

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)

The Bolivia's ICT industry has been slow to flourish, with the services' uptake at a moderate rate when compared with the regional and global levels. The operator Entel was privatized in 1995, only to be renationalized in 2007. Since then, it is a state-owned company.

Mobile services: The predominance of mobile over fixed services is evident in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, with mobile phones accounting for more than ten times the amount of fixed lines. There are three mobile operators in the country: Entel, Telecel and NuevaTel. In 2015, Entel's market share represented more than 40 per cent of the mobile subscriptions, with the other two companies sharing the rest of the market. All companies offer mobile-broadband services and have had increasing success, especially given the poor quality and lack of availability of fixed broadband. During the last eleven years, more than 11000 radio base stations have been deployed allowing 3G and LTE technologies to sharply increase their coverage. Moreover, the three mobile network operators have recently made efforts in LTE technology roll-out, amounting to close to US\$ 500 million for 2015.¹⁰⁰ In 2017, the Government will implement mobile number portability, which aims at increasing the dynamics and competition in the mobile market.¹⁰¹

Fixed services: The Plurinational State of Bolivia's fixed-telephone penetration levels have remained stable over recent years, despite being at a much lower level than those of its neighbouring countries. The Bolivian local fixed services are supplied by multiple telecom cooperatives that are controlled by their users. In many cases, those cooperatives also offer broadband services. The non-profit character of such cooperatives could also explain the low uptake in the fixed services, as there are few competitive related incentives to improve the service quality. Entel offers long distance services as well as DSL. Entel's broadband prices are influenced by the fact that the Plurinational State of Bolivia is a landlocked country with no direct access to submarine cable networks. Nevertheless, the country has made remarkable progress in terms of fixed infrastructure. In 2013, there were 3500 km of optical fibre and only three International Internet links; today, there are 18000 km of optical fibre

Key indicators for Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (2017)	The Americas	World	
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	7.7	23.9	13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	99.2	111.8	103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	76.5	89.5	61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	81.8	93.9	87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	81.8	84.3	76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	43.8	67.5	48.6
Households with a computer (%)	36.3	64.8	47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	32.2	68.3	54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	39.2	77.1	76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	3.2	19.9	13.6
Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution			
<i>-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s</i>	59.2	6.6	4.2
<i>-2 to 10 Mbit/s</i>	23.6	23.1	13.2
<i>-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s</i>	17.2	70.3	82.6

Note: Data in italics are ITU estimates. Source: ITU (as of June 2018).

and nine international links to the Internet with a bandwidth of 200 Gbit/s.

Government policy: The body responsible for regulating the Plurinational State of Bolivia's telecommunication sector, *Autoridad de Regulación y Fiscalización de Telecomunicaciones y Transportes* (ATT), was created in 2009. The regulator recognizes the importance of telecommunications for national social and economic development, further stating that, by itself, the sector contributed to 6 per cent of the country's GDP. The Plurinational State of Bolivia's Central Bank announced in 2015 that mobile money transactions grew by more than 900 per cent in volume compared with the previous year, one more example of the strong presence of the mobile segment in the country.¹⁰² Mobile operators have also joined forces with GSMA and ATT within the scope of "We Care Bolivia", a campaign committed to leveraging mobile communications to increase online safety and data protection.¹⁰³ In recent years, the Government has implemented policies on digital signature, broadband planning, free software development, digital terrestrial television and electronic government, among others.

Conclusion: The Bolivia's mobile services uptake has great potential, as the penetration rates continue to grow. Government incentives along with operators' investment and strategic partnerships, such as the one for "We Care Bolivia", have been paramount to the industry's growth.