal basic pension's full population coverage has supported poverty reduction, this benefit is lower than an income below the international poverty line. Equally important, trade unions and employers' organisations do not participate in the administration of the pension system. The ageing population is projected to grow significantly with higher financial pressure on social protection.

FACT SHEET

Significant developments

- The labour income share of Bolivia has increased and supersedes the neighbouring countries.
- The General Regulations of the Labour Inspection entered into force in January 2024.
- Effective social protection coverage has increased in Bolivia from 41% in 2017 to 60% of the total population in 2021.
- Bolivia became a full member of MERCOSUR in November 2023 that may improve trade agreements and workers' fundamental rights within the regional trade bloc.

Social dialogue

- Relatively high collective bargaining coverage rate of 70% for employees.
- Public sector workers not employed in the administration of the State and agricultural workers are denied the right to bargain collectively.
- Deteriorated social dialogue ambiance.
- Alternative dispute resolution has been used broadly, due to workers' distrust towards the legal court system.

Main challenges

- Weak linkages of labour-related policies create hurdles, and fiscal space needs to be extended via the tax system's progressivity to support the social protection financial sustainability.
- The trend of not creating more formal jobs is bringing the labour-related legal framework more in limbo.
- The challenges faced by trade unions and employers' organisations in handling the just transition agenda at the strategy and policy level underscore the need for stronger and more effective approaches.
- The political environment brought adversarial industrial relations, thwarting the national tripartite institutions and negatively affecting the social dialogue ambiance.

- The absence of a comprehensive policy to eradicate child labour lead many children below 14 years old into illegal child labouring.
- Struggling to survive in a competitive job market dominated by digital automation can be extra stressful for workers in Bolivia, presenting new challenges for the trade union movement.

Unionism

- Trade union density of 12% for employees, which turned stable during the end-2010s.
- Some agricultural workers and day labourers are organised workers from the informal economy.
- Violations of trade union rights rank 3 of 5+.

The trade unions movement's main risks:

- Legal restrictions on forming/joining trade unions and strikes, especially in the public sector, lead to trade union parallels.
- Lack of adequate coverage of agricultural workers in central national labour legislation.
- Trade unions' plans and strategies do not trickle down into improved job creation in the formal sector, including to handle the emerging just transition and the 4IR agendas.
- Trade unions sidelined from the pension and TVET administration systems.

Workforce

- The working-age population is 8.5 million.
- Unemployment rate of 4%.
- The proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment is 80%.
- Child labour rate is 9.7%.
- Labour share of national income of 55%.
- Men and women employees' share of total employment is 65% and 35%, respectively.
- The education, employment, or training (NEET) rate of 10%.

COUNTRY MAP



Source: National Online Project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	I
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	II
FACT SHEET	III
COUNTRY MAP	IV
ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE	1
Just Transition.....	2
Free Trade Zones.....	3
LABOUR LEGISLATION	3
Observations on Labour Legislation.....	3
Ratified ILO Conventions	4
Trade Agreements	5
SOCIAL PARTNERS	6
Government.....	6
Trade Unions	6
Employers' Organisations.....	7
SOCIAL DIALOGUE	7
Central tripartite institutions.....	8
Labour dispute resolution system	8
TRADE UNION RIGHTS VIOLATIONS	9
WORKING CONDITIONS	9
WORKFORCE	10
Unemployment	11
Migration	12
Informal Economy	13
Child Labour.....	13
Gender	14
Youth.....	15
EDUCATION	16
Vocational Training.....	17
Fourth Industrial Revolution	18
SOCIAL PROTECTION	19
APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DATA	22
Table 4: Bolivia's Climate Governance	22
Table 5: Central employment and labour legal framework in Bolivia.....	23
Table 6: Central legal reservations concerning the rights to organise, collective bargaining, and strikes in Bolivia	24
Table 7: Ratified ILO Conventions in Bolivia	25

Table 8: Labour market efficiency in Bolivia, 2019	26
Table 9: Ease of Doing Business in Bolivia, 2020.....	26
Table 10: Bolivia’s key workforce data, 2022	27
Table 11: Bolivia - Scores for Women, Business and the Law, 2022	27
Table 12: Proportion of population covered by social protection systems and health in Bolivia and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), %, latest year	27
REFERENCES	28

Tables

Table 1: Level of national compliance with labour rights among Bolivia and neighbouring countries, 2022	5
Table 2: Key indicators for employed gender gaps in Bolivia, 2022.....	15
Table 3: Bolivia’s key economic data, projections, 2019-2025	22
Table 4: Bolivia’s Climate Governance	22
Table 5: Central employment and labour legal framework in Bolivia.....	23
Table 6: Central legal reservations concerning the rights to organise, collective bargaining, and strikes in Bolivia	24
Table 7: Ratified ILO Conventions in Bolivia	25
Table 8: Labour market efficiency in Bolivia, 2019	26
Table 9: Ease of Doing Business in Bolivia, 2020.....	26
Table 10: Bolivia’s key workforce data, 2022	27
Table 11: Bolivia - Scores for Women, Business and the Law, 2022	27
Table 12: Proportion of population covered by social protection systems and health in Bolivia and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), %, latest year	27

Figures

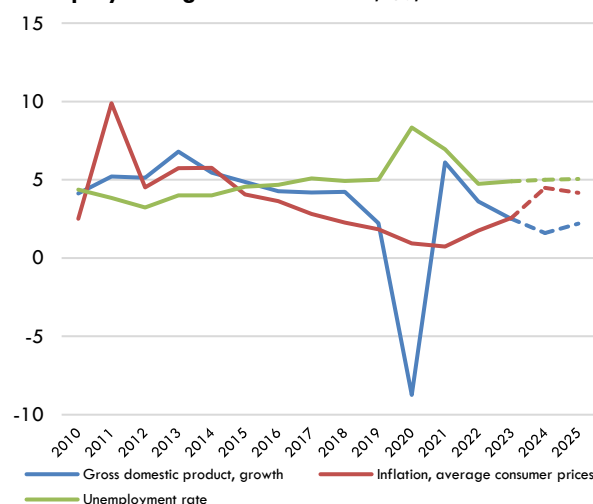
Figure 1: Gross domestic product, inflation, and unemployment growth in Bolivia, %, 2010-2025.....	1
Figure 2: Aggregate sectoral economic changes, sum of value-added per sector in Bolivia and Latin America & Caribbean (LAC), % of GDP, 2010-2022	1
Figure 3: Trade union density rate in Bolivia and neighbouring countries, %, 2011-2019.....	6
Figure 4: Nominal minimum wage trend (Bolivianos) and real minimum wage growth (%) in Bolivia, 2009-2024	9
Figure 5: Population pyramid based on the Age-Sex structure of the population in Bolivia, 2023	10
Figure 6: Unemployment rates in Bolivia, Total and Youth, %, 2014-2022	11
Figure 7: Net migration and personal remittance in Bolivia, 2010-2023	12
Figure 8: The proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment trend in Bolivia, 2011-2022	13
Figure 9: Proportion of women in senior and middle management positions and in managerial positions in Bolivia and neighbouring countries, %, 2022	15
Figure 10: Status of proportion of youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in Bolivia and neighbouring countries, %, 2022.....	16
Figure 11: Population five years old or older who used information and communication technologies in the last three months in Bolivia, %, 2013-2021	19
Figure 12: Population registered or affiliate with health insurance, %, 2011-2021.....	21
Figure 13: Current health expenditure per capita (current US\$) and out-of-pocket expenditure (% of current health expenditure) trends in Bolivia and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), 2010-2020	21

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

Bolivia—known formally as the Plurinational State of Bolivia—is a lower-middle-income country. Together with Paraguay, it is the only landlocked country in Latin America, requiring some dependence on neighbouring countries for access to seaports. Since 2006, the government has strengthened the state's role in the economy. Currently, the government operates with the 2025 Patriotic Agenda and the National Economic and Social Development Plan (PDES) 2021-2025. Economic turmoil fuels distrust in government and its 'failed coup' claim in 2024.

At the beginning of the 2010s, the high economic growth bonanza was supported by commodity production, but it lost pace. The country relied more on public spending to maintain high economic growth, increasing public debt. More volatile economic growth entered the scene at the end of the 2010s and even plummeted in 2020 due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, triggering an increase in the unemployment rate. The economic growth stayed weak in recent years, mirrored in macroeconomic and political imbalances, fuelling social discontent. Recently, the inflation in consumer prices has started to challenge the protection of workers' income purchasing power (see Figure 1 and Appendix Table 3).

Figure 1: Gross domestic product, inflation, and unemployment growth in Bolivia, %, 2010-2025

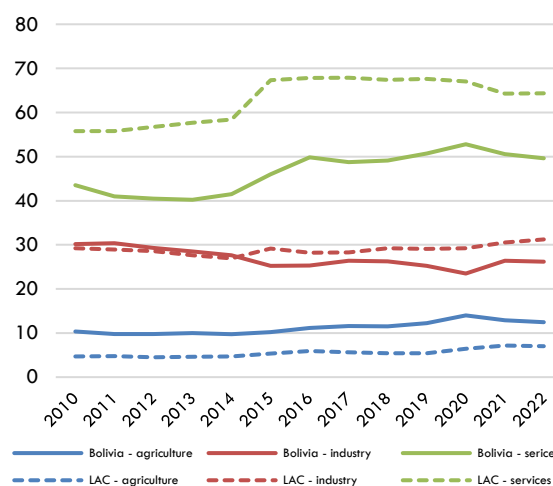


Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2024.

Some of the factors that Bolivia's economy faces are related to the high fuel subsidies and not generating sufficient formal jobs. Regarding tax revenues, personal income tax has a minimal share (1%) while dominated by value-added taxes, goods and services tax, and social security contributions.¹

Bolivia's economic sectoral trends are reflected in a slight downturn in the industry sector, landing below the regional average with a slowly widening gap since the mid-2010s. Instead, the service sector is rising but continues far below the regional average. The agricultural sector's value added increased in the margin driven by cash crop exports, floating above the regional average (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Aggregate sectoral economic changes, sum of value-added per sector in Bolivia and Latin America & Caribbean (LAC), % of GDP, 2010-2022



Note: Value added is the net output of a sector after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs.

Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

The economic development has encountered difficulties, reflected in weak business regulations and labour market efficiency; for example, the Doing Business Index ranked Bolivia 150 out of 190 countries (1st is best) (see more details in Appendix Table 9). Additionally, the informal economy is widespread, creating loopholes in labour and business regulations and obstacles to good governance.

Although Bolivia significantly reduced economic inequality during the last two decades, it ranks as the 35th most unequal country among 163 countries.

Similarly, Bolivia has succeeded in closing the gap for extreme poverty, supported by shifts in employment and social protection coverage. However, the national poverty line jumped by two percentage points in 2020, reaching 39% of the population as an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, but fell back to 36% in 2021.

Just Transition

Bolivia is very vulnerable to climate-related disasters such as floods, wet mass movement, and drought. For example, droughts currently affect several regions around the country and the onset of El Niño in late 2023 or early 2024. The Global Climate Risk Index 2021 (CRI) places Bolivia as the tenth most vulnerable country globally, considering the impacts of extreme climate events and associated socioeconomic data.

Several institutions, laws, and policies support Bolivia's climate governance framework. It includes the updated Plurinational Climate Change Policy, launched in 2023, introducing training on climate change mitigation and adaptation (see more in Appendix Table 4). Implementing the policies has, so far, faced financial obstacles due to macroeconomic encounters.² In addition to this, a broad public debate on a just transition is new in the country to address the urgency to tackle the climate changes and the impacts on job creation and the labour market.

The potential impacts of implementing greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation and adaptation policies on job markets have not yet received significant attention from the government and only scant attention from social organisations, including the trade union movement. The national economy is not threatened by the changing climate but the country's structural deficiencies in managing the risks of transition to a low-carbon economy that may fundamentally change the landscape of the labour market.

The national economic model, which dependent on exports such as agricultural goods, is tested. For example, agriculture is highly vulnerable to climate variability and weather extremes, and around a third of the population derives their livelihood from agricultural production. A lack of water has already negatively affected farmland, bringing thousands of farmers into crisis. Studies suggest that the most directly affected is industrial agriculture, with a projected loss of between 11% and 17% of the agricultural sector's GDP.³ Shifts in mining, deforestation, urbanisation, and untreated wastewater are also further risking the labour market balances.⁴

An emerging water crisis meets swelling water demands due to population growth and development plans to expand the agriculture, industry, and energy sectors. However, water resources have become a critical issue due to the strained water supplies. Data show that the Bolivian Andes are warming faster than the rest of the world, and models suggest the trend will continue. The massive glaciers will disappear, leaving the highlands without crucial water sources. For example, at the height of the recent drought, the main dams that supply drinking water to over 30% of the population in the city of La Paz had almost run dry.⁵ At the national level, these water resource impacts can seriously affect food security; for instance, changes in temperature and precipitation would cause an average reduction of 20% in rural incomes. As indicated, about 40% of the economically active population is involved in the agricultural sector, suggesting that many workers are gradually forced to find other sectoral income sources.

In its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Bolivia commits to increase renewable energy use to 81% by 2030. However, the country does not have a fossil-fuel phase-out policy nor offer regulatory incentives to achieve policy outcomes that preserve biodiversity or other ecological benefits. Public procurement policies do not include environmental and green growth considerations.⁶

Free Trade Zones

In Bolivia, the establishment of free trade zones (FTZs) initiated in 1987, protected by *Decreto supremo* No.25933 of 2000. In 2016, a legal reform was enacted, introducing a new hybrid free trade zones model. The regulations establish a period of one year for existing FTZs to transform into free industrial zones (FIZs). Six FIZs are in operation; Cobija is the only remaining FTZ. The legal reform eased customs procedures for goods entering the zones and established stronger government support for the promotion of productive investments in the zones.⁷

The National Council on Free Trade Zones (Spanish acronym: CONZOF) oversees industrial and commercial-free trade zones and authorises operations.

Special regulations in the free zones are linked with exemptions of several tariffs and national taxes. Even though the zones are part of the national territory, they are considered outside the national customs territory.⁸

The main sectors in FTZ/FIZs are leather and textiles, exported to the United States, Chile, and Peru.⁹ About 48,000 workers (3.3% of total employees) operate in FTZ/FIZs.¹⁰

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Bolivia's labour market legal framework is complex and updated regularly (see more in Appendix Table 5).¹¹ Status of some of the central labour-related laws are:

- The Constitution of Bolivia of 2009 introduced sweeping changes, enshrining a broad range of rights, particularly indigenous rights, and the fundamental right of every citizen to access basic public services. It placed a more active role for the state in economic matters and natural resource control. The right to collective bargaining and the right to strike are protected. Although the right to freedom of

association is also preserved, it is strictly regulated.

- The General Labour Code of 1939 sets regulations and statutory instruments for employment and working conditions. The law prohibits anti-union discrimination but does not provide adequate protection against it. The right to collective bargaining is recognised by law. The right to strike is also recognised by law but strictly regulated.¹² Legal modifications were launched in 2021 to ensure that workers' salaries and other social benefits protect unionism while they carry out their union functions.
- The General Law on Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare of 1979 set the leading OSH legislation to ensure adequate conditions of health, hygiene, safety, and welfare at work.
- The Pension Code of 2010 regulates social security. The law links with the constitutional banning the private administration of social security, transforming the system into a three-pillar hybrid system (see more in the Social Protection section).¹³

The government work on updating a new law for public servants not engaged in public administration and drafting a new Labour Code to address the issue of the exclusion of agricultural workers.

Observations on Labour Legislation

Several specific observations are listed for the labour-related legal framework regarding the international standards in the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, and the right to strike (see more in Appendix Table 6 and the Ratified ILO Conventions sub-section).

The politicisation of labour issues is also present; for instance, the extent of the practical application of fundamental labour rights could sometimes depend on the actors' political affiliations. Some trade unions allegedly prioritise political allegiances over the representation of workers' interests.¹⁴ Other critical factors are the exclusion of agricultural

workers from the General Labour Code; the denial of the right to organise to public servants; the excessive requirement that 50% of all workers in an enterprise are needed to establish a trade union.¹⁵

Reports argue that Bolivia's government did not effectively enforce applicable laws, and penalties were less than those for other laws involving denials of civil rights, such as discrimination. Penalties were rarely applied against violators (see more in the Labour Dispute Resolution System sub-section).¹⁶

The Health Emergency Law of 2021 prohibits strikes and protests by health sector workers. It was approved without the organised workers' consent.

Many workers operate in the informal economy, sidelining labour and business regulations in practice, which is often due to a lack of awareness or incentives (see more in the Informal Economy sub-section).

Ratified ILO Conventions

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) conventions enumerate international principles and rights at work. Bolivia has ratified 50 conventions. Appendix Table 7 shows that eight of ten fundamental conventions and three of four governance conventions are approved, and 20 Technical Conventions are Up-To-Date and actively promoted. The latest ratified convention was the Safety and Health in Construction Convention (C167) signed in 2015.

The independent ILO body, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), listed observations and direct requests for several conventions. For instance, about the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (C087), CEACR has, for many years, requested the Bolivian government to bring legislative texts into conformity with the convention concerning a series of factors, including to dissolve trade unions unilaterally; criminalised the promotion of any lock-out, protest or strike declared to be illegal by the labour authorities; the intervention of labour inspectors is

limited to the legalisation of acts protecting labour rights and to the prevention of labour disputes; the denial of the right to organise of public servants; the excessive requirement of 50% of the workers in an enterprise to establish a trade union, in the case of an industrial union; the illegality of strikes in the banking sector; to disqualify ex officio trade union leaders. Although the Bolivian government has provided information, the government is still requested to take the necessary measures to bring laws to ensure their conformity with the convention. CEACR further asked the government to initiate a dialogue to identify the reforms needed to ensure that workers can freely establish the organisations of their choosing, even in the absence of the authorisation of a higher-level trade union organisation.¹⁷

The CEACR also registered some observations to the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (C098) concerning Bolivia's government violating the principle of free and voluntary negotiation about wages. The CEACR requested the Bolivian government to take the necessary measures to eliminate legislative or regulatory provisions for the compulsory signing of collective agreements and related penalties. The committee further recalled two other issues, which are: i) the urgency of updating the fines to make them more effective in preventing discrimination and anti-union interference; ii) the need to guarantee the right to collective bargaining for both public servants not engaged in the public administration and agricultural workers.¹⁸

The Sustainable Development Goals indicator 8.8.2 measures compliance with fundamental labour rights. Based on ILO textual sources and national legislation, Bolivia's scoring slightly deteriorated recently and aligned with the Latin America and the Caribbean average (see more in Table 1). This trend suggests that the country is not taking in the right direction to reach the specific SDG goal, and as previously mentioned, there are several observations and direct requests of the national labour-related legal framework.

Table 1: Level of national compliance with labour rights among Bolivia and neighbouring countries, 2022

Country	Value
Argentina	2.7
Bolivia	3.1
Brazil	2.2
Chile	2.7
Paraguay	3.2
Peru	4.8
Latin America & Caribbean	3.2

Note: The value ranges from 0 to 10, with 0 being the best possible score (indicating higher levels of compliance with freedom of association and collective bargaining (FACB) rights) and 10 the worst (indicating lower levels of compliance with FACB rights based on ILO textual sources and national legislation).

Sources: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

Trade Agreements

Bolivia is a World Trade Organisation (WTO) member and linked to four regional trade agreements (RTAs). Two of them, the Andean Community (CAN) and the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), have labour provisions.

The CAN – Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru – operates with a Labour Advisory Council and promotes social cooperation in areas like social security and recognition of education certificates.¹⁹

In 2002, Bolivia became an associated member of MERCOSUR and adhered to the constitutive treaty in 2015. This organisation links with four other State Parties: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay; Venezuela was suspended in all the rights and obligations inherent to its status in 2016.²⁰ It was not until November 2023 that Bolivia finally became approved to become a full member of MERCOSUR.

MERCOSUR forms a “free residence area” that permits citizens of those countries to obtain residence and the right to work in the participating countries without a visa. This institution has allowed workers and citizens to rely upon it to challenge domestic legislation and protect their fundamental rights in the workplace. The organisation promotes various activities via Socio-Labour Bodies (SLBs) that generate joint policies. It has led to the MERCOSUR Socio-Labour Declaration, the latest revised in 2015, and it has been considered a bold attempt

to protect workers’ fundamental rights within a regional trade bloc. This declaration should be revisited after six years, suggesting it should have been done by 2021. However, the revision has still not taken place. It is worth mentioning that MERCOSUR has promoted the Multilateral Agreement on Social Security of the Southern Common Market and Administrative Regulations, the Regional Strategy for Employment Growth and created the Labour Market Observatory. Studies found that two regional factors have emerged, shaping the Member States’ labour markets, namely platform work and climate change with a focus on green jobs and just transition policies.²¹

Bolivia is a major exporter to the United States (U.S.). The Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) arrangement allows duty- and quota-free access to some products. A country can be removed if it violates or does not take steps to uphold the ILO core labour standards. The United States Trade Representative (USTR) institution’s latest hearings for ongoing review of specific practices was in 2020, concerning Bolivia’s practices of workers’ rights.²²

Bolivia benefits from the European Union’s (EU) unilateral GSP+ special incentive arrangement, allowing duty and quota-free access to most products. To be granted and continue to be given GSP+, a country must ratify and effectively implement conventions within human rights, environmental, and the fundamental ILO conventions. GSP+ removes import duties on products from vulnerable developing countries in the EU market. These measures help developing countries alleviate poverty and create jobs based on international standards, including labour and human rights. The European Parliament and European Council examine each beneficiary every second year. The latest report on the GSP+ covered the period 2020-2022 and assessed that in terms of compliance with the GSP+ standards, Bolivia continues to face severe challenges in the protection of human rights, notably in addressing the high levels of gender-based violence and child labour across various economic sectors.²³

Other countries – Australia, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Russia, and Switzerland – have a bilateral free trade agreement with Bolivia with limited labour clauses.

SOCIAL PARTNERS

Social partners are central to promoting the realisation of core labour rights and social justice for workers by protecting freedom of association and collective bargaining. These organisations are usually represented as the government, trade unions, and employers' organisations.

Government

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Welfare (MLESW) oversee labour relations, pensions, and social security programmes. The ministry is responsible for the compliance and enforcement of occupational safety and health (OSH) legislation, including inspecting workplaces and conducting the procedures for applying OSH sanctions. The ministry is also responsible for fixing and periodically reviewing the minimum wage, and with offices for worker inquiries, complaints, and reports of unfair labour practices and unsafe working conditions. In addition, MLESW's General Direction of Union Affairs is involved in conflict prevention and mediation.

Some of the other central government institutions concerned with labour-related issues and involved in the tripartite collaboration are the Ministry of Education, responsible for determining the education system's policies and direction, and the Ministry of Health, responsible for formulating policies and promoting research and development of health services.

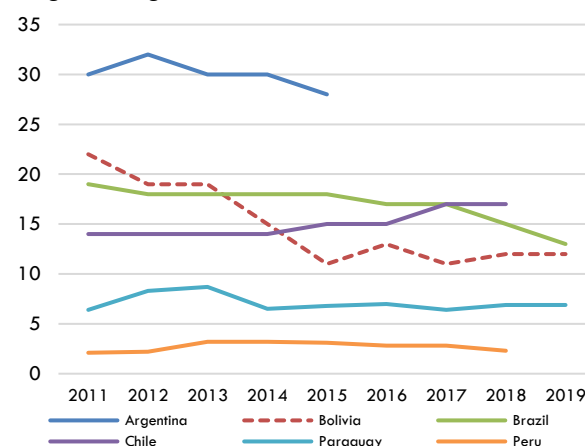
Trade Unions

The Bolivian Workers' Centre (*Central Obrera Boliviana*—COB) was formed after the 1952 nationalist-populist revolution and became a unitary, single union centre. The centre affiliates a

broad group of institutions, such as peasant economic organisations, peasant agricultural corporations, trade unions, and indigenous community associations.

Updated data on COB's affiliated members are scarce; some estimates count the membership rate as about 2.0 million, out of which 560,000 workers are members of trade unions (28% of the total members).²⁴ Bolivia's trade union density rate plummeted at the beginning of the 2010s, but it became more stable and reached 12% of employees at the end-2010s. This trade union density rate was at the intermediate level among neighbouring countries (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Trade union density rate in Bolivia and neighbouring countries, %, 2011-2019



Note: This trade union density rate conveys the number of union members who are employees as a percentage of the total number of employees.

Source: International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT.

Many trade unions have raised concerns over the government's reluctance to recognise and organise political independent trade union organisations, leading to trade union parallels, especially among organised peasants and teachers (revisit Appendix Table 6 and the Education section). This situation has triggered clinches between the government and the trade union movement in several events during the last decade. Generally, trade union rights violations have persisted (see more in the Trade Union Rights Violations section).

Mining and industrial sectors have been the most potent COB federations. According to the COB statutes, the General Secretary of COB must come

from the Mine Workers' Federation (FSTMB). The Confederations for Construction and Manufacturing Workers (CGTFB), which affiliates workers in the textile industry, beverages, and construction materials, is also active. Other public sector federations gained importance, such as in the education sector with CONMERB (*Confederación Nacional de Maestros de Educación Rural en Bolivia*), CTEUB (*Confederación de Trabajadores de Educación Urbana de Bolivia*), and CSTSPB (*Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores en Salud Bolivia*) in the health sector.

In three of COB's affiliated organisations—CSTSPB, CTEUB, and CONMERB—approximately 65% are women. This relatively high share generated an increase in women in organisational leadership at all levels for two of them: CSTSPB and CTEUB have women representation in leadership positions and decision-making bodies at 33%, while CONMERB is down to 14%. Specific strategies to promote young people in national leadership have not been applied to these three organisations.

The widespread informal economy and dominance of micro-enterprises are challenging the scope of unionism in Bolivia. However, some agricultural workers and day labourers in Bolivia are organised workers from the informal economy, representing about 10% share of total membership.²⁵ Another weakness is that the education system does not sufficiently prepare students to transition from school to work, including awareness or incentives to protect workers' rights.

Employers' Organisations

Employers—those working on their account or with one or a few partners, holding jobs defined as “self-employment jobs”—represent 3.5% of the total employment in Bolivia, somewhat lower than Latin America and the Caribbean average of 4.1%.²⁶ This employer group is dominated by men (see more in the Gender sub-section).

The Global Competitiveness Index provides a view on various aspects, including labour market efficiency, based on surveys among Bolivian

employers in the country. This latter efficiency has landed low, ranking 135 of 141 countries (1st is the best), including the poor cooperation in labour-employer relations (see more in Appendix Table 8). Based on the Global Risks Report 2023, identified by the Bolivian Executive Opinion Survey, the five risks that are the most likely to pose the biggest threat to the country in the next two years are prolonged economic stagnation, digital inequality, employment and livelihood crisis, state collapse, human-made environmental damage, debt crisis, and erosion of social cohesion.²⁷

The leading employer organisation is the Confederation of Private Employers in Bolivia (*Confederación de Empresarios Privados de Bolivia – CEPB*), established in 1962. This confederation has 26 affiliated organisations, including the National Chamber of Industry (NCI). CEPB affiliates to the International Organisation of Employers (IOE). CEPB is governed by an executive committee and with representation in tripartite social dialogue forums. However, during the Morales-administration, the CEPB was somewhat sidelined for tripartite social dialogue, not to mention CEPB's statutory legal framework in relation to representation for the purpose of negotiating labour matters lack of clarity.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

As a part of the 2009 Constitution reform, a process of social dialogue was introduced to collective bargaining. The Supreme Decree No. 29892 places the Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Welfare responsible for promoting, guaranteeing labour negotiation within the framework of social dialogue in labour matters. The country has not ratified ILO's central social dialogue conventions (C144 and C154), not to mention that no progress has been reported by the government in addressing ILO comments and requests on collective bargaining.²⁸

Social dialogue remains politicised and challenged by distrust among social partners. At the national tripartite institutional level, employers' organisations were often placed in observer status

while negotiations were carried out between the COB and the government. It has raised concern from some national stakeholders, arguing it erodes trade union independence and has undermined freedom of association.²⁹ On the other hand, the government took a hard position against trade unions that are not related to the movement towards socialism and even took criminal actions against union leaders who spoke out against government policies. At the beginning of the 2020s, massive national strikes emerged; for instance, a massive national strikes by teachers in 2023, to protest the worsening conditions for students and teachers (see more in the Education section). This situation has negatively affected the social dialogue ambience, styming collective bargaining and cooperation in labour-employer relations. There are some positive attempts at the lower levels; for example, a change in the model for lithium exploitation turned into a better social dialogue between the government, trade unions, and companies that operate with mines, improving job quality. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic also brought social dialogue to its peak in the health sector, which is linked with solidarity among workers but has somewhat faded out.

In Bolivia, there are no sectoral or branch collective agreements. Instead, these agreements are more common at the bipartite workplace level. Most collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) have been restricted to addressing wages. Reports show that Bolivia – along with Argentine and Uruguay – had a relatively high share of wage and salaried workers covered by CBAs with more than 70% coverage; most companies were unionised.³⁰ It is worth mentioning that the employee group covers around one out of three (31%) of the total employment, suggesting still a large majority of the workforce still are sidelined for CBA coverage. By the same token, public sector workers who are not employed in the state administration and agricultural workers are denied the right to bargain collectively (revisit Appendix Table 6).

Central tripartite institutions

Only a few tripartite labour institutions are registered in Bolivia, challenging the function of social dialogue. The central institutions are summarised below.

National Tripartite Occupational Safety and Health Council

The council has representation from the government, trade unions, and employers' organisations. The institution monitors and improves occupational safety and health (OSH) standards and enforcement. The council reported unfair labour practices and unsafe working conditions. The Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Welfare has offices for worker inquiries and complaints.

Other bi/tripartite organs

- National Health Fund (*Caja Nacional de Salud*).
- National Commission for the eradication of child labour (*Comisión Nacional de Erradicación Progresiva del Trabajo Infantil*).
- Productivity and Competition Commission (*Comisión de Productividad y Competitividad*).

Labour dispute resolution system

Disputes in labour and social security matters are subject to legal provisions in the General Labour Code. If arbitration and settlement of labour disagreement is not solved at the company or at the organisational level, the labour inspection system can initiate the necessary proceedings before the labour courts specialised within the judicial branch responsible for resolving labour disputes. The hierarchy of labour courts includes Labour and Social Security Courts, Social Chambers, and Supreme Court of Justice. These courts have the power to resolve individual and collective labour disputes, including disputes over wages, benefits, and working conditions, reinstatement of dismissed workers, authorisation of strikes and lockouts, and collective bargaining disputes. These institutions are empowered to hear cases and determine a binding outcome of a dispute.

The number of professional judges reached eight per 100,000 people, which was at the medium level compared with other South American countries.³¹ Reports registered that the National Labour Court handled complaints of antiunion discrimination but took one year or more to issue rulings. The ineffectiveness of labour courts and the lengthy time to resolve cases and complaints limited freedom of association. The court ruled in favour of discharged workers in some instances and required their reinstatement; however, union leaders stated problems had often been resolved or were no longer relevant by the time the court ruled.³²

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) has been used broadly in Bolivia via legal processes, where “Western” and “indigenous” practices are disconnected systems allowed to coexist. ADR appeal is linked with the distrust many Bolivians feel toward the state legal system and the confluence of donor platforms and social movement demands.³³

TRADE UNION RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The Global Rights Index ranked Bolivia as 3 out of 5+ (5+ is worst) in 2024, registering “regular violations of rights”, i.e., governments and/or companies regularly interfere in collective labour rights or fail to fully guarantee important aspects of these rights. Deficits and/or certain practices could make frequent violations possible.

The International Trade Union Confederation registered no cases of systematic violations of rights in recent years.³⁴ The country has one ILO active freedom of association case concerning the complainant organisation alleging that the Ministry of Labour illegally revoked decisions recognising the leadership and the union leave entitlement of trade union leaders.

Reports listed that the government charged and detained the president of the Bolivian Medical Association for the death of his father from Covid-19. Observers criticised the charge as politically motivated due to the leader’s criticisms of the government. Doctors, along with the National Committee for the Defence of Democracy and

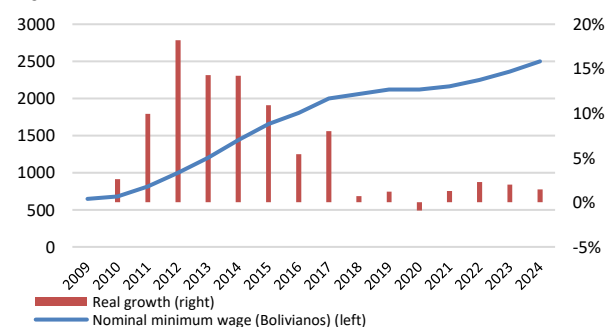
several other institutions, staged protests denouncing the trade union leader as corrupt. The minister retaliated by imposing salary penalties on doctors who joined the protests.³⁵

Crises heighten the risk of all forms of modern slavery, and climate crisis has accelerated these circumstances. About 83,000 people were living in modern slavery in Bolivia, ranking as number 9 out of 25 Latin American countries on the Global Slavery Index (1 is the worst score) in 2023. This index measures modern slavery, i.e., slavery-like practices (such as debt, bondage, forced marriage and sale or exploitation of children), human trafficking and forced labour. Reports found that individuals can become trapped in a “vicious circle” where Bolivians flee their homelands due to environmental degradation caused by extractive practices but end up working in these very same extractive industries, often experiencing exploitation.³⁶

WORKING CONDITIONS

Since 2006, Bolivia’s government has adjusted the national minimum wage annually based on negotiations, mainly with COB. Modifications concern compulsory increases from the previous year’s payroll. Figure 4 below shows the significant real minimum wage growth trend until the tempo lost pace in 2018 and ahead to tackling fiscal imbalances and keeping international competitiveness; even negative real growth in 2020 triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 4: Nominal minimum wage trend (Bolivianos) and real minimum wage growth (%) in Bolivia, 2009-2024



Note: The real minimal wage growth is based on the inflation rate in consumer prices deducted in nominal minimum wage growth.

Sources: Instituto Nacional de Estadística; own estimations of the real minimum wage.

The monthly minimum wage is higher than the government's official poverty income and is the third highest among the closest neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, the widespread informal economy hinders the implementation of minimum wage regulations, often due to a lack of awareness or incentives.

The average income has a deep gap between urban and rural areas, and there is a gender salary gap of 13% on average. Ethnicity-related rural-urban gaps are more extensive than those associated with gender salary gap; ethnicity is more important in determining the existing wage gaps for indigenous women.³⁷

The labour inspection system monitors compliance with the minimum wage legislation and occupational safety and health (OSH), linking with the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security. This system can initiate the necessary proceedings before the Labour and Social Security Court.

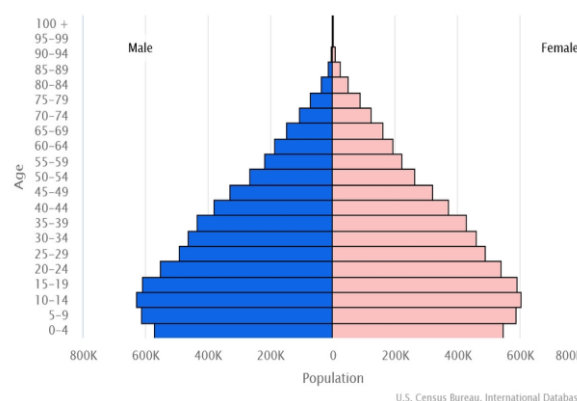
In Bolivia, the number of labour inspectors experienced a hike of 72% from 2021 to 2022, reaching 123 labour inspectors, equalling about one per 17,000 employees. It is worth mentioning that employees represent about 32% of the total employment. The inspectors' coverage of total employment was estimated at one inspector per 52,000 workers. The number of inspectors was insufficient to provide effective workplace inspection: the ILO is concerned if the relation exceeds one inspector per 20,000 workers in transition economies.³⁸ It suggests that Bolivia must employ at least 320 labour inspectors among employment. It took almost eight years to finally launch the General Regulations of the Labour Inspection, which entered into force in January 2024. These new regulations establish the procedures for labour inspection in various dimensions, as well as bring more in line with ILO's labour inspection conventions (C081 and C129) (revisit Appendix Table 7).

WORKFORCE

Bolivia consists of about 12.1 million people in 2023, close to half identify themselves as indigenous or Afro origin. The country's demographic landscape demonstrates a decelerated population growth trend, which is similarly in Latin America. It points toward that Bolivia is on the path to a population age structure enabling a "demographic dividend", i.e., when the share of the working-age population is larger than the non-working-age share of the population.

Figure 5 below visualises Bolivia's demographic pyramid, echoing in the gradually falling age dependency to Working-Age Population ratio from 66% in 2010 to 56% in 2022. The country experiences an ageing population, supported by an upsurge in life expectancy. The share of persons over 60 is projected to grow from 7% in 2022 to 17% in 2050.³⁹ It is anticipated to bring mounting financial pressure on social protection, such as health and eldercare pensions (see more in the Social Protection section).

Figure 5: Population pyramid based on the Age-Sex structure of the population in Bolivia, 2023



Source: Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, Bolivia.

The main trends of Bolivia's workforce trends are summarised below, and other facts are available in Appendix Table 10:

- The employment-to-population ratio reached 75% in 2022, increasing by seven percentage points since 2013.
- Workers are becoming better educated at the advanced level.

- The employees' share of total employment gradually fell during the 2010s and accelerated at the beginning of the 2020s due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, the self-employed group increased by nine percentage points during the last decade.
- During the last decade, employment in the public sector share fell by 3.4 percentage points while it similarly grew in the private sector.
- Employment in urban areas increased by two percentage points while it dropped similarly in rural areas during the last decade.
- During the last two decades, employment in the agricultural sector has been dwindling while the industry sector has stayed stable. In the service sector, it was on the rise—similarly regional trends.
- Labour share of national income grew by ten percentage points during the 2010s and has remained stable in recent years, superseding the rate of the closest neighbouring countries.

The employment structure remains haunted by informality, including subsistence agriculture in rural areas. Instead, formal employees are primarily present in urban areas (see more in the Informal Economy sub-section).

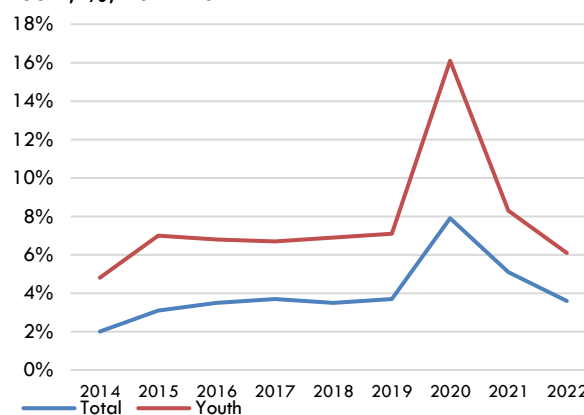
Micro and small enterprises dominate Bolivia's business landscape, which is a central part of job creation. A large part of these enterprises operates in the informal economy, including in the agriculture sector. This group faces difficulties like access to a credit line or a bank loan.⁴⁰ This scenery also challenges the evolution of unionism and collective bargaining.

Unemployment

Bolivia's official data show that the unemployment rate slowly rose during the 2010s due to economic growth deceleration. The rate doubled in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic but quickly reverted to its before-2020 level. It will most likely reach the Economic and Social Development Plan 2021-2025 goal of reducing unemployment to 4.5% in 2025 (see Figure 6). The country's unemployment rate

remains the lowest in South America. Unemployment is mainly an urban phenomenon, sticking with persons with higher education levels and youth; for example, the youth unemployment rate exploded in 2020, reaching its record-high peak of 16%, but fell fast to its previous level.

Figure 6: Unemployment rates in Bolivia, Total and Youth, %, 2014-2022



Source: Bolivian Household Surveys and Continuous Employment Surveys.

Subsistence farming is occupied during planting and harvesting but not engaged full-time throughout the year, creating some “disguised unemployment.”

Currently, there is no provision for unemployment benefits under Bolivian labour legislation, and there is basically no functioning unemployment insurance scheme; for instance, coverage of unemployment benefits and active labour market programmes (ALMP) grasped just 0.8% of the population in 2019, and 0% registered in recent years.⁴¹ Labour market programmes have not helped expand the size of formal jobs haunted by the rigid labour and business regulations, not to mention labour policies were mainly based on temporary employment programmes.⁴² Instead, many are entering casual or informal activities as a survival strategy to generate some earnings (see more in the Informal Economy and the Social Protection sections).

Unemployment is statistically a part of the employed group, excluding people outside the workforce. Around 22% of the working-age population in Bolivia was estimated to be economically inactive in 2022, hiding significant potential unemployment.

Migration

Bolivia has undersigned central international migration conventions but has not ratified ILO's migrant-specific instruments. The country has a comprehensive migration-related legal framework, including that the constitution guarantees that all nationals and foreign workers in Bolivia can freely exercise their rights.⁴³

Based on the latest national census, Bolivia's stock migrant population (immigrants and emigrants) represented 14% of the total population, with a decrease of 1.5 percentage points compared to the 2001 Census.⁴⁴

The adverse impacts of climate change are challenging many small-scale agricultural workers living in vulnerable areas. A glimpse of its scope is displayed by a large segment of internally displaced people (IDPs) associated with disaster – floods and wet mass movement – that reached 434,000 persons since 2008, mainly in 2010, 2014, and 2019. Internal displacements by internal conflict have been minimal, registering only 31 people in 2019 during the last decade.⁴⁵ Since new jobs are more available in urban than rural areas, the high IDP flow has fuelled the urbanisation growth.

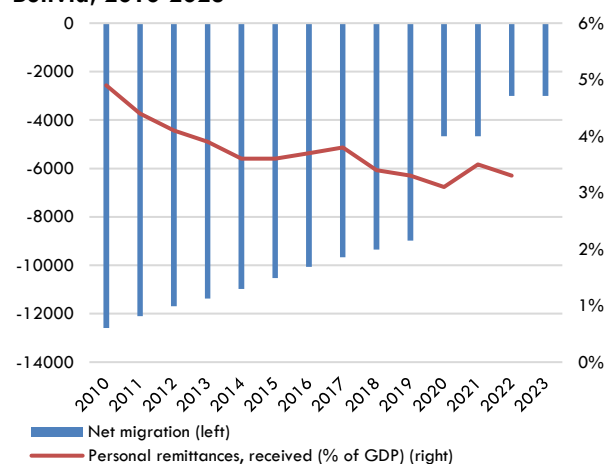
The country has experienced significant urbanisation: while in 1990, just over half of the population lived in cities, in 2022, about 71% of Bolivians lived in urban areas; UN projections suggest nearly 80% of the population will be urban in 2050.⁴⁶ The urbanisation process has been accompanied by the concentration of population and the previously mentioned shifts of the sectoral employment structure. Although cities provide several advantages that attract both businesses and workers, they face increased pressure to meet higher demand for public services, formal jobs, a higher cost associated with congestion, increased crime, or higher levels of pollutants in air and water.⁴⁷

The stock of Bolivian emigrants was estimated to be up to about 490,000 personas (5% of the total population), with a minor gender gap.⁴⁸ This high

outflow is driven by youth moving towards the top destination countries from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the United States.

Figure 7 shows that more leave than arrive in the country, but the net migration flow gradually became more balanced, especially after 2020, as an impact of the pandemic that disrupted migration in South America. Bolivia even implemented some of the longest and strictest lockdown measures worldwide.

Figure 7: Net migration and personal remittance in Bolivia, 2010-2023



* Net migration is the number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants, including citizens and noncitizens.

Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

The Bolivian diaspora sends personnel remittances, but the volume has dwindled, turning down to 3.3% of GDP in 2022 (revisit Figure 7). These transfers are not only used for basic living expenses but also provide opportunities to start small-scale business ventures, purchase consumer products, and spend on housing improvements. Remittances are significantly higher than foreign direct investments in Bolivia.

The country hosts almost 16,000 refugees, asylum seekers and mainly migrants in need of international protection, most of them from Venezuela. These groups have their rights to advocate for supporting the livelihoods of refugees and migrants through strengthening their autonomous businesses.⁴⁹ It is worth mentioning that Bolivia is not a prominent destination for the protection of recognised refugees: Data show that refugees in Bolivia represented just 0.4% of the

total refugee population in Latin America and the Caribbean region.⁵⁰ Although refugees should be placed on par with ordinary foreigners concerning their right to engage in wage-earning employment, it remains restrictive. Only a few highly skilled refugees can access the formal job market.

Informal Economy

The informal economy is central to Bolivia's economy and employment structure. The government developed a legal framework to bring more formality to the labour market, including the General Act No. 356 of 2013 on cooperatives and the Act No. 2450 of 2003 regulating domestic work. Besides, the country ratified the ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers in 2013, calling for legislative commitment at the national level to protect this group of workers.

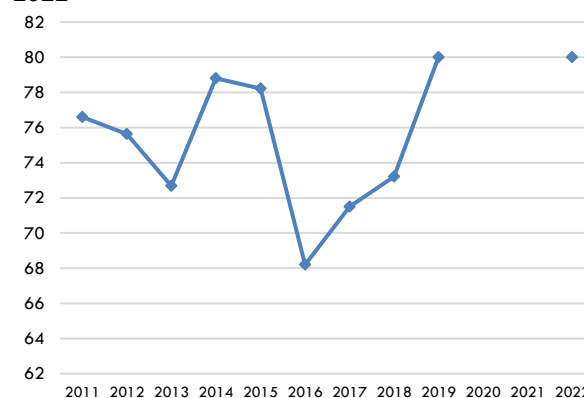
The country has not adopted any specific policy for the informal economy workers. Instead, the government has promoted some forums and roundtables that address informal workers' issues. They function more as declarative spaces rather than concrete and comprehensive long-term actions to reduce the high rate of informality (see ahead). Other programmes are focusing on basic technical education and training, but they have been more isolated than integrated into the central development agenda.

The Bolivian trade union movement has not prioritized to implement strategies and policies with an impact on reducing the proportion of informal employment. Initiatives have only been declaratively demanding the creation of more sources of quality employment and the rejection of labour outsourcing and job insecurity.

Bolivia has one of the highest proportions of informal employment in South America, grasping 85% of total employment in 2022. Interestingly, the country has a volatile trend in the proportion of informal non-agricultural employment (see Figure 8). For example, the high real minimum wage hikes at the beginning of the 2010s challenged firms'

profits because of tax registration. It led to their cost of formalisation exceeding benefits, triggering some job evasion from the formal sector. Generally, all workers operate in informality in the agricultural sector.⁵¹

Figure 8: The proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment trend in Bolivia, 2011-2022



Source: Bolivian Continuous Employment Surveys.

As mentioned, Bolivia faces rigid business regulations and poor labour market efficiency. For instance, entrepreneurs often lack awareness or incentives to formalise their business, which is, among others, indicated by poor ranking in starting a business (revisit Table 9). Many informal workers have little, if any, education; many are part of the marginalised indigenous population that faces discrimination. These factors suggest Bolivia is contested to reach the specific Sustainable Development Goal's indicator 8.3.1 target of encouraging enterprises' formalisation. Some informality can be voluntary, given their preferences, skills, competing earnings prospects, and job characteristics.

Child Labour

Bolivia's children under 18 were estimated to make up 39% of the population. Their share of the total population is falling, reflected in the mentioned demographic dividend shift (revisit Figure 5).

The country has ratified key international conventions regarding child labour, including ILO's two conventions on effectively abolishing child labour (see Appendix Table 7). The government has

established regulations linked to child labour, including the Child and Adolescent Code. The law was amended several times, latest in December 2018, bringing the controversial minimum age of 10 up to 14 years old to prohibit all paid work by children. Legislation requires apprentices to attend school; it does not set a minimum age for apprenticeship participation. The government promotes the Multisectoral Plan of Childhood 2021–2025 and the National Plan for Early Childhood Development. Reports registered that Bolivia made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.⁵²

Bolivia's child labour rate significantly fell during the last two decades, reaching 9.7% in 2019.⁵³ It remains considerably higher than Latin America and the Caribbean average of 6.0%.⁵⁴ Factors that contributed to falling child labour rate link with the child population cohort dropped (revisit Figure 5); the school enrolment at the primary and secondary education level rose; the urbanisation upsurge; increased funding for a conditional cash transfer programme aimed at bolstering school attendance.

Among the Bolivian children in child labour, at least one out of two (56%) were between 7 and 13 years old in 2019. This situation echoes the fact that the Child and Adolescent Code does not impact the riskiness of child labour. An expected child labour survey was not implemented as scheduled at the beginning of the 2020s due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the economic downturn that brought poverty reduction in limbo in 2020, the closure of schools, and an upsurge in informal employment have most likely triggered child labour on the rise. It even suggests that the government's goal launched in 2018 to eradicate child labour by 2025 turned unrealistic.

Child labour is more visible in rural areas and more frequent among the indigenous population. It is worth mentioning that work is part of several indigenous groups in Bolivia, which have cultural values teaching them to work. Boys are slightly more likely to be engaged in child labour compared to girls. Among the worst forms of child labour,

including forced labour, children often worked in the sugarcane and Brazil nut harvests, brick production, hospital cleaning, domestic labour, transportation, agriculture, and vending at night. There was little progress in removing children from mining activities.

The Bolivian Union of Child and Adolescent Workers represents thousands of under-18s. The organisation seeks to bring young workers together to defend their rights and promote education. Successes include organising pay rises for children who sell newspapers, using negotiations and the threat of strikes.⁵⁵

Gender

Bolivia has demonstrated political will to promote gender equality and is committed to central, regional, and international gender-related conventions and protocols. Generally, the country's laws and regulations around the life cycle of a working woman score 89 out of 100 (100 is best) in 2022, relatively higher than the regional average across Latin America and the Caribbean at 80. However, they still face a lower ranking on the indicator measuring laws affecting parenthood, workplaces, and pension (see more details in Appendix Table 11).⁵⁶ Despite the advanced legal framework on protecting women, widespread informality and cultural heritage halt its implementation in practice.

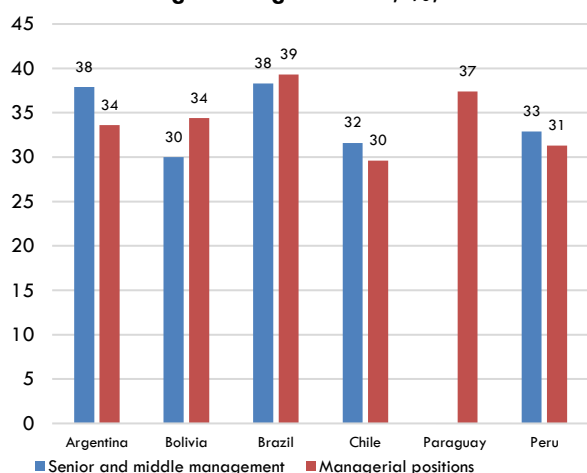
The latest National Equal Opportunity Plan was launched in 2008 and could benefit from being updated. Tackling gender mechanisms has been weak, but the government has launched the Plurinational Service for Women and Depatriarchalisation (PSWD) in January 2019. This institution is a decentralised public institution under public law, under the supervision of the Ministry of Cultures, Decolonisation and Depatriarchalisation.

Machismo – the sense of being “manly” and self-reliant, a concept associated with exaggerated masculinity – is part of the cultural heritage. Also, around half of the Bolivian population identifies themselves as indigenous descendants, linking

cultural values that support traditional patriarchal gender roles. Many Bolivian women feel discriminated against in different aspects of their lives.⁵⁷ These dogmas often sideline women's decision-making and active participation in the labour market.

The participation of Bolivian women in leadership is a path to strengthening gender equality commitment and increased confidence among other women to play a role in decision-making organs around the country. Data suggest that the proportion of Bolivian women in senior and middle management positions has the lowest rate among the closest neighbouring countries, and it has stood somewhat stable in recent years. Those Bolivian women in managerial positions lost the pace from its peak in 2018, situating in the middle among the neighbouring countries' rate in 2022 (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Proportion of women in senior and middle management positions and in managerial positions in Bolivia and neighbouring countries, %, 2022



Source: International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT.

Table 2 below displays Bolivia's gender gaps in the employment structure. During the last decade, the employment-to-population gender gap fell by nine percentage points, standing at half of the regional employment-to-population ratio on average. While Bolivian women's workforce participation is relatively high, most face a 'domestic burden' that makes women much more likely than men to work in part-time or vulnerable employment, informality, and low-productivity sectors.⁵⁸ Bolivian women have a higher unemployment rate than men.

Table 2: Key indicators for employed gender gaps in Bolivia, 2022

	Men	Women
Participation rate	85%	72%
Employment share	58%	42%
Unemployment rate	5.6%	6.8%
Employees share	65%	35%
Employers share	4.3%	1.6%
Informal employment rate	83%	87%

Source: Ethiopian Statistics Service, Statistical Report on the 2021 Labour Force and Migration Survey, 2021; International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT.

Spanish, the dominant language in Bolivia, includes formal enterprise practice. But many Bolivian women who live in rural communities do not speak Spanish, leading them excluded from the formal sector's possibilities. Reports argue that many companies prefer men to women to circumvent labour regulations such as maternity leave.⁵⁹ Besides, among urban Bolivian women, close to one out of three is without their own incomes; those in rural areas are significantly higher at 42% compared with men of 7.8%.⁶⁰

Youth

Bolivia's population structure is characterised by a 'youth bulge', i.e., the current significant increase in the youthful population. However, this factor has started to change, enabling a demographic dividend (revisit Figure 5). Youth aged 15-24 years represented 2.1 million (25%) of the working-age population in 2022.⁶¹

The average income per capita should increase if young workers can be fully employed in productive activities increases. Data show that Bolivia's income per capita is rising, suggesting that the youth bulge supports a demographic dividend. On the other hand, many young Bolivian workers cannot find formal jobs, which is mirrored in the widespread informal economy (revisit Figure 8). It has led to low-income youngsters often having limited access to jobs providing a proper salary and insurance due to low skill levels.

Bolivia has a mixed specific policy framework for youth employment, linked with the National Employment Plan (NEP) and programmes like My

First Job with Dignity, aiming to create more jobs for young people. Hundreds of firms have signed agreements with the government to become part of the NEP, and about 12,000 young persons enrolled in the programme (representing 0.6% of total youth employment). Youth employment is further mainstreamed into several other sectoral, institutional and inclusiveness policies. Furthermore, Bolivia's youth organisations promoted an agenda for public politics (APPP) with proposals based on the issues that challenge and motivate the younger generations. It is worth mentioning that Bolivia's youth generation is active in protests.

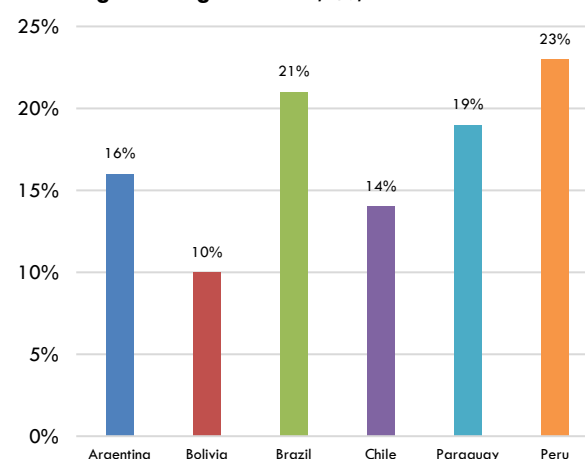
Interestingly, the country's youth unemployment rate is at least half that of Latin America and the Caribbean average, 6.3% and 15% in 2022, respectively. It indicates that policies' impact on addressing youth employment appears positive, not to mention the relatively low rate of not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (see ahead). Bolivian youth stick instead to the difficulty of labour insertion, high underutilisation, and more vulnerable working conditions in the informal economy. Many are non-qualified workers, facing the mismatch between education and the labour skills demanded by the labour market. It costs many graduates to fail to reap the rewards of their education.

According to Bolivia's constitution, every citizen, including youth, has the right to participate in the country's development process. Although the government has made progress in creating an enabling environment for youth participation, there are still gaps in dialogue due to the limited involvement of youth concerning political and civic participation, including the need for greater inclusion in discussions about digital policies and innovation.⁶² It supports the fact that Bolivia's latest ranking on the Global Youth Development Index (YDI) was 72 of 183 countries (1 is best) in 2023, demonstrating some improvements in youth development.⁶³ However, it continues with a weak scoring concerning youth political and civic participation, echoed in the deaccelerated Bolivia's trade union density and compliance with fundamental labour rights slightly deteriorated.

The nature of the labour market is changing, and the mounting group of better-educated youth brings pressure on decent job creation, gearing to oversupply. It further supported the emigration outflow, considered one of the youth's solutions to escape unemployment (revisit Figure 7).

The Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) rate landed 10% in 2022, the lowest rate among the neighbouring countries (see Figure 10). The NEET rate exemplifies a gender gap, catching 14% for young females and 5.7% for males. It is worth mentioning that young people with disabilities are severely disadvantaged in labour markets; for instance, the NEET rate of Bolivian young people with disabilities is six times as high as the NEET rates of youth without this additional obstacle.⁶⁴

Figure 10: Status of proportion of youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in Bolivia and neighbouring countries, %, 2022



Note: Data from Paraguay is from 2017.

Source: International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT.

EDUCATION

Bolivia's government has steadfastly championed equitable access to education. The Educational Revolution, initiated in 2006 and fortified with the enactment of Education Law No. 070 of 2010, encompasses strategic areas and policies for both public and private entities. This reform's pivotal aspects include free primary education, bridging the gap between rural and urban education, enhancing teachers' education, acknowledging teachers' seniority and right to organise, and

reiterating the importance of indigenous languages and culture.

The Education Revolution reform has mixed results. According to the national survey data, the literacy rate slowly rose during the last decade, reaching 95% in 2021. Gaps are slowly curbed on the urban-rural gaps in the attendance rate and average years of study.⁶⁵ Other data show that education was universalised for all children at school enrolment in primary and secondary education level, supported by redistributive social protection policies like the “Bono Juancito Pinto”. However, the enrolment rates lost pace at the end of the 2010s with gaps per place of residence, gender, and quality education measurements. The education system struggles to encourage many children to remain in school; for example, just four out of ten do not complete secondary school; there is an overpopulation of students in the urban area and their literacy skills many have acquired do not equip them for skilled jobs in urban areas, not to mention the relatively high child labour echoes this situation.

The combined impact of Covid-19 and climate change has posed significant challenges to education in Bolivia, such as attainment has suffered. For instance, Bolivia experienced one of the highest numbers of weeks with schools fully or partially closed in 2020 and 2021 in Latin America.⁶⁶ This situation could potentially lead to an increase in child labour and exacerbate other issues such as teacher absenteeism, overcrowded schools, long distances for learners to travel to and from schools, and a general lack of quality education delivery.

The government increased public spending on education during the 2010s, peaking at 8.4% of GDP in 2020. The country has reached by far the international Education 2030 Framework for Action’s benchmark for government financing of education within 4% to 6% of GDP.

Although most Bolivian youngsters could benefit from their experience at school, many are facing difficulties in the transition from school-to-work to

increase their future livelihood options in the formal sector. Among informal workers, the incidence of undereducation is relatively high at 22%, not to mention a significantly higher incidence of undereducation among informal workers compared with formal workers, which is three times as high.⁶⁷

The CTEUB functions with political-union independence from the government. As previously indicated, the politization of social dialogue has complicated this union’s relation with the government, leading towards “union parallelism” promoted by the government via *Magisterio Único*, an alternative to CTEUB and linked with the political party Movement for Socialism (MAS). In 2023, this stance triggered a national mobilization that lasted more than 60 days, with a hunger strike by the leaders of the affiliated federations and the “blocking” of the main leaders of the National Executive Directorate.

Vocational Training

Bolivia’s constitution guarantees vocational education and humanist technical learning. At the policy level, the Basic Curriculum Design of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), launched in 2012, defines the foundations and guidelines that orientate the training activities in the higher technical institutes that develop educational activities in vocational training. It is worth mentioning that the curriculum includes an environmental focus in sectors such as tourism, agriculture, technology, marketing, the food industry, and ecology and the environment.

The Vice Ministry of Higher Education for Vocational Training, which is part of the Ministry of Education, is responsible for developing, managing, and conducting policies on higher education and TVET sectors. Initially, Bolivian Workers’ Centre (COB) was part of the direction and administration of the Superior Board together along with the government and employers’ organisations. However, the 1% TVET-related payroll tax turned out being managed by the Confederation of Private Employers in Bolivia (CEPB), associating with firms’ tax benefits to incentivise investment in education

and training for their employees.⁶⁸ Since COB is not directly involved with job training and general training, except via some specific bipartite agreements between some union organisations with the Ministry of Education, the trade union movement was sidelined for supervision the TVET system.

Based on the latest available data, nearly 789,000 students were enrolled in vocational training in 2018, around half (49%) were females. Remarkably, the proportion of Bolivian 15–24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education is 22 percentage points higher than the Latin America and the Caribbean average, at 29%. In addition, Bolivia's vocational and technical enrolment sticks with 65% of total secondary enrolment, which was among the world's highest rates.⁶⁹

TVET centres often lack equipment in workshops, and many teachers and instructors are insufficiently trained or lack the technical skills they were supposed to teach. The vocational training system is considered uncoordinated and concentrated in urban areas.

Business development centres are active in Bolivia as hubs of entrepreneurship, fostering innovation and empowering small businesses to flourish. These centres offer training in business competencies and other services necessary to support successful business development. For example, entrepreneurship courses help them set up their own small-scale business, such as a car, computer, or mobile phone repair workshop, or become a farmer who knows how to profit. Nevertheless, many vocational training centres were reluctant to offer entrepreneurship courses as part of their curriculum.⁷⁰

Bolivian firms (excluding micro-enterprises) offering formal training programmes fell during the 2010s, reaching 50% of firms in 2017; it stood at the middle level compared with the neighbouring countries. Formal firms represent a relatively small group compared to the widespread informal micro and small enterprises, left without a voice in the TVET system.

Fourth Industrial Revolution

Bolivia's labour market, with its significant young population, is poised to harness the opportunities presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). This transformative phase, characterised by integrating artificial intelligence (AI), digitalisation, biotechnology, and global connectivity, reshapes production systems, management, and governance. While there are concerns about the displacement of low-skilled and medium-skilled workers, the potential for youth to thrive in the emerging ICT sector is immense.

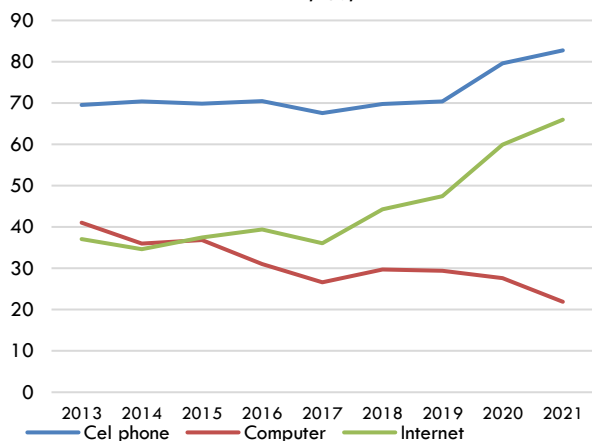
Bolivia's 2025 Patriotic Agenda identified that the country needs to expand its innovation, knowledge, and technology in strategic areas. Many new technology facilities emerged, many equipped with updated technology, and some were in more remote areas of the country. Students are also increasingly interested in technological innovation and software development in the Information and communications technology (ICT) sector. Bolivia's university system offers a wide range of IT courses. However, ICT education remains haunted by digital division, at a slower tempo than in other Latin American countries, and imbalances among the high/low-income and urban/rural groups. Additionally, the application of ICT tools in teaching is challenged by a lack of adequate computers; often, there is no connection appropriate electric power or internet connection.⁷¹

Although the communications sector is increasing in Bolivia, the eCommerce market is still relatively small. According to the Global Innovation Index 2023, Bolivia is in the 97th position out of 132 countries (1 is best), significantly lower ranked than other South American countries.

The government has promoted ICT via several policy and strategy initiatives, including the National Broadband Plan launched in 2016 to curb ICT's continuous and rapid evolution. National survey data suggest that the strategies have made some strides ahead; for example, an upsurge in internet use started in 2018 and cell phones in 2020. As indicated, computer use demonstrated a worrisome falling trend (see Figure 11). Other data

suggest, though, that the number of internet connections in Bolivia and the number of households with internet access at home more than doubled from 2014 to 2019.⁷²

Figure 11: Population five years old or older who used information and communication technologies in the last three months in Bolivia, %, 2013-2021



Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Encuestas de Hogares 2013-2021.

The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry is evolving in the country. Companies are developing their own businesses in the IT sector. The BPO sector benefits from a Bolivian skilled workforce that can handle digital projects.

Struggling to survive in a competitive job market of digital automation can carry extra stress for workers in Bolivia, bringing new challenges for the trade union movement. For instance, the effects of “casualisation” and “externalisation” could emerge with an increasing number of part-time and contractual workers. These factors could lead to employment vulnerability, making unionisation more difficult.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Bolivia has ratified some conventions that require the government to develop policies, strategies, and programmes on social protection, including the ILO’s social security standards of the Social Security Convention (C102). However, several other social security conventions, including the fundamental conventions of occupational safety and health, are not endorsed (see Appendix Table 7).

The 2009 constitution and the Law on Pensions of 2010 supported reforms that significantly changed the social protection system. The latter established a new social security system, sidelining the private administration of long-term social security schemes. The government rebuilt a public pension system, leading to improvements, such as expanding the eldercare scheme *Renta Dignidad* (see ahead).

There is political sensitivity to the management of funds by the government, leading trade unions and employers’ organisations do not participate in the board of directors of the social security management system. The trade union movement demands that worker representatives be included in this directory.

The country’s public social protection expenditure reached 9% of GDP, which was concentrated in old age and health, and situated five percentage points lower than Latin America and the Caribbean average at 14%.⁷³

Social protection coverage has increased in Bolivia from 41% in 2017 to 60% of the population in 2021. The system for non-contributory social protection programmes has taken steps to institutionalise them in the country. It is visualised in a relatively high social safety net coverage of 76% on average during the 2010s, and it even accelerated to 98% of the population in 2020. On the other hand, coverage of social insurance programmes remains sluggish, reaching just 8.1% of the population in 2020 with a stark leakage to the richest quintiles; the poorest has a weak coverage of just 0.7% (see more details of social protection coverages in Appendix Table 12).

Bolivian employees, representing 31% of total employment, contribute to social security contributions while employers are excluded: Those who earn more than 13,000 bolivianos (US\$ 1,881) per month are subject to a supportive social contribution determined on a scale system from 1% up to 10% over the gross salary. It is worth mentioning that income obtained because of investments is also subject to a supportive social contribution. However, it has not yet been collected

due to the lack of further regulations.⁷⁴ Bolivia has promoted other innovative ways to finance social protection, such as a hydrocarbon tax.

Bolivia has adopted universal pensions via the *Renta Dignidad* scheme, including 100% of the population coverage of persons above retirement age receiving a pension. The programme costs around 1% of GDP and is tax-financed from the mentioned direct tax on hydrocarbons and dividends from state-owned companies. Although the pension has supported poverty reduction at the household level, the scope for those without a contributory pension grasped 4,550 Bolivianos (US\$55) per month in 2024, which is lower than the international poverty line. Just around 15% of the population is covered by a semi-contributory system. It remains relatively low due to the widespread informal economy, evasion of labour and business regulations, and relatively high employee contributions. As mentioned, trade unions and employers' organisations do not participate in the pension system administration.⁷⁵ There are still questions about how much the system departs from the existing market-based pension scheme and its financial sustainability due to the demographic shifts.⁷⁶

There is no provision for unemployment benefits under Bolivian labour legislation. Nevertheless, the Labour Code requires employers to provide severance pay to dismissed employees with more than 90 days of continuous employment. Dismissed employees are covered for medical and maternity benefits up to two months after employment ceases. Instead, several employment programmes offer intermediation and advisory services to people looking for work and companies needing staff. For example, the government promotes the Programme for the Support of Employment (*Programa de Apoyo al Empleo*, PAE) for workers' employment formality by contributing to social security and earnings. This public programme involves job seekers registered in the Public Employment Service (PES) and information about job vacancies posted by formal firms. They receive three months of wage subsidy if selected for the vacancy. Studies found that PAE has improved the probabilities of employment and

formality; for instance, job seekers improved their chances of employment, formality, and earnings. Still, PAE remains challenged by enhancing the access of marginalised workers and making their effects sustainable over time.⁷⁷

In Bolivia, all female employees are eligible for maternity benefits, consisting of 90 days of paid maternity leave (45 days before the due date and 45 days after). The employer will pay the maternity benefit at 100% of the national minimum wage; the employer will receive a reimbursement of 90% from social security. Around 59% of mothers with newborns receive maternity benefits.⁷⁸ The father is entitled to mandatory paid paternity leave of three days in insurance schemes; data on its coverage are scarce.

Subsidies are central to Bolivia's social protection system and contribute to poverty reduction. The country has implemented extremely high fuel subsidies, which, along with certain food subsidies, help keep consumer prices low, bringing a significant fiscal cost. In 2022, more than half of Bolivia's fiscal deficit stemmed from fuel subsidies alone. According to the Court of Justice of the Andean Community, these fuel prices in Bolivia violate the principle of free competition and distort the Andean market.

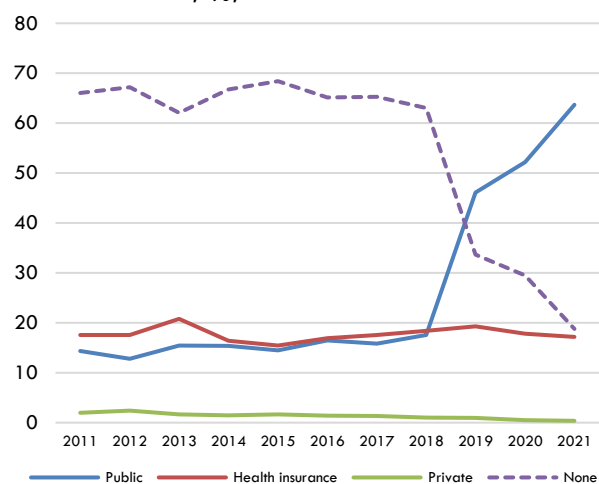
The National Health System (SNS) is linked with public, private, and health insurance institutions. These three different health sectors remain primarily unrelated.

Trade unions participate in the entities' boards of directors that provide short-term health insurance. However, in recent years, health fund institutions have lowered their quality of service and coverage. The workers have been demanding a restructuring in the institutions' administration and services. On the positive side, the social dialogue brought the payment of the Health Worker Bonus in 2023, grasping an average amount of the Bonus of Bs 6,100 (US\$883) and has benefited more than 19,000 members, not to mention that the workday for public health workers is six hours per day

instead of eight, since they do not have benefits granted by the General Labour Code.

A remarkable shift happened in recent years, visualising a swift upsurge in health insurance coverage from 2019, supported by the public sector (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Population registered or affiliate with health insurance, %, 2011-2021

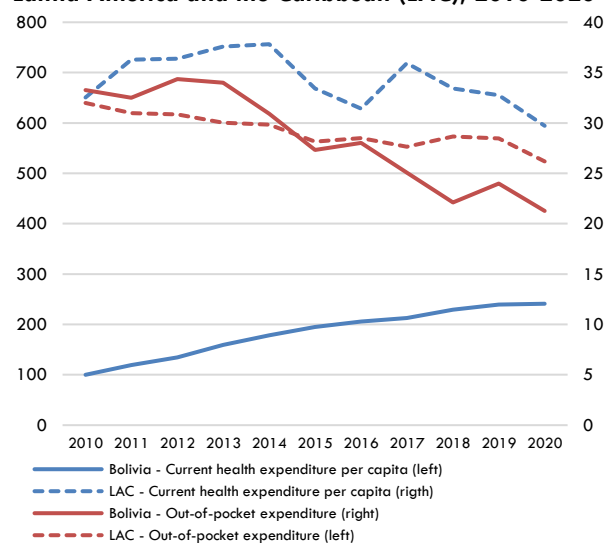


Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

The country has achieved progress in healthcare during the last decades, marked by reductions in maternal and child mortality rates and increased life expectancy. These factors remain behind the regional level. The universal health service coverage index increased from 37 in 2000 to 65 (on a scale of 0 to 100; 100 is best) in 2021. Significant challenges persist in ensuring equitable access to quality and affordable healthcare services, especially in rural areas.

The country’s health out-of-pocket expenditure also fell while spending on health per capita is rising. These factors have been supported by increasing government health expenditure, peaking at 7.9% of GDP in 2021. Thus, Bolivia has, by far, reached the World Health Organization’s minimum threshold of 4% of GDP (see more details in Figure 13).

Figure 13: Current health expenditure per capita (current US\$) and out-of-pocket expenditure (% of current health expenditure) trends in Bolivia and Latina America and the Caribbean (LAC), 2010-2020



Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators

Despite the progress towards universal social protection, Bolivia still faces massive challenges integrating the overwhelming informal economy and social inequality. Some of the main issues concern weak linkages and coordination that create hurdles; fiscal space needs to be extended via the tax system’s progressivity, and accelerating efforts to formalise the labour market.

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DATA

Table 3: Bolivia's key economic data, projections, 2019-2025

Values	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
GDP (current, US\$)	41.2bn	36.9bn	40.7bn	44.3bn	46.8bn	49.7bn	52.7bn
GDP per capita (PPP, US\$)	8,757	7,882	8,243	8,415	8,447	8,487	8,554
Total investment (% of GDP)	20%	16%	17%	15%	15%	14%	14%
Gross national savings (% of GDP)	14%	13%	14%	13%	10%	9.6%	10%
General government expenditure (% of GDP)	36%	38%	34%	36%	33%	33%	32%
Government gross debt (% of GDP)	59%	78%	81%	80%	81%	81%	82%

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2023.

Table 4: Bolivia's Climate Governance

Climate Governance
Laws and Regulations
The Political Constitution of 2009.
Law No. 777 Integrated National Planning System of 2016.
Law No. 071 on the Rights of Mother Earth of 2010.
Law No. 300 Framework of Mother Earth and Integrated Development for Living Well of 2012.
Policies and Strategies
Plurinational Climate Change Policy and Plan (2016, updated in 2023).
National Economic and Social Development Plan 2021-2025.
Patriotic Agenda 2025 (2016).
Nationally Determined Contribution (2021-2030)
Institutions
Plurinational Authority of Mother Earth (APMT).
Ministry of Development Planning (MPD).
Ministry of Environment and Water (MMAyA).
Ministry of Rural Development and Land (MDRyT).
Ministry of Hydrocarbons and Energy (MHE).
Vice Presidency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Source: Ministry of Environment and Water & Plurinational Authority of Mother Earth, Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, NDCs update for the 2021-2030 period within the framework of the Paris Agreement, 2022.

Table 5: Central employment and labour legal framework in Bolivia

Legislation
1. Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2009.
2. General Labour Act, 1939.
3. Decree enacting the Regulation of the General Labour Act, 1943.
4. Supreme Decree No. 107, 2009.
5. Supreme Decree, 2016 (No.2750).
6. Supreme Decree 28699, 2006.
7. Decreto Ley N° 16187 de 16 de febrero de 1979.
8. Supreme Decree, 2012 (No. 1212).
9. General Law on Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare, 1979.
10. Supreme Decree on Organizational Structure of the Executive, 2009 (No. 29894).
11. Ministerial Resolution on Labour inspection, 1987 (340/87).
12. Social Security Code, 1956.
13. Law on Pensions, 2010.
14. Comprehensive Law to Guarantee Women a Life Free of Violence, 2013 (No. 348).
15. Law against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination, 2010 (No. 45).
16. Penal Code, 1972.
17. Child and Adolescent Code, 2014.
18. Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez Education Law, 2010.
19. Benefits of Integral Health Services Law, 2013 (No. 475)
20. Decree Law No. 13214 of 1975.
21. Supreme Decree that creates an incentive- bonus mother-child for a safe motherhood, 2009 (No. 0066).

Source: WageIndicator.org, Decent Work Check 2023: Bolivia.

Table 6: Central legal reservations concerning the rights to organise, collective bargaining, and strikes in Bolivia

Right to organize
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour legislation sets out extensive registration procedures that could amount to a requirement of prior authorisation by the Government for the establishment of a trade union. • To form an industrial union, only 21 workers are needed, and 50% of the workers' support is needed to establish it as the only union at the company level. • Members of trade union executive boards must be Bolivian by birth and must be regular employees of the same company as the workers they represent. • Administrative authorities' power to unilaterally dissolve, suspend or de-register trade union organisations. • The General Labour Law provides for labour inspectors to attend union meetings and monitor union activities. • The General Labour Law denies public servants the right to organise, except for health, education and oil industry workers. • Some categories of agricultural workers are denied the right to organise, as they are excluded from the scope of labour legislation.
Right to collective bargaining
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector workers not employed in the administration of the State (Art. 104 of the General Labour Law) and agricultural workers are amongst those who are still denied the right to bargain collectively.
Right to strike
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order for a strike to be legal it must be supported by three quarters of the workers. • General strikes and solidarity strikes are totally prohibited. • Compulsory arbitration may be imposed in order to put an end to a strike or a collective dispute in sectors that are not considered essential by the ILO. • Where a strike is declared illegal, those who took part in it may be sentenced to prison terms of one to five years, with forced labour as an additional punishment. • Strikes in public services, including banks (Art. 1c of Supreme Decree no.1958 of 1950) and public markets, are banned by law. • The Health Emergency Law of 2021 prohibits strikes and protests by health sector workers. This law was approved without having been agreed with the workers.

Source: International Trade Union Confederation, *Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, Bolivia: Legal*, April 2024.

Table 7: Ratified ILO Conventions in Bolivia

Subject and/or right	Convention	Ratification date
Fundamental Conventions		
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948	1965
	C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949	1973
Elimination of all forms of forced labour	C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930	2005
	C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957	1990
Effective abolition of child labour	C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973	1997
	C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999	2003
Elimination of discrimination in employment	C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951	1973
	C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958	1977
Occupational safety and health	C155 - Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981	Not ratified
	C187 - Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006	Not ratified
Governance Conventions		
Labour inspection	C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947	1973
	C129 - Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969	1977
Employment policy	C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964	1977
Tripartism	C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976	Not ratified
Technical Conventions (Up-to-date)		
Working time	C014 - Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14)	1954
	C106 - Weekly Rest (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1957	1973
Elimination of child labour and protection of children and young persons	C077 - Medical Examination of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1946	1973
	C078 - Medical Examination of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946	1973
	C124 - Medical Examination of Young Persons (Underground Work) Convention, 1965	1977
Wages	C095 - Protection of Wages Convention, 1949	1977
	C131 - Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970	1977
Social security	C102 - Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952	1977
	C118 - Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962	1977
	C121 - Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964	1977
	C128 - Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits Convention, 1967	1977
	C130 - Medical Care and Sickness Benefits Convention, 1969	1977
Occupational Safety and Health	C120 - Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1964	1977
	C162 - Asbestos Convention, 1986	1990
	C167 - Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988	2015
Equality of opportunity and treatment	C156 - Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981	1998
Employment policy and promotion	C159 - Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983	1996
Labour administration and inspection	C160 - Labour Statistics Convention, 1985	1990
Indigenous and tribal peoples	C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989	1991
Specific categories of workers	C189 - Domestic Workers Convention, 2011	2013

Note: Fundamental Conventions are the eight most important ILO conventions that cover four fundamental principles and rights at work. Governance Conventions are four conventions that the ILO has designated as important to building national institutions and capacities that serve to promote employment. There are also 73 Technical Conventions, which ILO considers "up-to-date" and actively promoted.

Source: International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, Country Profiles, Bolivia.

Table 8: Labour market efficiency in Bolivia, 2019

Indicator	Rank
Total	135
Redundancy costs (weeks of salary) **	139
Hiring and firing practices *	140
Cooperation in labour-employer relations *	134
Flexibility of wage determination *	129
Active labour market policies *	131
Workers' rights *	63
Ease of hiring foreign labour *	106
Internal labour mobility *	8
Reliance on professional management *	125
Pay and productivity *	133
Ratio of wage and salaried female workers to male workers **	82
Labour tax rate **	85

* Survey data. ** Ranked by per cent.

Note: Rank from 1 to 141 (1 is highest).

Source: The Global Competitiveness Report, 2019, 8th pillar: Labour market efficiency.

Table 9: Ease of Doing Business in Bolivia, 2020

Topics	Ranking
Overall	150
Starting a Business	175
Dealing with Construction Permits	139
Getting Electricity	96
Registering Property	148
Getting Credit	144
Protecting Minority Investors	136
Paying Taxes	186
Trading Across Borders	100
Enforcing Contracts	109
Resolving Insolvency	103

Note: Doing Business 2020 indicators are ranking from 1 (top) to 190 (bottom) among other countries. The rankings tell much about the business environment, but do not measure all aspects of the business surroundings that matter to firms and investors that affect the competitiveness of the economy. Still, a high ranking does mean that the government has created a regulatory environment conducive to operating a business.

Source: World Bank & IFC, Ease of Doing Business 2020 in Bolivia.

Table 10: Bolivia's key workforce data, 2022

Indicator	Value
Working Age Population	8,490,400
Employment rate	75%
Unemployment rate	2.8%
Outside labour force	22%
Employed share	
Urban	33%
Rural	67%
Public	7.7%
Private	92%
Employed by aggregated sector share	
Agriculture	27%
Industry	21%
Service	52%

Source: Bolivian 2022 Labour Force Survey.

Table 11: Bolivia - Scores for Women, Business and the Law, 2022

Mobility	Workplace	Pay	Marriage	Parenthood	Entrepreneurship	Assets	Pension	Index score
100	75	100	100	60	100	100	75	89

Note: Overall scores are calculated by taking the average of each indicator, with 100 representing the highest possible score.

Source: The World Bank, Bolivia: Women, Business and the Law 2022.

Table 12: Proportion of population covered by social protection systems and health in Bolivia and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), %, latest year

Indicator	Bolivia	LAC **
Population covered by at least one social protection benefit	60% *	56%
Persons above retirement age receiving a pension	100% *	75%
Persons with severe disabilities collecting disability social protection benefits	10% **	58%
Unemployed receiving unemployment benefits	0% ***	13%
Mothers with newborns receiving maternity benefits	59% **	41%
Employed covered in the event of work injury	25% **	42%
Children/households receiving child/family cash benefits	64% *	56%
Poor persons covered by social protection systems	56% **	-
Vulnerable persons covered by social assistance	36% *	36%
SGD 3.8.1: Universal health coverage, % of population	65% *	-

* Data from 2021. ** Data from 2020. *** Data from 2022.

Source: International Labour Organisation, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM); World Health Organization, Coverage of essential health services (SDG 3.8.1) (%).

REFERENCES

- ¹ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Revenue Statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean 2024 – Bolivia, May 2024.
- ² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Bolivia: Climate change communication and education, March 2024.
- ³ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Agricultural Sector Expected to Be Worst Affected by Climate Change in Bolivia, August 6, 2014.
- ⁴ Climate Investment Funds, Supporting Just Transitions to a Sustainable Water Sector in Bolivia, 2023.
- ⁵ OXFAM, Bolivia: Climate change, inequality and resilience.
- ⁶ U.S. Department of State, 2023 Investment Climate Statements: Bolivia, 2023.
- ⁷ U.S. Department of State, 2023 Investment Climate Statements: Bolivia, 2022.
- ⁸ World Trade Organization, Trade Policy Review Body, 2017.
- ⁹ ILO database on export processing zones (revised), 2007.
- ¹⁰ Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores/as de las Américas & International Trade Union Confederation, Country Information Fact Sheet: Bolivia.
- ¹¹ Biz Latin Hub, Overview: what are Bolivia's labor laws, 2023.
- ¹² International Trade Union Confederation, Survey of violations of trade union rights, Bolivia, April 2024.
- ¹³ ILO, Reversing Pension Privatization in Bolivia, ESS – Working Paper No. 65, 2018.
- ¹⁴ European Commission, Targeted Surveys on application of core labour standards: Bolivia, August 31, 2019.
- ¹⁵ European Commission, Joint Staff Working Document: The EU Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance (GSP+) assessment of the Plurinational State of Bolivia covering the period 2020-2022, Brussels, November 21, 2023.
- ¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bolivia, 2022.
- ¹⁷ International Labour Organization, Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) - Bolivia, NORMLEX, Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2023, published 112nd ILC session, 2024.
- ¹⁸ International Labour Organization, Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) – Bolivia, NORMLEX, Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2023, published 112nd ILC session, 2024.
- ¹⁹ Andean Community, Cartagena Agreement
- ²⁰ MERCOSUR, MERCOSUR Countries, April 2024.
- ²¹ Mauro Pucheta & Atahualpa Blanchet, The Mercosur Socio-Labour Declaration and the importance of judicial activism, Rev. secr. Trib. perm. revis. 2023, Año 12, N° 21, e537. 2024.
- ²² Congressional Research Service, Generalized System of Preferences (GSP): Overview and Issues for Congress, Updated November 22, 2023.
- ²³ European Commission, Joint Staff Working Document: The EU Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance (GSP+) assessment of the Plurinational State of Bolivia covering the period 2020-2022, Brussels, November 21, 2023.
- ²⁴ Wikipedia, Bolivian Workers' Center, May 2024.
- ²⁵ International Labour Organisation, Trade Unions in the Balance, ILO ACTRAV Working Paper, 2019.
- ²⁶ The World Bank, World Development Indicators, Employers, total (% of total employment) (modeled ILO estimate).
- ²⁷ World Economic Forum, Global Risks Report 2023, Global Risks Perception Survey 2022-2023.
- ²⁸ European Commission, Joint Staff Working Document: The EU Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance (GSP+) assessment of the Plurinational State of Bolivia covering the period 2020-2022, Brussels, November 21, 2023.
- ²⁹ European Commission, Targeted Surveys on application of core labour standards: Bolivia, August 31, 2019.
- ³⁰ IZA World of Labor & Carlos Lamarche, Collective bargaining in developing countries, 2015.

³¹ International Labour Organization, Access to labour justice: Judicial institutions and procedures in selected South American countries - Overview of procedural elements for access to labour justice in judicial dispute resolution institutions, 2021.

³² U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bolivia, 2022.

³³ Susan Helen Ellison, Domesticating democracy: the politics of conflict resolution in Bolivia, Duke University Press, 2018.

³⁴ International Trade Union Confederation, Survey of violations of Trade Union Rights, Bolivia: In practice, July 2024.

³⁵ U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bolivia, 2022.

³⁶ Minderoo Foundation, The Global Slavery Index 2023.

³⁷ World Bank, Gender Gaps in Bolivia: An overview, 2018.

³⁸ International Labour Organization, Press Release, ILO calls for strengthening labour inspection worldwide, November 16, 2006.

³⁹ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ageing in Latin America and the Caribbean: inclusion and rights of older persons (LC/CRE.5/3), Santiago, 2022.

⁴⁰ Latin Finance, IDB subsidizes small business loans in Bolivia, July 24, 2020.

⁴¹ The World Bank, DataBank, Coverage of unemployment benefits and ALMP (% of population), April 2024.

⁴² Inter-American Development Bank, Unemployment in Bolivia: Risks and Labor Market Policies, December 2011.

⁴³ Dirección General de Migración - Departamento de Registros y Sistemas, Leyes Relacionadas al Ámbito Migratorio, April 2024.

⁴⁴ Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Censo de Población y Vivienda 2012 – Bolivia, Características de la Población, February 2015.

⁴⁵ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Bolivia, April 2024.

⁴⁶ United Nations Development Programme, La Paz and El Alto on their way to integrated urban development, October 18, 2021.

⁴⁷ The World Bank, Urbanization Trends in Bolivia: Opportunities and Challenges, Direction in urban development, May 2015.

⁴⁸ Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Censo de Población y Vivienda 2012 – Bolivia, Características de la Población, February 2015.

⁴⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Bolivia: Fact Sheet, April 2023.

⁵⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Statistical Online Population Database.

⁵¹ Instituto Nacional de Estadística, National statistical data from Household Surveys and Continuous Employment Surveys; International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT.

⁵² U.S. Department of Labour, Child Labour and Forced Labour Reports, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2022.

⁵³ Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Encuesta de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes que realizan una actividad laboral o trabajan (2016 y 2019), Estadísticas Sociales, Empleo, April 2024.

⁵⁴ International Labour Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, Child Labour Global Estimates 2020, Trends and The Road Forward, 2021.

⁵⁵ The Guardian, Bolivia's child workers unite to end exploitation, November 27, 2012.

⁵⁶ World Bank Group, Women, Business, and the Law 2022: Bolivia.

⁵⁷ World Bank, Bolivia: Challenges and Constraints to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, 2015.

⁵⁸ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and The World Bank, Bolivia: Challenges and Constraints to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, 2015.

⁵⁹ U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bolivia, 2019.

⁶⁰ Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, Bolivia - Country profile, 2020.

⁶¹ International Labour Organization, Working-age population by sex and age (thousands) – Annual, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), April 2024.

⁶² United Nations, Youth Delegates Demand Greater Inclusion in Discussions about Digital Policies, Innovation, Protocols, as Commission on Status of Women Continues Session, Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, March 13, 2023.

⁶³ Commonwealth Secretariat, Global Youth Development Index – Update Report, 2023.

⁶⁴ International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT: Share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) by sex and disability status.

⁶⁵ Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Encuesta de Hogares, Educación, April 2024.

⁶⁶ World Bank Group, The Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Latin America: Long-Run Implications for Poverty and Inequality, Policy Research Working Paper 10259, 2022.

⁶⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Education-occupation mismatch in the context of informality and development, Working Paper, No. 346, 2021.

⁶⁸ M. Hanni, “Financing of education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Latin America and the Caribbean”, Macroeconomics of Development series, No. 200 (LC/TS.2019/29/Rev.1), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2019.

⁶⁹ The World Bank, Education Statistics, Vocational and technical enrolment (% of total secondary enrolment), April 2024.

⁷⁰ NUFFIC, Lessons learned on improving the quality and relevance of vocational training through ICT, October 31, 2013.

⁷¹ Cracow Pedagogical University, ICT in education: the situation of Bolivia, February 2020.

⁷² The International Trade Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bolivia - Country Commercial Guide, August 2, 2022.

⁷³ International Labour Office, World Social Protection Report 2020–22: Regional companion report for Latin America and the Caribbean, Geneva: ILO, 2021.

⁷⁴ PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited, Bolivia: Individual - Other taxes, Worldwide Tax Summaries, April 2024.

⁷⁵ ILO, Reversing Pension Privatization in Bolivia, ESS – Extension of Social Security, ESS – Working Paper No. 65, 2018.

⁷⁶ NACLA, Bolivia: New Pension Law Lowers Retirement Age, Raises Expectations.

⁷⁷ Rafael Novella & Horacio Valencia, Active Labor Market Policies in a Context of High Informality: The Effect of PAE in Bolivia, The Journal of Development Studies, Volume 58, 2022 - Issue 12, September 12, 2022

⁷⁸ International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT, SDG indicator 1.3.1 - Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems (%) | Annual, Bolivia.