AFCLC

EXPEDITIONARY CULTURE

# FIELD GUIDE

## Argentina

U.S. AIR FORCE

# About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success.

The guide consists of two parts:

Part 1 "Culture General" provides the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment with a focus on the Southern Cone.

Part 2 "Culture Specific" describes unique cultural features of Argentine society. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location. This section is designed to complement other pre-deployment training.

For further information, contact the AFCLC Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil or visit the AFCLC website at https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/.

# PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

## What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value—freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic, because it represents the premium Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity.

## Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones, where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local nationals to

focus on developing stable political, social, and economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

### Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize behaviors and systems into categories – what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains" – in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains – which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems and others (see chart on next page) – as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the way a culture defines family and kinship, a US military member operating overseas can more effectively interact with members of that culture.

### Social Behaviors across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival, although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more complex market economies, producing foodstuffs for universal consumption.

Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

### Worldview

One of our most basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different based on our cultural standards. As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Usually, we assume that those in the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.


This collective perspective forms our worldview—how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your

worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.

**Cultural Belief System**

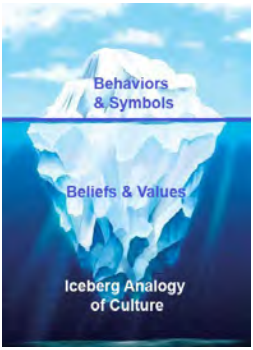
An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system assigns meaning, sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central aspect of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed.

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have helped shape our characters.

Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.

## Core Beliefs

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).




In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success.

As you travel through the Southern Cone, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common across the region. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

# CULTURAL DOMAINS

## 1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable, or which occurred prior to written language.

15The Southern Cone includes four countries on the South American continent: Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Scientists believe that early humans entered the region around 13,000 years ago. Between 5,000-2,500 years ago, they developed agriculture, and over time, some groups remained nomadic hunter-gatherers, while others settled in communities. By the 15th century, the population comprised a variety of ethnolinguistic groups, with some territories in northern Chile and Argentina controlled by the powerful Inca Empire from its center in present-day Peru.

In the 16th century, Spaniards conquered much of the Americas, seeking wealth, enhanced social status, and the spread of Catholicism. Columbus touched on the Venezuelan coast in 1498, while other explorers landed on Colombia's Caribbean coast in 1499, then conquered Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia by 1541. Meanwhile, Spanish and Portuguese explorers were sailing along the Southern Cone's Atlantic coastline. In 1536, Spaniards founded Buenos Aires (present-day capital of Argentina) and Asunción (present day capital of Paraguay) a year later. Moving overland from Peru, other Spanish conquerors founded Santiago (Chile's modern-day capital) in 1541. By contrast, Uruguay saw little Spanish settlement until the early 17th century, then the founding of Montevideo (its present-day capital) in 1726 as a counter to the Portuguese

presence in neighboring Brazil. The Spaniards introduced horses, cattle, and sheep, establishing ***estancias*** (large ranches) that relied on forced indigenous labor or enslaved Africans (primarily in Uruguay) and later, ***gauchos*** (hired ranch hands, often European immigrants). Over the years, the region's indigenous populations reduced due to conflict, disease, famine, and their exploitation in forced labor systems. In Paraguay, the Catholic Church forcibly resettled indigenous people in order to convert them. Some indigenous communities violently resisted the Europeans for centuries.

In the early 19th century, some local leaders began to seek autonomy from the Spanish Crown. Following several years of armed struggle, Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay achieved independence by 1818. Meanwhile, Uruguay, though claimed by Argentina, was annexed by Brazil in 1821, leading to war. After international mediation, the independent state of Uruguay was created as a buffer between Brazil and Argentina in 1828.

Border disputes and economic competition spurred conflicts across South America in subsequent decades. Chile invaded neighboring Bolivia and Peru in 1836, and Paraguay's violent confrontations with Brazil and Argentina in 1858 subsided only after the appearance of US and British navies. The devastating 1864-70 War of the Triple Alliance pitted Paraguay against Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay and resulted in the deaths of two-thirds of Paraguay's male residents and the loss of one-quarter of its territory. In 1883, Chile gained new territories when it won the War of the Pacific against Peru and Bolivia.

Meanwhile, indigenous resistance in Argentina and Chile had continued. To open additional territory for European immigrants, those governments launched campaigns against the indigenous rebels in the late 19th century, killing or displacing thousands from their traditional lands. In the 1930s, Paraguay prevailed in the Chaco War against Bolivia, gaining disputed territory but causing significant losses to both sides.

Beginning in the mid-20th century, a wave of authoritarian leaders seized power. Prominent dictators included Juan Perón in Argentina (1946-55 and 1973-74), Gen Augusto Pinochet in Chile (1973-90), and Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay (1954-89).

Such regimes typically imposed censorship, banned trade unions, dissolved national legislatures, and outlawed political activities, though they often received the support of the US due to their anti-communist stances. These regimes also frequently detained, tortured, and murdered tens of thousands of their own people. In the 1970s, the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and military regimes in Argentina and Uruguay perpetuated numerous human rights abuses, with the plight of the "disappeared" victims receiving worldwide attention.

In the 1980s, democracy and civilian rule returned to the Southern Cone. In recent decades, Argentina and Paraguay have experienced political volatility and serious economic challenges. Although a stable democracy, Chile struggles to respond to ongoing social unrest prompted by wealth inequalities. Considered one of the world's strongest democracies today, Uruguay has the region's lowest levels of corruption, poverty, and inequality.

## 2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all of the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. The Spanish conquest and colonial rule changed society in the Southern Cone considerably. Further, the decimation of the indigenous population, import of enslaved Africans, and arrival of European immigrants in the 19th-20th centuries permanently altered the region's ethnic and racial makeup.

Today, the residents of the Southern Cone are mostly of European or mixed European and indigenous ancestry, with most Argentines, Uruguayans, and Chileans identifying with

their European roots. By contrast, Paraguayans are proud of their mixed Spanish and indigenous Guaraní heritage, viewing it as the fundamental aspect of Paraguayan national identity. Some 2.4% of Argentines and Uruguayans and 2% of Paraguayans identify solely as indigenous, compared to 13% of Chileans. Almost 5% of Uruguayans claim a Black identity, and a small number of Chileans and Argentines also have African ancestry. Generally, indigenous and Black residents across the region tend to be poorer, less educated, and face discrimination. Indigenous communities also struggle to attain rights to their traditional lands.

All the Southern Cone countries today are presidential republics. Since the 1983 return of democracy, most Argentine Presidents have been adherents of Peronism – the populist and nationalist policies espoused by former President Perón. Taking office in 2023, President Javier Gerardo Milei is taking a different approach and describes himself as an “anarcho-capitalist” seeking to reduce bureaucracy in the Argentine government.

Between 2006 and 2022, the Chilean Presidency had alternated between socialist Michelle Bachelet and conservative Sebastián Piñera. Although representing opposite ends of the political spectrum, they both faced large-scale public unrest. Since 2022, Gabriel Boric Font, Chile’s youngest President and a progressive, has focused his term on constitutional reforms.

Except for the period 2008-13, the conservative Colorado Party (ANR) has dominated politics in Paraguay since 1947. Taking office in 2023, Santiago Peña Palacios actually started his pollical life as a member of the Liberal Party but switched parties in 2017 and was elected representing the Colorado Party.

Since the 1985 return of democracy in Uruguay, parties and coalitions from across the political spectrum have held the Presidency. After 15 years of rule by a center-left coalition, the conservatives returned to power with the 2019 victory of Luis Lacalle Pou. Then, in a close vote in 2024, Uruguay elected

Yamandú Ramón Antonio Orsi Martínez of the left-leaning Broad Front party as President.

Relationships in the region are occasionally tense due to territorial disputes, illegal activities in porous border regions, and the influx of illegal migrants, most recently from Venezuela. In 1982, Argentina invaded and briefly held the United Kingdom (UK)-administered Falkland Islands. Today, Argentina continues to claim these and other UK-held territories in the South Atlantic, occasionally leading to tense relations.

## 3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society.

The Spanish conquerors introduced Christianity beginning in the early 16th century. As Roman Catholicism spread, the Catholic Church became entrenched in colonial life. Today, the Catholic Church remains an important part of many communities, a significant provider of social services, and an influential organization with sometimes strong political and social influence.

Roman Catholicism remains the dominant religion in the region, with around 80% of Paraguayans, 63% of Argentines, 42% of Chileans and Uruguayan identifying as Catholic. At least 14% of Argentines, Chileans, and Uruguayans and around 7% of Paraguayans are Protestant Christians. Secularism is growing in the region, with some 24% of Uruguayans, 37% of Chileans and 12% of Argentines reporting no religious affiliation in recent surveys.

Other faiths with a presence in the region include Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,

Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith. Argentina has the region's largest Jewish (some 220,000) and Muslim (up to 1 million) populations.

None of the Southern Cone countries names an official religion, though the Argentine constitution grants a preferential legal status to the Roman Catholic Church.

## 4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin").

Family life and relationships are fundamental elements of Southern Cone societies. Regional inhabitants tend to maintain strong connections with family members, supporting them emotionally and financially, while providing physical care for elderly or ailing kin if needed. Residence patterns differ somewhat across the region, though multiple generations often reside together in one household or live in close proximity.

While close family ties mean relatives have some influence over children's choice of spouses, both genders generally choose their own partners. Both Spanish traditions and Roman Catholic teachings strongly value marriage as an institution and discourage divorce. Nevertheless, divorce rates have risen in recent years, as women have gained social and economic independence.

Most residents live in urban areas, notably over 96% of Uruguayans and around 93% of Argentines and 88% of Chileans. By contrast, less than two-thirds of Paraguayans are urban dwellers. Urbanization has changed life in many areas. As both men and women take advantage of the enhanced educational and employment opportunities available in urban areas, family structures have become more diverse.

While many upper income residents in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Santiago inhabit luxurious high-rise apartments, many cities lack affordable housing. As a result, some residents occupy crowded sub-standard housing in make-shift communities on urban peripheries.

## 5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles.

The cultures of the Southern Cone traditionally privilege the male's role as provider and leader. ***Machismo***, or masculine behavior and pride, is an important element of male identity in many areas, while women traditionally occupy subordinate domestic roles. Women have acquired equal rights under the law, though social, economic, and political inequalities between the genders remain.

Despite most countries' progressive gender equality laws and policies, women face continued challenges to their participation in the workforce. In much of the region, women still assume the traditional roles of wives and mothers, oftentimes having to balance both domestic duties and employment in the workforce. Moreover, women often face gender discrimination in hiring and promotion processes. Female workforce participation rates range from a high of 60% in Paraguay to around 51% in Argentina.

Women have a long history of serving in public office in the Southern Cone. When Isabel Martínez de Perón assumed the Argentine Presidency following her husband's 1974 death, she became the world's first female President. Since then, both Argentina and Chile have had female heads of state. Generally, Argentina has the largest female participation in politics, ranking 17th in the world in 2022, when women held over 44% of seats

in the national legislature. Paraguay tends to have the lowest rates, with women holding some 15% of such seats in the 2023 legislative elections.

Fertility rates have fallen significantly in recent decades, with Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay averaging fewer than 2 children per woman and Argentina around 2.2. The decrease has been starkest in Paraguay, with the rate declining from 6.5 to 2.3 children per woman between 1960-2023. Since 2012 and 2020, abortion is legal in Uruguay and Argentina, respectively. In Chile and Paraguay, the procedure is illegal except in a few circumstances.

In 2010, Argentina became the first Latin American country to legalize same-sex marriage. Uruguay followed in 2012 and Chile in 2022. Uruguay permits homosexual individuals to serve openly in the military and grants protections to them. Same-sex marriage remains illegal in Paraguay.

## 6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally.

As a result of the Spanish conquest and colonialism, Spanish is an official language in every Southern Cone country and is the region's most widely spoken language. However, Paraguay's constitution also names Guaraní, an indigenous language, as an official one alongside Spanish. Over 90% of Paraguayans speak Guaraní, though most also speak Spanish. As of 2021, Chilean law outlines protections for nine indigenous languages yet grants them no official recognition. Chileans are hopeful these languages will receive official recognition in Chile's new constitution.

Some Argentines and Uruguayans speak a Spanish variety having an accent and vocabulary resembling those of certain

Italian dialects. Along the Uruguay-Brazil border, some residents speak a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish.

## 7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.

While education has improved across the region in recent years, quality and completion vary. Chile and Uruguay performed highest in the most recent international assessments, though they, like all the Southern Cone countries, show large gaps between high- and low-achieving students.

Access to education has increased significantly in recent decades, especially at pre-primary and secondary levels. Generally, children from poor and rural backgrounds are less likely to attend school and more likely to receive a lower-quality education. Argentina and Chile lead the region in secondary enrollment rates. By contrast, Paraguay lags in enrollment at all levels, from pre-primary to secondary. Uruguay has the region's highest repetition rates at the lower secondary level.

Literacy rates reflect the region's varied education landscape, ranging from 95% in Paraguay to 97% in Chile and nearly universal in Argentina and Uruguay. Public investment in education also varies, usually lowest in Paraguay.

## 8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In most Western cultures, people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. While the pace of life

in the Southern Cone is somewhat faster than in many other parts of Latin America, establishing and maintaining relationships often take precedence over meeting deadlines, punctuality, or accomplishing a task in the most efficient manner. The workday runs on a schedule similar to the US, though some businesses and shops may close for mid-day break of around 2 hours, extending their hours into the evening.

The rhythm of daily life typically changes during national holidays, many reflecting Christian traditions and historical events. Communities throughout the region celebrate Carnival, an annual celebration prior to Christian Lent. Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay celebrate their independence from Spain and Uruguay from Brazil.

Concepts of personal space sometimes differ from those in the US. During conversations, regional residents often stand closer than most Americans. Men and women may interact differently than Americans are used to. For example, men shake hands both in greeting and parting, while some women may greet each other with a kiss on the cheek.

## 9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and style. Most of the Southern Cone's art, architecture, dance, music, and theater reflect the region's Roman Catholic heritage and European and indigenous influences. Some traditional art and folklore centers on the South American cowboy, the *gaucho* in Argentina and Uruguay and ***huaso*** (countryman) in Chile.

Dance and music infuse daily life in the Southern Cone and influence and reflect styles from across the Caribbean and Latin America. Andean styles featuring indigenous instruments like panpipes are common in some northern regions. Other styles more clearly demonstrate European influence, such as the polkas and waltzes common throughout the region and the

***tango***, a music and dance style that emerged in Buenos Aires in the late 19th century. One traditional Paraguayan dance requires performers to balance bottles on their heads.

By far, soccer is the most popular sport across the region. Uruguay notably hosted the inaugural World Cup in 1930, and all the Southern Cone countries have had significant international success, producing players of world renown. With its *gaucho* tradition and vast ***pampas*** (treeless plains), Argentina has also achieved international preeminence in polo. Some games and sports in Chile and Paraguay are of indigenous origin.

Traditional handicrafts such as weaving, ceramics, leatherwork, and woodcarving have been revived in recent years. Paraguay's most famous handicraft is ***ñandutí*** lace, reflecting 16th-century European and Guaraní techniques. With a rich literary tradition, the region has produced writers of international influence, notably Argentina's Jorge Luis Borges, Chile's Pablo Neruda and Isabel Allende, Paraguay's Augusto Roa Bastos, and Uruguay's Eduardo Galeano, among others.

## 10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

Cuisine varies across the region based on local products and tastes, though beef is universally popular. Argentina and Uruguay lead the world in beef consumption, typically more than twice the US per capita average. Along the coasts, residents consume seafood. In Paraguay and Chile, some dishes reflect indigenous traditions, such as the varied use of corn or maize.

Argentina and Chile are large wine producers with high domestic consumption. ***Maté***, an herbal beverage traditionally drunk from a gourd through a straw, is popular throughout the region.

Health in most of the region has improved in recent decades as evidenced by decreased infant mortality rates and longer life expectancies. Argentines, Chileans, and Uruguayans have access to healthcare that is subsidized by their governments, with high quality services and standards of care. Uruguay's healthcare system is especially advanced, with almost 62 physicians per 10,000 people, almost double the Paraguay rate of 32, and greater than the US rate of 36.

In Paraguay, few residents have health insurance, and clinics and hospitals are often ill-equipped and understaffed, particularly in rural areas. Further, Paraguay has high rates of malnutrition and low immunization rates, resulting in a notable number of preventable deaths. Noncommunicable diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and chronic respiratory disease cause at least 75% of deaths in all the Southern Cone countries, though Argentina and Paraguay also experience outbreaks of communicable diseases.

## 11. Economics and Resources

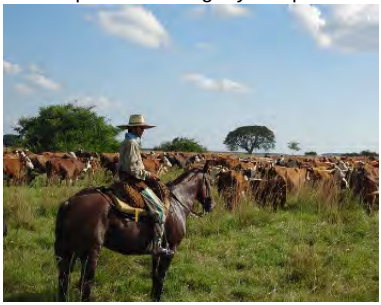
This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. It details how countries allocate their resources by sector, trade with other countries, give or receive aid, and pay for goods and services within their borders.

Under Spanish colonial control, regional economies focused predominantly on large agricultural estates. After 19th-century independence, Chile experienced a mining boom, and while most economies continue to rely on the export of agricultural products today, they have become more diversified. The

Southern Cone's largest economy is Argentina, followed by Chile, Uruguay, and then Paraguay.

The services sector comprises the largest part of GDP in all the countries, ranging from 63% in Uruguay to 48% in Paraguay, as of 2022. Tourism brings in significant income across the region, and Uruguay has emerged in recent decades as an important offshore banking center. Industry has seen significant growth in Paraguay, and mining continues to comprise about 14% of GDP in Chile in 2022.

Nevertheless, agriculture continues to provide most export products. For example, Argentina is one of Latin America's largest producers of grain, Paraguay is a world leader in soybean production, and livestock and associated products make up 40% of Uruguay's export income. Patagonia (a region comprising parts of Argentina and Chile) is home to about half the world's sheep, most sheared for their wool. Wheat and wine are other important agricultural products.



Paraguay tends to have the region's lowest standard of living and Uruguay the highest. Paraguay also has a large informal sector, with many residents laboring as small-scale subsistence farmers. Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay benefit from their membership in Mercosur, the Southern Common Market, a trading bloc that has signed free trade agreements with Chile, Japan, and the European Union, among others. Meanwhile, Chile has joined other international blocs, notably becoming the first South American member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2010.

As of late-2024, economic recovery is underway in the Southern Cone. While the region is still experiencing effects of the pandemic, experts expect economic growth to reach a moderate 2% in 2024.

## 12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. Roads form the primary infrastructure in the region, though quality tends to deteriorate in rural areas. Argentina has one of Latin America's largest rail systems, though services have reduced in recent decades. While Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay have large container ports for sea-going vessels, landlocked Paraguay relies on river ports for access to the Atlantic Ocean.

Argentina and Chile depend predominantly on fossil fuels, and Argentina also has three nuclear reactors generating about 5% of its energy. While all the Southern Cone countries rely on hydroelectric plants, Paraguay generates all its power from hydroelectricity and is one of the world's largest exporters of electricity. By contrast, Uruguay has become a world leader in solar and wind energy, generating some 46% of its energy from such sources in 2023.

Of the Southern Cone countries, Uruguay ranks highest in a 2024 worldwide press freedom ranking. In Chile and Paraguay, press freedoms are threatened by the concentration of media ownership in a few hands. Further, to prevent them from reporting on sensitive topics, journalists in Chile occasionally face harassment and those in Paraguay face threats and violence.

Telecommunications infrastructure is generally highly developed. Paraguay has the region's lowest rates of mobile phone users at 128 subscriptions per 100 people as of 2022, compared to more than 132 in the other countries. Internet use ranges from 77% of Paraguayans to 90% of Chileans and Uruguayans.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize Southern Cone society at large, we will focus on specific features of society in Argentina.

# PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

## 1. HISTORY AND MYTH

### Overview

Located in southern South America, Argentina became a poor and distant colony in Spain's global empire in the 16th century. After gaining independence in 1816, Argentina leveraged its vast natural resources and successive waves of European immigration to become a wealthy regional power, despite frequent political and economic instability. Although Argentina's democratic institutions have strengthened since its 1983 transition from military dictatorship, the country remains plagued by financial volatility.

### Early History

Archeological evidence indicates that humans first inhabited present-day Argentina around 10,000 years ago. Many of the region's indigenous Mapuche, Toba, Charrúa, Guaraní, and Querandí peoples, among others, were culturally diverse farmers and nomadic hunter-gatherers, who lived in dispersed and politically decentralized communities. Based in northwestern Argentina and Chile, the Diaguita people adopted customs and technology from the neighboring Inca Empire based in Peru, enabling them to establish more permanent settlements.

### Arrival of the Spanish

Spanish ***conquistadores*** (conquerors) made several attempts to settle in present-day Argentina in the early 16th century, lured by stories of indigenous wealth and a desire to halt Portuguese expansion from their colonies in present-day Brazil. However, a lack of resources and conflict with native groups led to repeated failures. In 1536, explorer Pedro de Mendoza led an expedition

that founded the city of Nuestra Señora del Buen Aire on the northeastern coast of the country. While the initial settlers soon abandoned the city after indigenous attacks, Spanish colonists based in Asunción, present-day Paraguay's capital, re-founded the city in 1580. Over subsequent centuries, residents simplified the name to Buenos Aires, Argentina's present-day capital.

From recently founded urban centers in northern Argentina, the largest of which were Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and San Miguel de Tucumán, Spanish settlers expanded southward. For nearly 300 years, the Spanish displaced indigenous groups through repeated violent confrontations (see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*). As in their various other colonies, Spanish settlers implemented the ***encomienda*** (forced labor) system, which decimated local indigenous communities by imposing harsh agricultural and livestock rearing tasks on them. Many indigenous Argentines also died from diseases contracted from the Spanish colonists.

### Colonial Period

Argentina was relatively distant from Spain's other colonies in South America and suffered from a lack of trade and European immigration during its early history, allowing it a degree of independence from the Spanish government based in Lima, present-day Peru's capital. Nevertheless, the local Europeans instituted a rigid class- and race-based system as in other Spanish colonies. At the top of the hierarchy were Spaniards, called ***peninsulares***, who wielded the most economic and political power and had significant social prestige. Next were the ***criollos*** (Spanish people born in the Americas), then the ***mestizos*** (people of mixed Spanish and indigenous descent). Although indigenous Argentines maintained autonomy in some areas, they were at the bottom of Argentina's early social hierarchy. Likewise, Buenos Aires was one of southern Latin America's largest slave ports. Wealthy Europeans brought some 70,000 enslaved Africans to work in large households and on ***estancias*** (farms).

As Spain's global influence began to decline in the 17th century, Buenos Aires, until then largely a contraband port, increasingly expanded its trade with Europe, experiencing a cultural blossoming and attracting scholars, merchants, and tradesmen. The Spanish Empire recognized this growth in 1776, when it reorganized its colonial holdings and formed the Viceroyalty of ***Río de la Plata*** (River of Silver, or "River Plate"), a new administrative state governed from Buenos Aires that comprised present-day Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and parts of Bolivia.

Even prior to the new Viceroyalty, ***gauchos*** (cowboys) herded livestock on Argentina's vast plains. For the next century, their distinctive style of dress (see p. 1 of *Aesthetics and Recreation*), famous ballads (see "Santos Vega" below), and independent lifestyle cemented the *gaucho*'s place in Argentina's folklore, where they remain an important national symbol today.

The Viceroyalty benefitted from its extensive Atlantic coastline, expanding its trade relationships, and attracting new immigrants. The new arrivals exposed Argentines to enlightenment ideals that championed democracy and self-governance, ideas that appealed to the *criollo* elites, who the *peninsulares* overlooked for powerful and lucrative government positions.

### The Struggle for Independence

Political changes in early 19th-century Europe affected Spain's colonies. In 1808, French Emperor Napoleon I removed Spanish King Ferdinand VII from the throne and appointed his own brother as King of Spain. Refusing to recognize this new king, on May 25, 1810, Argentine criollo members of a Buenos Aires ***cabildo*** (local council) proclaimed they would rule on behalf of the deposed Ferdinand VII. When the King returned to power in late 1813, he remained under French influence, and the *criollos* maintained their independence. Local militias, led in large part by José de San Martín and Manuel Belgrano, Argentine *criollos,* fought to expel the Spanish from northern Argentina during years of warfare.

After Spain's eventual defeat and retreat from much of current Argentina, a congress in San Miguel de Tucumán proclaimed the former Viceroyalty as a new country. The United Provinces of *Río de la Plata*, which represented the territories of the former Viceroyalty (without Paraguay, which had already declared independence in 1813), was founded on July 9, 1816, celebrated today as Argentina's Independence Day. However, the patriots did not fully expel the Spanish from Argentina for 2 more years.

### Political and Geographic Fragmentation

The United Provinces, sparsely populated and dominated by decentralized landowners, lacked political unity. San Martín left the newly independent country to help liberate neighboring Chile and Peru. Consequently, Argentina was ruled by local leaders who lacked the political will to fully incorporate the region. Soon, ***caudillos*** (warlords) ruled each of the new country's provinces largely independently, with successive governors of Buenos Aires Province using their wealth and military strength to ensure that their province remained the seat of power.

Other leaders seeking greater independence began to secede from the United Provinces. In 1824, communities in present-day Bolivia broke away. After Brazilian troops had settled in fertile land situated in present-day Uruguay, the United Provinces and a revolutionary group known as the Thirty-Three Orientals fought the Argentine-Brazilian War from 1825-28. The conflict halted most regional trade and ended in a stalemate that eventually led to Uruguay's independence. Troops returning from the campaign deposed the sitting Governor of Buenos Aires, and after failed attempts at drafting a constitution, wealthy landowner Juan Manuel de Rosas became Governor of Buenos Aires Province in 1829.

### The Argentine Confederation

Rosas became the most powerful governor in the Argentine Confederation, the loose collection of provinces that succeeded

the United Provinces. He provided a sense of political stability by promising to uphold the Confederation's decentralized governing structure and defend the region against indigenous incursions. However, Rosas quickly used his power to establish a cult of personality. The ***mazorca***, ("corncob," his secret police), violently upheld his rule within Buenos Aires, while the military enforced Rosas' will in the rest of the Confederation.

Foreign relations significantly impacted Rosas' administration. In 1833, British forces took possession of the Falkland Islands (also known as ***Islas Malvinas***, see p. 2 of *Political and Social Relations*), setting the stage for diplomatic and military conflicts that persist to the present. In 1843, Rosas launched an 8-year-long siege of Montevideo, Uruguay's capital. The act led the British and French navies to temporarily blockade Buenos Aires, damaging the local economy and weakening Rosas' control of the new country.

Discontent with Rosas' war led the Brazilian and Uruguayan governments to lend support to General Justo José de Urquiza, a rival governor in the Confederation. Urquiza worked on behalf of the neighboring countries and forced Rosas to lift the siege on Montevideo in 1851. A year later, Urquiza defeated Rosas' troops outside of Buenos Aires, forcing him into exile.

### State Consolidation

Urquiza took steps to unify Argentina under a more cohesive political system, passing a constitution in 1853 that Buenos Aires Province refused to accept (see p. 4 of *Political and Social Relations*). As such, Urquiza moved the capital north to the city of Paraná, and Buenos Aires seceded from the country. The division was short-lived, however, as the military reincorporated Buenos Aires in 1859. Thereafter, government leaders amended the constitution to appease the breakaway province, guaranteeing the decentralized federal system of governance that it had favored (see p. 4-6 of *Political and Social Relations*).

In 1862, Bartolomé Mitre, former Governor of Buenos Aires, rebelled against Urquiza and became the first President of a unified Argentina, with its capital once again in Buenos Aires. Soon afterwards, Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay created an alliance and defeated Paraguay in Latin America's deadliest-ever war, the War of the Triple Alliance (also known as the Paraguayan War, see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*). Occurring from 1864-70, the war resulted in the country's population expansion. Huge numbers of European immigrants, primarily from Spain and Italy (see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*), arrived to participate in the growing wheat and livestock sectors (see p. 1 of *Economics and Resources*).

**The Roca Administrations:** In 1880, General Julio Argentino Roca became President with support from ranchers and local businessmen. A war hero famous for defeating indigenous tribes in the Pampas and Patagonia (see p. 2, 13 of *Political and Social Relations*), Roca modernized the Argentine government. He made the city of Buenos Aires a federal district and separated it from the rest of Buenos Aires Province, putting an end to the power struggle between the central government and the wider capital region. In addition, massive public spending projects and increased European immigration temporarily helped bolster the struggling economy.

Nevertheless, increased public spending and inflation caused a financial crisis shortly after Roca left office. In 1891, Argentina defaulted on its foreign debt, marking one of several times that the country would struggle to service foreign loans (see p. 1, 3-4 of *Economics and Resources*). The fallout from the economic turmoil led to the creation of the ***Unión Cívica Radical*** (Radical Civic Union, or UCR), which opposed the traditional conservative elements that held most political power in the country. Roca returned to office in 1898 but was unable to gain support from the UCR and proved much less effective than in his

first term. Consequently, he left office amid increasing political instability and polarization.

After a series of short-lived Presidencies, in 1912, the Argentine government passed an electoral reform that introduced universal male suffrage. This reform led to the 1916 election of Hipólito Yrigoyen as the country's first democratically elected President.

### Radicals in Power Under Yrigoyen

Yrigoyen built a system of political patronage throughout the country that favored the UCR and passed largely pro-labor policies. Yrigoyen's administration enacted laws to aid tenant farmers and reformed the university system after students demonstrated in Córdoba, protesting heavy-handed management by school administrators (see p. 3 of *Learning and Knowledge)*. With increased democratic participation and growing industrial, agricultural, and ranching sectors (see p. 1-2 of *Economics and Resources*), Argentines experienced a quality of life comparable to that in major industrialized nations. It even surpassed some Western European nations in per-capita GDP during this era.

With the UCR remaining largely undefeated in local elections, Yrigoyen won a landslide electoral victory for a second nonconsecutive term in 1928. However, his erratic but generally pro-worker policies alienated the country's business elites and military during his first term, creating tensions in the government. After the 1929 onset of the Great Depression reduced global demand for Argentine exports, Yrigoyen was unable to rally the economy, and the military removed him from office in 1930.

### The Infamous Decade

Between 1931-43, with support from the ***Concordancia*** ("Concordance," a coalition of business interests, moderate Radicals, and conservatives), the military controlled the country through friendly Presidents elected via fraudulent elections. The

*Concordancia* systematically expelled the UCR from electoral politics, with several military leaders aspiring to reorient the country by emulating the fascist policies that Italy and Germany were implementing in Europe. Because of the suppression of electoral democracy and severe economic hardship, historians termed this period as the "Década Infame" (infamous decade).

At the 1939 outbreak of World War II, which was fought between the Allies (Britain, France, the US, and the Soviet Union, among others) and Axis powers (Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan), Argentina as home to many Italians and Germans sought neutrality. Nevertheless, US economic and diplomatic pressure influenced Argentina's decision to break diplomatic relations with Germany in 1943. Simultaneously, the military government faced a legitimacy crisis after several generals were unable to effectively lead the country, leaving the government imperiled.

### Juan Perón Takes Power

Colonel Juan Perón, an officer who played a minor role in the military government, soon emerged as a national leader. As a worker-friendly Minister of Labor, he built a large following among the urban poor, known as the ***descamisados*** ("shirtless ones"), and the military promoted him to Vice President (VP) in 1945. In office, he declared war on Germany, which appeased the US and allowed Argentina to join the United Nations. He also expanded his appeal by supporting the working class, military, and Roman Catholic Church (see p. 3 of *Religion and Spirituality*). After his rivals in the Navy, who were threatened by his broad support, failed to unseat him in a coup, Perón became the de facto leader of the country in late 1945 and narrowly won the Presidency in the 1946 election.

Perón led the country as a populist, significantly expanding his powers and rewarding loyal constituents in working-class and urban areas of the country with patronage. His political philosophy, which included ideas spanning the political spectrum

undergirded by a broad nationalist appeal, became known as ***Justicialismo*** (also more broadly known as ***Peronismo***, see p. 5-6 of *Political and Social Relations*). The movement remains a wide-ranging and dominant political force in the country today.

Notably, Perón garnered international attention after the end of WWII, when he welcomed thousands of Nazis and collaborators to Argentina. The President, who served as a military attaché in fascist Italy, held increasingly authoritarian views and hoped to recruit Nazis to help modernize Argentina's military. This policy alienated Perón from Argentina's large Jewish population (see p. 3, 7 of *Religion and Spirituality*).

However, as First Lady, Perón's wife, known fondly as Evita, bolstered the government's image and became an important political player. Known for her glamour and charitable work, Evita gained support from working-class women and labor unions through her work on social welfare and health initiatives, serving as de facto Minister of Health and Labor. In 1951, she ran as her husband's VP candidate after a constitutional change permitted his reelection. However, her worsening health and the military's reservations made her decline the nomination.

In 1952, Perón was reelected, though austere economic policies enacted to tame rising inflation and increasingly authoritarian tendencies in government marked a more conservative second term in office. Likewise, Eva's death from cancer in 1952 removed many of the left-wing influences on the President. Tensions with student groups soon alienated some of the Peróns' original supporters, and after a conflict with the Catholic Church, the military forced the President into exile in 1955.

### Political Disorder and Military Intervention

Perón's departure was followed by about 2 decades of political turmoil. Different political factions and the military tried to fill the power vacuum left by the former leader and rein in his supporters, with minimal success. Amid sporadic efforts at

resuming democratic elections, the military wielded ultimate control, stepping in to support unpopular governments and dissolving unfriendly administrations on multiple occasions.

The situation deteriorated in 1962 as the military unofficially split into factions: the ***rojos*** (reds), who favored the exclusion of Peronism from politics, and ***azules*** (blues), who condoned a certain level of Peronist political participation. After the 1963 election of a UCR candidate, who many critics considered slow and ineffective, the *azules* launched a coup in 1966.

From 1966-73, the military assumed direct control of the country. While attempting to manage an increasingly unstable economy and an overvalued currency, the security situation worsened. Leftist militias representing communist groups and left-wing Peronist organizations, notably the ***Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*** (People's Revolutionary Army, ERP) and the ***Montoneros***, grew in strength, seeking political control by carrying out high-profile robberies, kidnappings, assassinations, and attacks on military installations. In 1969, several large-scale protests broke out in Córdoba and Rosario.

### Perón's Return

The military allowed democratic elections to occur in 1973, resulting in the victory of Héctor Cámpora, who brought Perón back from exile and then resigned as President. While abroad, Perón had continued his rightward shift, aiming to appease business interests and tacitly supporting the inactive Argentine Anticommunist Alliance (AAA), a paramilitary organization that sought to purge leftists from government and society at large. After right-wing Peronists killed some 13 *Montoneros* at the Buenos Aires airport the day of Perón's return to Argentina, it became increasingly evident that conservative Peronism would be the leading political ideology in the new government.

In October 1973, Perón was reelected President and his third wife, Isabel Perón, VP. The security situation in the country

remained perilous, as the ERP and *Montoneros* continued rallying against Perón and the AAA. Rising oil prices and the outbreak of disease among Argentine livestock likewise strained the economy (see p. 2-3 of *Economics and Resources*), adding to the country's woes. Perón was unable to remedy the situation before he died in 1974, leaving his wife Isabel as the world's first woman President (see p. 2 of *Sex and Gender*).

### The Military Junta

Isabel lacked the political charisma of Eva Perón and was ineffective as head-of-state. The new President oversaw a radical rightward shift in the country but was unable to win the support of the military, who ousted her in 1976. General Jorge Rafael Videla led the military junta that took control. From 1976-83, the military violently repressed dissidents, academics, and leftists. During this period, the military also shut Congress, banned political parties, dissolved labor unions, and censored the press.

**The Dirty War:** Videla began the National Reorganization Process, known to some as the ***Guerra Sucia*** (Dirty War) for its violent tactics. The dictatorship, receiving funding and support from the US (and allegedly Britain and France), persecuted citizens suspected of conspiring against the government or holding left-wing views. Human rights abuses were widespread, with many detainees suffering arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings. The junta became known for its "death flights," during which they drugged and then dropped prisoners off planes into the River Plate.

Likewise, the government enacted a policy of family separation, removing the newborn children of imprisoned women and giving them to pro-regime families (see p. 11 of *Political and Social Relations*). In all, some 30,000 people were murdered or simply "disappeared," meaning they were kidnapped and presumed murdered. Besides terrorizing its own population, the Videla junta also participated in Operation Condor, a coordinated

campaign of political repression and state terror against presumed leftists in several South American countries.

**The Falklands War:** Amid economic turmoil and increasing discontent with the government, which was led by two generals whose presidencies together lasted less than a year, General Leopoldo Galtieri became President. Galtieri sought to capitalize on increasing nationalist sentiment regarding the Falkland Islands, launching an attack on the British-held islands in April 1982. The Argentine government underestimated British resolve to keep the territory, and the British military successfully launched a series of amphibious landings, retaking the islands by June. Humiliated, Galtieri resigned as President and Chief of the Armed Forces. His successor, General Reynaldo Bignone, scheduled elections for the following year, overturning the ban on political organizing.

### Return to Democracy

In 1983, Raúl Alfonsín, the UCR candidate, won the country's first democratic elections after the military dictatorship. Alfonsín, a human rights lawyer and career politician, presided over the successful prosecution of high-profile junta members, notably Videla and Galtieri, for human rights abuses. His government helped consolidate Argentina's return to democracy and launched a new currency, the ***austral***, to reduce inflation and increase foreign confidence in the economy (see p. 3 of *Economics and Resources*). Nevertheless, in 1988, the *austral* began a rapid decline in value from which it would never recover.

**The Menem Years:** Peronist candidate Carlos Menem won the 1989 presidential election and gained significant congressional majorities. Menem was known for his huge personality, and like Perón, appealed to working-class Argentines. His government ascribed to a pro-business, market-friendly form of Peronism, reintroducing the Argentine peso as the national currency in 1991 and privatizing state enterprises. Controversially, Menem pardoned many members of the military junta.

In 1994, the President pushed through a constitutional reform that reorganized the Argentine government and shortened presidential terms from 6 to 4 years. After Menen's reelection in 1995, international economic crises spread to Argentina, plunging the country into what became known as the "Argentine Great Depression" in 1998 (see p. 3 of *Economics and Resources*). Economic difficulties and mounting corruption scandals led much of the public to grow discontent with Menem's second term, handing the 1999 elections to Fernando de la Rúa, who ran as part of a center-left coalition of parties including the UCR.

### Argentina in Crisis

De la Rúa inherited a country in economic distress, with high unemployment, inflation, and foreign debt. A series of finance ministers were unable to control the situation, leading to massive protests and largescale strikes in 2001. After the President attempted to declare a state of emergency to quell protests and calm the markets, trust in the government deteriorated, forcing de la Rúa to resign in late 2001. During the following 11 days, Argentina cycled through five Presidents, ending with Congress voting for Eduardo Duhalde to lead the country as interim President in early 2002, a post he would retain until elections were held the following year.

Upon taking office, Duhalde confirmed that Argentina defaulted on its foreign debt of about $85 billion, the largest default in history at the time. During the 1998-2002 economic crisis, per-capita GDP fell substantially, accompanied by significant increases in unemployment and poverty (see p. 3 of *Economics and Resources*).

### The Kirchner Era

Argentines elected Néstor Kirchner, a left-wing Peronist, to the Presidency in 2003. Kirchner led the restructuring of much of Argentina's debt, benefitting from a commodities boom that enabled significant loan repayment (see p. 3 of *Economics and Resources*). This economic rebound, along with Kirchner's

decision to overturn the amnesty of pardoned military junta members, made him popular. Despite substantial economic growth, an energy crisis and high inflation plagued the end of his term. Kirchner chose not to run for reelection, instead supporting the candidacy of his wife, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who was elected in 2007.

Fernández de Kirchner continued the political dynasty that Néstor had founded, implementing increasingly left-wing policies, and realigning Argentina closer to other Latin American left-wing governments. In 2010, her government was the first in Latin America to pass a law allowing same-sex marriage (see p. 3 of *Sex and Gender*). Christina was reelected in 2011 after the death of her husband. While initially popular, high-profile confrontations with "vulture" investment funds seeking repayment for debt from 2001 caused Argentina to default again in 2014 (see p. 4 of *Economics and Resources*). Likewise, corruption scandals and accusations of the government's implication in the murder of Alberto Nisman, a public prosecutor, tarnished Cristina's image.

### Macri's Disappointing Presidency

The center-right Mauricio Macri, running on a business-friendly platform that sought to stabilize Argentine markets and radically reduce the poverty rate, defeated the Peronist candidate in the 2015 presidential election. He was largely successful in 2016 by reaching deals with the remaining 2001 holdout lenders, preventing another default.

Regardless, he lacked congressional majorities, which hindered his legislative agenda. Despite his campaign promises, Macri was unsuccessful in significantly growing the economy, lowering inflation, or reducing the number of Argentines living in poverty.

### Peronism Returns

As a result, Peronist candidate Alberto Fernández was elected President in 2019. Fernández presented a unified Peronist ticket by running with Fernández de Kirchner (no relation), who was

elected VP. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic dashed hopes for a robust economic recovery. Argentina imposed one of the world's longest and strictest continuous lockdowns (see p. 6 of *Sustenance and Health*), and GDP contracted by almost 11%.

In May 2020, Argentina defaulted on its debt for a ninth time, and growing inflation led to public rifts between the President and VP. Regardless, a failed assassination attempt on the VP in late 2022 rallied some support for the government, though she was later sentenced to 6 years for corruption, pending an appeal, preventing her from seeking public office in the 2023 elections.

### Myth Overview

In contrast to history, which is supposed to be an objective record of the past based on verifiable facts, myths embody a culture's values and often explain the origins of humans and the natural world. Myths are important because they provide a sense of unique heritage and identity. Some Argentine myths helped define a sense of national identity as many immigrants arrived in Argentina in the late 19th century.

**Santos Vega:** Argentine folklore tells of a famous *gaucho* named Santos Vega, who was renowned for his skill in the ***payada***, a form of song whereby *gauchos* compete by singing refrains back and forth. While many sources agree that Vega was a real man born in the 19th century, he became a semi-mythical figure with increasingly fantastical tales of his supernatural singing talents. One common story claims that the only time Santos Vega was defeated in a *payada* was by the devil, who had disguised himself as a ***payador*** (singer of *payada*) called Juan ***Sin Ropa*** (Juan Without Clothes). After Vega's defeat, the devil killed him out of jealousy, ending the *gaucho's* reign as a famous storyteller. In the 19th and 20th centuries, several authors and filmmakers adapted Vega's story into poems and a film, further immortalizing the legendary *gaucho* as a folk hero.

## 2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

### Official Name
Argentine Republic (English)
***República Argentina*** (Spanish)


### Political Borders
Chile: 4,158 mi
Bolivia: 585 mi
Paraguay: 1,573 mi
Brazil: 785 mi
Uruguay: 336 mi
Coastline: 3,100 mi

### Capital
Buenos Aires

### Demographics
Argentina's population of 46.9 million is growing at an annual rate of about 0.8%. Over 93% of the population lives in urban areas, with about a third living in Buenos Aires Province. Generally, while residents concentrate in northern and central regions, the southern Patagonia region remains sparsely settled.

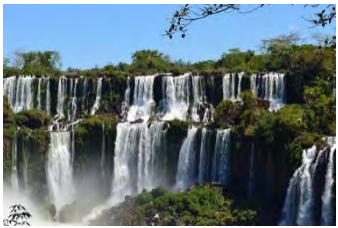
### Flag
Adopted in 1818 and modified in 2010, the Argentine flag consists of three equal horizontal bands, two sky blue (top and bottom) and one white (middle). A yellow sun with a human face in the center, known as ***Sol de Mayo*** (Sun of May), represents the sun shining during the mass demonstration for independence in 1810 (see p. 3 of *History and Myth*), with a face symbolizing ***Inti***, the Inca sun god. One interpretation is that the colors represent the cockades (ornate ribbons) worn by patriots in 1810.

### Geography
Located in southern South America, Argentina borders Bolivia and Paraguay to the north, Brazil, Uruguay, and the South

Atlantic Ocean to the east, and Chile to the west. Argentina has territorial disputes with the United Kingdom (UK) and Chile (see "Foreign Relations" below), and still claims several islands in the South Atlantic, including the ***Islas Malvinas*** (Falkland Islands), and part of Antarctica. The US does not recognize Argentina's land claims to Antarctica or the UK-administered Falkland Islands. Argentina is the world's eighth-largest country, with a total land area of about 1,056,642 sq mi, slightly less than three-tenths the size of the US and just larger than Kazakhstan.

Argentina is geographically diverse. In the West lie the rugged Andes Mountains, the world's longest mountain range, and vast forests. In the Northwest, between the Andes and Paraná River, are the dry lowlands of the Gran Chaco plain. In the Northeast are sub-tropical forests and plains, often called Mesopotamia for their lush climate and location between the Paraná and Uruguay rivers. Low, fertile grasslands known as the Pampas comprise much of the Central-East. To the south, Patagonia stretches from the lush rivers and lakes of central Argentina through an arid plateau to ***Tierra del Fuego*** (Land of Fire), a sub-Antarctic archipelago at the southernmost tip of South America.

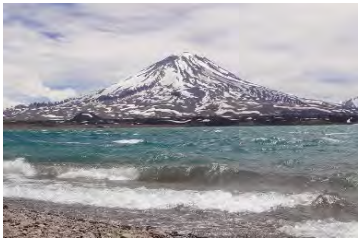
Argentina is home to the Western Hemisphere's highest and lowest points – Cerro Aconcagua (22,384 ft) in the Andes, and Laguna del Carbón (-344 ft) in Patagonia. Iguazú Falls, on the northeastern border with Brazil and Paraguay, is one of the seven natural wonders of the world and comprises 275 cascades, making it the world's largest broken waterfall. The Paraná is Argentina's longest and South America's second-longest river (3,032 mi), which runs through Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina.



### Climate

Argentina's climate ranges from subtropical in the Northeast to sub-Antarctic in the southern glacial regions. In the far South, temperatures range from about 5-64° F, with abundant snow in winter, while temperatures range from 50-95° F in the North, with about 40-80 in of annual rainfall. In the capital, Buenos Aires,

located on the northeastern coast, the average high temperature is about 84° F in January and 47° F in July the low. The capital's average annual rainfall is about 39 in.



### Natural Hazards

Argentina is located in the Ring of Fire, a belt of active volcanoes bordering the Pacific Ocean that accounts for 75% of volcanic eruptions and 90% of earthquakes around the world. Argentina is home to dozens of volcanoes, primarily along its Chilean border. Copahue, in the Southwest, has periodically erupted in recent decades. Its 2012-13 eruption caused property damage, evacuations, and flight cancellations. However, due to effective early warning and evacuation systems, casualties are rare.

Argentina is vulnerable to extreme heat, wildfires, earthquakes, melting glaciers, extreme precipitation, flooding, landslides, and water scarcity. River floods are common in much of the country, and coastal flooding is a concern along the southern coast. While heatwaves primarily impact the North, the Southwest and cities face an increasing risk of extreme heat. Water scarcity and drought are concentrated in the country's central interior.

### Environmental Issues

Human practices and related climate change have degraded Argentina's natural environment, resulting in significant damage caused by soil degradation, desertification, and air and water pollution. Converting farmland for raising livestock and growing soybeans has contributed to deforestation. Although Argentina enacted a law mandating that local governments regulate large-scale farming expansion, a lack of enforcement in some areas has led to an increase in deforestation.

In 2021, the Corfo lagoon in Patagonia turned pink, likely due to pollution by sodium sulfite, a chemical agent used by fisheries. A year later, wildfires intensified by low humidity, drought, and a heatwave burned over 1.5 million acres in the northeastern Corrientes Province.

## Government

Argentina is a federal republic that divides into 23 ***provincias*** (provinces) and a federal capital district, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. Provinces are divided into ***departamentos*** (departments), or ***partidos*** (districts) in Buenos Aires Province, led by ***gobernadores*** (governors), and subdivided into municipalities led by ***intendentes*** (mayors). An elected ***jefe de gobierno*** (head of government) governs the City of Buenos Aires, which is divided into 15 ***comunas*** (communes) and 48 ***barrios*** (neighborhoods). Each province and the City of Buenos Aires has its own legislative assembly consisting of senators and representatives. Municipal government officials, like *intendentes* and councilpersons, are elected every 4 years.

The current constitution, adopted in 1853 and last amended in 1994, includes citizen rights as well as guaranteed local self-governance. Like in the US, each province establishes its own constitution in accordance with the National Constitution, granting local governments significant legislative and governing power separate from the federal government.

## Executive Branch

The current President, Javier Gerardo Milei took office in 2023. The President is head-of-state and government and serves as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The President is responsible for appointing all military, civil, and judicial officers, as well as the Chief of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Elected Vice President in 2023, is Victoria Villarruel, whose formal role is to succeed the President in case of death, incapacity, resignation, or other reasons to leave office.

The President and VP are directly elected by an absolute majority vote for 4-year terms, with multiple, but only two consecutive terms allowed. If a candidate does not receive a majority in the initial round of voting, a run-off is held.

### Legislative Branch

The two-chamber ***Congreso Nacional*** (National Congress) consists of a 72-seat Senate and 257-seat House of Deputies. Senate members are directly elected to 6-year terms, along with three representatives from each province and the federal capital. Deputies are elected to 4-year terms in multi-seat constituencies apportioned according to population. The *Congreso Nacional* controls most legislative powers, such as lawmaking and approving treaties. Initiated by the House of Deputies and carried out by the Senate, the *Congreso Nacional* has the power to impeach the President, VP, Cabinet Chief, Ministers, and Supreme Court Justices.

### Judicial Branch

The judiciary includes the ***Corte Suprema de Justicia de la Nación Argentina*** (Supreme Court of Justice of the Argentine Nation), Courts of Appeal, district courts, and territorial courts, as well as provincial-level supreme, appellate, and first instance courts. As the highest court, the Supreme Court is an appellate court that reviews lower-court decisions. The Supreme Court's seven members (Court President, VP, and five Justices) are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate for life, with mandatory retirement at age 75.

### Political Climate

Argentina's political landscape is characterized by a multi-party democracy. Politics today are dominated by political ideology rooted in Peronism (see p. 8-9 of *History and Myth*), a populist movement founded by former President Juan Perón that draws significant support from the poorer working classes and labor unions. The popularly elected President has wide-ranging executive powers, including passing some policies without Congressional approval. Argentina has universal suffrage with compulsory voting for people aged 18-70 and voluntary voting for people between 16-18 and over 70.

The electoral system mandates each party print and distribute paper ballots on election day, which contributes to the unfair advantage of wealthier political parties. Two political parties

dominate politics today. Current President Fernández's political party, the ***Partido Justicialista*** (Justicialist Party), was founded by Perón. It is ideologically center-left and was the country's largest party for nearly 40 years. Since 2019, it joined other Peronist parties to form the coalition ***Frente de Todos*** (Everyone's Front), which lost its congressional majority in 2021. The party continues to draw support from poorer classes and labor unions, typically favoring governmental economic intervention and maintaining federal subsidies and generous social welfare programs.

*Frente de Todos*' main political opposition is the anti-Peronist alliance, ***Juntos por el Cambio*** (Together for Change), which won more seats than *Frente de Todos* in the 2021 legislative election. The alliance generally favors initiatives such as judicial system reform, promoting human rights, and reducing national debt. About half of the coalition belongs to the center-progressive ***Unión Cívica Radical*** (Radical Civic Union, or UCR) that mostly draws support from the urban middle class.

For decades, Argentines have gathered to protest the country's inflation, human rights abuses, and corruption (see "Civil Unrest" below). While Argentina's criminal code prohibits bribery of public and foreign officials, corruption is pervasive. In a 2021 corruption perceptions ranking, Argentina tied with neighboring Brazil at 96 of 180 countries and ranked far below Uruguay and Chile. The judicial system has the power to prosecute officials for corruption. However, in practice, many courts, particularly at the provincial level, provide politicians protection from corruption charges. In 2023, VP Fernández de Kirchner was sentenced to 6 years of prison for corruption during her 2007-15 Presidency, but she has not served any time due to the immunity provided by her position as VP at that time. Currently the case is still in the high courts on appeals. She sought to gain public support by asserting how she survived an assassination attempt (see p. 15 of *History and Myth*), sparking rallies of solidarity in Buenos Aires later that year, though she is prevented from holding public office again, pending an appeal.

## Defense

The ***Fuerzas Armadas de la República Argentina*** (Armed Forces of the Argentine Republic) are a unified military force consisting of ground, maritime, and air branches, with a joint strength of 72,100 active-duty troops and 31,250 paramilitary and gendarmerie. Military operations emphasize maintaining domestic stability with a focus on counternarcotics operations and territorial integrity. Military conscription was abolished in 1995.

**Army:** This branch consists of 42,800 active-duty troops, organized into 4 maneuver divisions comprising over 80 mechanised brigades, companies, battalions, and groups; a light division with 21 brigades, battalions, groups, and a presidential escort; 7 combat support battalions, convoys, and groups; 3 combat service support battalions; and a helicopter brigade.

**Navy:** Composed of 16,400 active-duty troops, the Navy includes 4 commands (Surface Fleet, Submarine Force, Naval Aviation, and Marines) and a special forces group. Naval Aviation consists of some 2,000 active-duty troops. The Marines, comprising 2,500 active-duty troops, is organized into 3 amphibious maneuver forces.

**Air Force:** Comprising 12,900 active-duty personnel, the Air Force, consists of 4 major commands (Air Operations, Personnel, Air Regions, and Logistics) and a special forces unit, 17 paramilitary battalions, and a mixed aviation battalion.

**Gendarmerie and the *Prefectura Naval* (Coast Guard):** These units are services of the Security Ministry and consist of 31,250 active-duty personnel. The Gendarmerie has 18,000 active-duty troops with 7 regional commands, a special forces unit, 17 paramilitary battalions, and a mixed aviation battalion. The *Prefectura Naval* consists of 13,250 active-duty troops, who protect Argentina's rivers and coastal territories.

# ARGENTINA RANK INSIGNIA

## Air Force

**General**
*Brigadier general*

**Lieutenant General**
*Brigadier mayor*

**Major General**
*Brigadier*

**Colonel**
*Comodoro*

**Lieutenant Colonel**
*Vicecomodoro*

**Major**
*Mayor*

**Captain**
*Capitán*

**1ST Lieutenant**
*Primer teniente*

**2ND Lieutenant**
*Alférez*

**Lieutenant**
*Teniente*

**Chief Master Sergeant**
*Suboficial mayor*

**Senior Master Sergeant**
*Suboficial principal*

**Master Sergeant**
*Suboficial ayudante*

**Technical Sergeant**
*Suboficial auxiliar*

**Staff Sergeant**
*Cabo principal*

**Sergeant**
*Cabo primero*

**Airman 1ST Class**
*Cabo*

**Senior Basic Airman**
*Voluntario primero*

**Basic Airman**
*Voluntario segundo*

## Foreign Relations

Although Argentina has historically maintained close economic and political ties with its Latin American neighbors, its foreign relations often shift with each coalition government. Since 1982, when Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands (see p. 12 of *History and Myth*), the UK and Argentina periodically have shared tense relations, especially given Argentina's continued territorial claims. Argentina maintains close ties with the US and European Union (EU) and more recently has cultivated closer relations with China.

Argentina is a member of international economic and peace organizations like the United Nations, World Health Organization, World Trade Organization, Group of 20 (G20, comprising 20 of the world's largest economies), and Group of 15 (a forum in which developing countries promote growth and cooperation). Argentina is also an active member of regional organizations like the Organization of American States (OAS) and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

**Relations with China:** Argentina and China established diplomatic relations in 1972 and continue to cultivate trade ties, notably via the G20. In 2022, Argentina joined China's Belt and Road Initiative, a global infrastructure development strategy. Chinese investment is concentrated in telecommunications, agriculture, and infrastructure. It also financed a space station and nuclear power plant. Between 2005-19, Argentina received nearly 40% (almost $31 billion) of Chinese investment in South America. In 2022, China reaffirmed Argentine sovereignty claims of the Falkland Islands, which sparked disapproval from the UK.

**Relations with the US:** The US and Argentina established diplomatic relations in 1823. In the past, relations were sometimes strained, notably due to Argentina's initial refusal to declare war on Nazi Germany during World War II (see p. 8 of *History and Myth*), US support for the UK's claim to the Falkland Islands, and the US-led coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003.

As of 2022, the US had $12.6 billion of direct stock investments in Argentina. In the same year, the US and Argentina signed an agreement to increase cooperation on energy and infrastructure development. The US is also one of Argentina's most important trade partners, and more than 300 US companies employ over 155,000 workers in the country.

Other areas of bilateral collaboration are counterterrorism and anti-crime efforts, the Tax Information Exchange Agreement, and cooperation with the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration on numerous occasions, such as for the launch of Argentine satellites in 2018 and 2020. Former President Fernández pledged to limit emissions and increase renewable energy at President Biden's Leaders' Summit on Climate in 2021.


**Regional Relations**

Historically, Argentina has had territorial disputes with neighboring countries including Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. Today, Argentina and Chile still dispute over a 30-mi section of their border, which was originally agreed upon in the Boundary Treaty of 1881, along an ice field in southern Patagonia.

As the largest countries in the region, Brazil and Argentina are the dominant members of the Southern Common Market, known by its Spanish-language abbreviation Mercosur, an economic and political bloc. Founded in 1991, Mercosur also includes Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela (suspended in 2016), as well as various other associate members. As of 2021, members' combined GDP was about $2.2 trillion, making Mercosur one of the world's largest economic blocs. Nevertheless, Mercosur has become weaker in recent years, largely due to protectionism, a stalled trade deal with the EU, internal squabbling, and Uruguay pursuing relatively independent trade and economic policies.

Mercosur and the Pacific Alliance – a generally more free-trade-oriented economic bloc comprising Chile, Colombia, Mexico,

and Peru – held their first joint summit in 2018 to commit to future integration and reaffirm cooperation on trade, tourism, and migration. However, relations between the blocs often are strained over trade, policy, and diplomatic disputes. Moreover, while Mercosur continues to pursue free trade agreements with countries like Canada and South Korea, former President Fernández was wary of bilateral agreements and announced that Argentina will not participate in future trade deals with Mercosur.

**Relations with Venezuela:** In 2018, Argentina and five other countries requested that the International Criminal Court investigate and prosecute alleged crimes against humanity and human-rights abuses committed by Venezuela under President Nicolás Maduro. In response, Argentina and Venezuela ceased formal diplomatic relations. After former President Fernández was elected in 2019, Argentina left the Lima Group – a coalition of countries in the Western Hemisphere seeking to address the human rights crisis in Venezuela that has caused millions of Venezuelans to flee their country – because it had isolated the Venezuelan government and "led to nothing." In recent years, around 211,000 Venezuelans have migrated to Argentina. Many are underemployed, partly due to limited job opportunities. In 2022, former President Fernández announced that his government plans to restore full diplomatic relations with Venezuela.

## Security Issues

**Civil Unrest:** For decades, Argentina has been rocked by sporadic demonstrations, as protesters have demanded an end to political corruption, reduction in wealth inequality, justice for human rights violations, and more recently, criticized the government's response to and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (see p. 6 of *Sustenance and Health*). In 2019, indigenous women (see "Ethnic Groups" below) from communities such as the Mapuche, Toba, and Tehuelche,

occupied the Internal Affairs Ministry in Buenos Aires, peacefully protesting forced land and home evictions. In 2022, demonstrations focused on soaring inflation, which had surpassed 90% (see p. 4 of *Economics and Resources*).

Since 1977, Mothers of the ***Plaza de Mayo*** (May Square*)* – an association of women who lost their children and grandchildren during the 1976-83 military dictatorship – have sought answers to what happened to about 30,000 ***desaparecidos*** (disappeared persons), including some 500 children kidnapped and given to loyalists of the dictatorship. Although a smaller group today, Mothers of the *Plaza de Mayo* continue to protest weekly in Buenos Aires, wearing symbolic white headscarves and demanding to know more about their lost family members. As of 2019, roughly 1,000 members of the dictatorship have been tried for human rights abuses and about 130 stolen children reunited with their families.

Every year, some Jewish Argentines rally and hold photos of the victims of the 1994 bombing of the ***Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina*** (AMIA, a Jewish center) in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people. The victims' families and society seek accountability for the bombing. Despite widespread belief that lack of progress is due to the corrupt political and justice systems, others believe VP and former President Fernández de Kirchner covered up involvement of Iran-backed Islamist group, Hezbollah. Even so, charges against her involvement were dropped in 2019.

**Crime:** In addition to petty crimes like theft and scams, which are prevalent in many big cities, violence surrounding narcotics, sex, and human trafficking is common, especially in Rosario and Buenos Aires outskirts. Despite security forces' efforts to combat trafficking, corruption and strained resources enable it to persist.

## Ethnic Groups

According to Argentina's 2022 census, about 97% of Argentines are European and ***mestizo*** (mixed indigenous and European), 2.4% Amerindian (a term that describes the indigenous peoples of the American continents), and less than 1% people of African descent.

Argentina also has many large immigrant communities. The country is home to hundreds of thousands of Bolivians, Chileans, Peruvians, Paraguayans, and Uruguayans. Other minorities include Arabs, Jews, Welsh, Koreans, Japanese, Germans, and Scots, among others.

During the colonial era, most European immigrants were Spanish. Following independence in 1816 (see p. 4 of *History and Myth*), settlers were mainly Spanish and Italian. Between 1870-1960, about two million Italians immigrated to Argentina. Today, around 65% of the population has some Italian heritage. Between 1890-1930, many Jews immigrated to Argentina, despite periods of hostility, notably during a massacre in 1919, when many Jews were beaten and killed. In recent years, Argentina's Jewish population of about 180,000 (see p. 7 of *Religion and Spirituality*), largely based in Buenos Aires, has declined, primarily caused by emigration due to political reasons during the dictatorship and economic crises.

Argentina is home to many indigenous groups. Some 205,000 Mapuche, a group mainly in modern-day Chile and Argentina, live in Argentina, though most reside in the Neuquén and Río Negro provinces in Patagonia. About 127,000 Toba (or Qom) and 50,000 Wichí (or Mataco) mostly live in northern Argentina. Other Amerindians live mainly in northern and western regions.

Argentines of African descent, or Afro-Argentines, were initially enslaved by Europeans and brought to Argentina primarily during the late 18th and early 19th centuries (see p. 2 of *History and Myth*). Some historians claim much of the Afro-Argentine population died fighting in the War of Independence and War of the Triple Alliance (see p. 3, 6 of *History and Myth*). Many others mixed with European or indigenous Argentines. Although a small population of about 150,000 Afro-Argentines lives mainly in the

capital, immigration from West African countries like Senegal has increased in recent years.

## Social Relations

As in other Spanish colonies, early Argentina had a strict, hierarchical class- and race-based system that continues to influence its society. Official policy historically encouraged immigration from Europe. Today, Argentine society divides along rural-urban, rich-poor, and ethnic group lines, and Europeans and their descendants control much of the country.

Social, economic, and political crises in the 21st century, notably the 1998-2002 Great Depression (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*), contribute to Argentina's fragmented society that divides into a small upper class and large middle and lower classes. Upper-class Argentines tend to live in cities and control much wealth, despite forming less than 3% of society. The upper-middle class holds many professional and skilled technical jobs, and constitutes about 30% of society. They mainly live in Buenos Aires and its suburbs, as well as in other main cities in the central Pampas and gated neighborhoods in provincial capitals.

The middle and lower-middle class, about 33% of society, often do not live in poverty but are vulnerable to economic instability and have minimal social mobility. The lowest class primarily constitutes informal waged workers, rural laborers, and the unemployed. Often living in urban outskirts or public housing in northern areas, they typically have access to low-quality education and healthcare. The pandemic worsened poverty across the country (see p. 4 of *Economics and Resources*).

Amerindians, many of whom live in rural communities, are more likely to be poor than their European or *mestizo* counterparts and often have less access to social services and education. In recent years, private and state interests in development and infrastructure projects have undermined these communities' rights to their traditional lands that the Constitution protects. Despite regular protests over land incursions and environmental damages, the local authorities have largely ignored their plight.

# 3. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

## Overview

Argentina's population is predominantly Christian, with about 63% in 2022 government survey identifying as Roman Catholic and 15% Protestant. According to the same survey, some 19% of Argentines are non-religious (including those who identify as atheist and agnostic), and less than 2% follow other religious traditions such as Baha'ism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and others.

Argentina's constitution (see p. 4 of *Political and Social Relations*) guarantees freedom of worship and prohibits religious discrimination but recognizes special privileges for the Catholic Church. Although the country's Supreme Court (see p. 5 of *Political and Social Relations*) has ruled that Argentina has no official or state religion, the government grants Catholic institutions more independence to run religious schools than other religious groups (see p. 3 of *Learning and Knowledge*) and likewise exempts them from some administrative requirements. Other laws allow religious groups that register with the government to receive funding, tax benefits, and the right to establish schools, among other privileges.

## Early Spiritual Landscape

Before the arrival of European conquerors (see p. 1-2 of *History and Myth*), Argentina's indigenous peoples (see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*) led rich spiritual lives. While the details of many beliefs and practices remain unknown, indigenous groups likely recognized multiple spirits and gods, who created the universe, controlled the natural elements, and influenced daily life. Some sources claim native Argentines may have believed in religious systems that centered around these higher powers and the need to commune with them through prayer and rituals.

## Introduction of Christianity

Christianity arrived in the 16th century with the Spanish ***conquistadores*** (conquerors). Besides seeking wealth and new territories, the Spanish Crown sought to convert the indigenous population to Roman Catholicism. The Spanish believed in a holy duty to convert indigenous Argentines, which gave them an ideological justification for their conquests. Catholic priests frequently accompanied *conquistadores* on their expeditions, and Spanish government officials entrusted members of the clergy with leadership positions in the early history of their colony. Simultaneously, *conquistadores* implemented the ***encomienda*** (forced labor, see p. 2 of *History and Myth*) system, which devastated indigenous communities and contributed to a decline in the native population and the subsequent loss of indigenous religious traditions and practices.

## Religion During the Colonial Period

Under Spanish colonial rule (see p. 2-3 of *History and Myth*), the Catholic Church was central to most aspects of Argentine life, particularly education, politics, and economics. While Dominican and Franciscan orders conducted early missionary and pastoral work, the Jesuits, another Catholic order, focused on education, service, and charitable works, and had become an increasingly influential presence by the 17th century.

Starting in 1609, the Jesuits began building ***reducciones*** (reductions) for the indigenous Guaraní in northern Argentina. These *reducciones* sought to establish self-sufficient communities, where indigenous people could live shielded from the abuses that they suffered under the *encomiendas*. While proclamations from the pope (the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Rome, Italy) advocating fair treatment of native tribes inspired these communities, Catholics' insistence on adopting Catholicism and European ways of life nonetheless contributed to the decline of traditional indigenous religious practices.

The Catholic Church, primarily through the Jesuit order, opened schools, orphanages, and hospitals that provided essential social services, notably the colony's first university which opened in 1610, during the colonial period (see p. 1 of *Learning and Knowledge*). Upon the Spanish King's expulsion of the Jesuits from his empire in 1767, many of these institutions closed or changed ownership.

### Religion in the 19th Century

Through the political instability that marked the decades following Argentina's 1816 independence (see p. 4 of *History and Myth*), disagreements over the role of the Catholic Church were common. From 1820-24, government minister Bernardino Rivadavia, initiated a controversial series of reforms that attacked Catholic institutions. Rivadavia abolished tithes (a form of tax paid to the Church), confiscated Church property such as the sanctuary of Our Lady of Luján, Argentina's patron saint, and sought to oppose religious control of higher education (see p. 2 of *Learning and Knowledge*).

While the reforms were largely successful, many more conservative Argentines believed the Catholic Church must form a part of the government to ensure social order. As a result, Church influence fluctuated over the decades. For example, Argentina's 1853 constitution mandated that Argentina's President and Vice President be Roman Catholic, though an amendment removed this requirement in 1994. Nevertheless, in the 1880s, a series of laws that established state control over birth, education, marriage, and death rituals (see p. 3-4 of *Family and Kinship*) led to a serious rift between the Catholic Church and the Argentine government. Moreover, in the following decades, waves of Jewish immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe moved to Argentina, establishing one of Latin America's largest Jewish communities (see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*) and diversified the country's religious landscape.

### Religion in the 20th Century

A revival of Catholic values in the early 20th century, particularly as Catholic immigrants from Spain and Italy came to the country in large numbers (see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*), gave the Church more power. In 1943, the military government permitted the Church to resume religious instruction in schools, helping bolster Catholic leaders' support for the military and the government of Juan Perón (see p. 8 of *History and Myth*), ushering in a period of reconciliation between both institutions.

Nevertheless, Church-government relations deteriorated by the end of Perón's second term, and in 1954, the President severed relations with the Church. Perón introduced laws permitting divorce (a violation of Catholic rules), limited the clergy's political power and censored religious celebrations. Anti-Church sentiment led to riots on June 16, 1955, whereby supporters of the President burned several churches in Buenos Aires. Perón's conflict with the Church, among other reasons, led the military to remove him from power in 1955 (see p. 9 of *History and Myth*).

### Religion During the Military Dictatorship:

In the years preceding and during Argentina's military dictatorship from 1976-83 (see p. 11-12 of *History and Myth*), the Catholic Church represented often divergent positions regarding the government's policies. Many high-ranking members of the Church hierarchy approved of the military junta's devout Catholicism and persecution of dissenters, at times collaborating with government officials and advising in policy matters. Simultaneously, many lower-ranking clergy adopted the doctrine of "Liberation Theology," a school of thought advocating freedom from oppression, poverty, and injustice through political action. These clergy members fought against the government's human rights abuses and sheltered those persecuted by the junta, often suffering torture or death for their work.

## Religion Today

Since Argentina's 1983 transition to democracy and subsequent constitutional reform in 1994, the Catholic Church has somewhat distanced itself from politics. Further, society has experienced both secularization and an increase in Protestant membership, with the proportion of Argentines claiming a Catholic identity decreasing from around 76% in 2008 to 63% today. Even among Argentines who claim a Catholic identity, many perceive the faith as simply part of their cultural heritage, having no regular role in their personal or professional lives. By contrast, Protestants are more likely to attend weekly religious services than Catholics.

**The Catholic Church:** Despite declining support, the Catholic Church remains influential. Largescale pilgrimages to the Basilica of Our Lady of Luján occur every October, whereby tens of thousands of pilgrims walk some 38 mi from Buenos Aires to pray in the provincial city of Luján. Likewise, many students enrolled in private schools attend institutions that the Catholic Church manages.

Several Church officials spoke out against the government's legalization of same-sex marriage in 2010 and campaigned against the legalization of abortion in 2020 (see p. 3 of *Sex and Gender*). As such, relations between the Church and Argentina's left-wing governments, particularly those run by the Kirchner family (see p. 13-14 of *History and Myth*), have often been strained.

In 2013, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, was elected pope, becoming Pope Francis. While some groups in Argentina

claimed that Bergoglio had not done enough to fight against the military dictatorship, others endorsed his election, pointing to his pastoral work and dedication to the poor of Buenos Aires. Francis, the first pontiff from the Americas and first Jesuit to hold the office, has centered his papacy around concern for the poor, migrants, and the fight against inequality and climate change. For many Argentines, Pope Francis and his popular tenure as pontiff are points of national pride.

**Other Christian Churches:** Protestantism arrived in Argentina in the early 19th century, mostly through immigrants from Northern and Central Europe. Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian congregations served these small immigrant communities, who began their own missionary efforts to convert indigenous groups. In the 20th century, immigrants introduced Lutheranism and Pentecostal Christianity, the latter of which gained an important foothold in the 1950s. Nevertheless, Protestant denominations remained a small religious minority for decades.


Today, most of the growth in the Protestant community comes from large evangelical and Pentecostal sects, which are increasingly popular among the urban poor in Buenos Aires and other cities. In recent years, many of these groups have grown their congregations through popular television and radio shows that are broadcast nationwide. In some of these religious communities, followers engage in associated charismatic beliefs and practices, such as divine healing, receiving direct revelations from God, and speaking in tongues during worship services.

Certain Protestant groups claim that the requirements imposed on them to register with the government to receive tax-exempt status and other benefits are discriminatory, as Catholic organizations receive these benefits automatically thanks to their special status in the constitution.

**Judaism:** Argentina is home to Latin America's largest Jewish community, with an estimated 175,000 practicing Jews in 2021. While records of Jewish Argentines date back to the early colonial period, the community grew substantially in the late 19th century due to European immigration. By 1936, Jews accounted for about 5% of Buenos Aires's population, and several Yiddish (a hybrid of German and Hebrew languages that some Jewish communities speak) newspapers were published there. Juan Perón's government attempted to gain support from the community by allowing for increased Jewish immigration after World War II (see p. 8 of *History and Myth*), yet his ties with Nazi Germany led to uneasy relations with the community. During the military dictatorship, many Jews emigrated to Israel to escape political persecution and the government's staunch Catholicism, vastly reducing the size of the country's Jewish community.

In 1990 and 1994, attacks on the Israeli Embassy and the ***Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina*** (AMIA, a Jewish center) in Buenos Aires, respectively, killed and wounded many Argentine Jews (see p. 12 of *Political and Social Relations*). Increased security concerns and economic instability again led many in the community to emigrate to Israel in the 1990s and early 2000s. Further, in recent years, various human rights organizations have noted an increase in antisemitic violence in Argentina.

**Indigenous Religions:** Due to the largescale annihilation of Argentina's native population, few residents observe indigenous religious practices. However, some Argentines practice a form of syncretic (mixed) Catholicism that incorporates local folk deities into mainstream Catholic practices. ***San La Muerte*** (Saint Death), ***Gauchito Gil*** (little Gaucho Gil) and ***La Difunta Correa*** (The Dead Ms. Correa) are popular religious figures among Argentines, with adherents leaving offerings of flowers, liquor, or lighting candles in exchange for favors, despite official Church prohibitions on the practice.

# 4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

## Overview

The family is the center of Argentine life and provides emotional, economic, and social support. Argentine families are typically close-knit and involved in members' life decisions. Marrying and starting a family remain a priority for most young adults.

## Residence

Beginning in the 19th century, Argentina began to urbanize. As of 2023, the country is one of the world's most urbanized, with over 93% of Argentines living in cities. Middle- and upper-class homes typically have electricity, running water, and central heating systems. Although electricity is widely available, many residents, particularly those of lower incomes or in rural areas, lack safe access to drinking water and sewage systems. In rural areas of Patagonia and the Andes (see p. 2 of *Political and Social Relations*), many dwellings rely on wood stoves or gas heaters for warmth during the winter.

**Urban:** Middle- and upper-class urban families tend to reside in high-rise apartments or gated neighborhoods. Apartments and condominiums comprise about 75% of the homes in Buenos Aires. In the urban outskirts, homes are often made of concrete with tile roofs. By contrast, many lower-class families live in makeshift housing. Migration from rural regions to Buenos Aires and other large cities resulted in the development of ***villas miseria*** (or just *villas* – shanty towns), where residents build homes from makeshift materials, often with flooring made of compacted dirt. Many residents in the *villas* lack basic services like indoor plumbing.

**Rural:** Many rural houses are constructed to withstand extreme weather (see p. 2-3 of *Political and Social Relations*). Most

families in rural areas live in traditional homes made of materials like ***adobe*** (mud) brick to keep the interiors warm in the freezing winter temperatures, with earthen floors and straw or mud roofs. Houses in the Patagonia region often have metal outer walls and roofs, serving as durable protection against rain and snow.

### Family Structure

In Argentine families, the father is traditionally the primary breadwinner and head-of-household. While the mother is generally responsible for domestic tasks and childcare, many women also work outside the home (see p. 1 of *Sex and Gender*). Some households include extended relatives, such as grandparents, and other family members sometimes live nearby. Families are typically close-knit, and children often live at home into adulthood. While couples traditionally wait until marriage to live together, particularly in more traditional areas in Argentina's northern and southern provinces, an increasing number of couples in cities and more progressive areas opt for cohabitation before marriage. Argentines highly respect their elders, with children often caring for their parents as they age.

### Children

While Argentine families historically had many children, they have fewer today (see p. 3 of *Sex and Gender*). Parents' involvement in their children's lives often varies by social class and ability or desire to employ domestic help. While some upper- and middle-class Argentines have nannies, maids, or childcare providers, who help at home or in daycare centers, lower-class women typically assume childcare responsibilities themselves or have assistance from relatives or neighbors. Parents tend to be highly protective of their children, especially girls, and children typically respect and obey their parents' decisions.

**Birth:** After a birth, family members and friends typically present flowers and gifts to the new mother. Traditionally, many Argentines consider superstitions that may draw attention to a newborn as bad luck. Some Argentines protect their children,

particularly infants, against the ***mal de ojo*** (evil eye) by wearing a red string bracelet.

**Naming:** While naming conventions vary (see p. 4 of *Language and Communication*), Argentine Catholics (see p. 5-6 of *Religion and Spirituality*) historically named their children after Catholic saints, and some still do. In the Catholic tradition, each saint is associated with one day of the year, so many Argentines celebrate their birthday and their saint's day.

**Rites of Passage**

Many Argentines observe Roman Catholic rites of passage, such as baptizing their children within a few months after birth and first communion around age 8. Both ceremonies are usually followed by a celebration and meal with extended family. Some Argentine 15-year-old girls have a ***fiesta de Quince*** (party at 15), also called ***Quinceañera***, to celebrate their transition into adulthood. Festivities typically include a father-daughter entrance to a large party with friends and family.

**Dating & Courtship:** Argentines typically begin dating in their mid-teens. Traditionally, most Argentines married and started a family in their early-to-mid-20s. Today, Argentines who attend university often postpone marriage until their mid-to-late-20s, preferring to first graduate and establish stable careers.

**Weddings:** Pre-wedding celebrations typically occur a few days before the wedding. Argentines often have ***despedidas de soltero*** or ***soltera***, similar to bachelor and bachelorette parties, respectively. Many of the celebrations consist of partying with friends in casual dress and playing drinking games.

Argentine weddings typically comprise a civil ceremony performed at a municipal office and a religious one at a church. Not legally required, the religious ceremony takes place after the civil wedding. Attendance at the civil ceremony is usually restricted to a few family members and friends, while the

religious one is often a larger, more extravagant affair. During the religious ceremony, the bride and groom exchange vows and wedding rings before the priest or minister pronounces them married. The wedding reception usually includes plentiful food, sweets, alcohol, music, and dancing. The party often continues into the early morning, with breakfast served the following day.

### Divorce

Legalized in 1987, divorce is uncommon in Argentina, which does not publish national divorce rates. A year after legalization, the divorce rate in Buenos Aires was 6.1 per 1,000 inhabitants but has since decreased. As of 2023, the divorce rate in Buenos Aires was about 2, lower than the US (2.4), but much higher than neighboring Chile (0.7). In the event of divorce, the mother usually retains custody of children under 5 years old.

### Death

After death, Argentines typically hold a vigil (or wake) at home or in a funeral facility. During this period, friends and relatives visit to pay respects, view the body, grieve, provide support, and reminisce with the family of the deceased. A day or so later, a priest leads a funeral mass in a church, after which mourners accompany the coffin in a procession to the cemetery, where the priest presides over the burial. On the anniversary of death, friends and relatives typically attend a special church service to honor their loved one.

Some residents of western Argentina visit cemeteries to pay respect to and celebrate the lives of dead family members on ***Día de Todos Los Santos*** (All Saints' Day). Likewise, while not widely celebrated, some residents of Andean and northwestern Argentina observe the Day of the Faithful Departed. Traditionally an Amerindian custom in the Andes of Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia, families typically make wreaths of paper flowers with ***tocoris*** (onion flowers) and food left as offerings for the dead, especially in the regions of Puna and Quebrada de Humahuaca.

# 5. SEX AND GENDER

## Overview

Traditionally, Argentina has a male-dominated society, whereby ***machismo*** (strong masculine pride) is counterbalanced by ***marianismo*** (female subservience). The Argentine social system is patriarchal, meaning men hold most power and authority. Women's equality has progressed rapidly in recent decades, and Argentina ranked 8 of 22 Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries in a 2023 gender equality study.


## Gender Roles and Work

**Domestic Work:** Historically, Argentine society maintained a distinct division between genders, with women responsible for most household chores and childcare, even if they worked outside the home. Today, in some households, men increasingly help with domestic duties.

**Labor Force:** In 2023, 51% of women worked outside the home, lower to neighboring Brazil (53%), Chile (52%), Uruguay (56%) and the US (57%). Overall, men tend to dominate skilled and professional positions. Women hold about 29% of managerial positions, similar to Uruguay (36%), Chile (31%) and Brazil (38%). Instead, women account for most informal sector workers (see *Economics and Resources*). For example, almost all domestic workers are women, nearly 80% of whom toil in the informal sector, receiving low wages and no workforce protections. Although Argentine law prohibits wage discrimination based on sex, as of 2023, women earned about 24% less than men for similar work.

## Gender and the Law

Legal protections forbid workplace harassment and employment discrimination. While protections are generally enforced, cases of workplace discrimination based on disability, sex, and age do occur. Women are guaranteed 90 days of paid maternity leave, and those who have been employed for over a year are eligible for 3-6 months of unpaid leave. Men receive only 2 days of

paternity leave after their child's birth. Laws prohibit women from working in jobs deemed hazardous and in certain sectors like mining, transportation, and manufacturing (see *Economics and Resources*). In 2022, Argentina prohibited mandatory testing of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases as part of pre-employment exams to combat discrimination against HIV-positive individuals.

### Gender and Politics

Although the campaign for women's suffrage began in the early 1900s, it was with the support of First Lady Eva Perón that women gained the right to vote in 1947 (see *History and Myth*). Isabel Perón, President Perón's third wife and Vice President, served as Argentina's and the world's first woman President from 1974-76, assuming her husband's title after his death in 1974. In 1991, Argentina became the first LAC country to pass national electoral legislation to incorporate gender quotas for political party lists, which must include at least 30% women. In 2023, women held about 45% of seats in Congress (see *Political and Social Relations*), higher than Brazil (18%), Paraguay (19%), and Chile (36%). Men dominate many national-level judicial and political positions, and in 2023, only 7 of the 23 provincial governors were women.

### Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

GBV is widespread and became more prevalent due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions (see *Sustenance and Health*). According to a 2022 survey by Argentina's Ministry of Women, Gender, and Diversity (Spanish abbreviation MMGD), 45% of women reported GBV by a former partner. In 2023, the country had about 250 femicides (murder of a woman based on her gender). The law stipulates sentences of 6 months to 20 years for rape and 8-25 years for femicide convictions. However, prosecution and protective measures are often ineffective.

In 2019, Argentina formed the MMGD to promote equality and combat GBV. By law, all federal employees must receive training on gender and GBV. In 2021, the training also became

arequirement for all individuals applying for their first driver's license. Various services such as hotlines and shelters assist GBV survivors. The government provides financial support to children orphaned by femicide. Founded in 2015 in Argentina, the Latin American feminist movement ***Ni Una Menos*** (Not One Less) has raised awareness for women's issues and demanded justice for women.

### Sex and Procreation

Between 1960-2023, Argentina's fertility rate decreased from 3.1 births per woman to 2.2, higher than the LAC average (1.9) and the US rate (1.8). Largely due to sexual abuse and a lack of comprehensive sex education, Argentina's adolescent fertility rate was 38 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 in 2022, over two times the US rate (15), and higher than Chile (23) and lower than Brazil (44). In some northern provinces, around 25% births are from adolescent pregnancies. However, the ***Puedo Decidir*** (I Can Decide) awareness campaign advocates for youth to decide when and how to have sex and provides information on safe sex and pregnancy. After advocacy groups promoted abortion rights for years, in 2020, Argentina legalized abortions up to the 14th week of pregnancy.

### Homosexuality in Argentina

In 2010, Argentina became the first LAC country to legalize same-sex marriage, and today, all legally recognized couples are entitled to the same benefits and rights, notably adoption. In 2012, the Gender Identity Law established the right for individuals to change their gender and name on government IDs. Argentina became the first LAC country to establish a third gender category of neither male nor female in 2022, when then President Fernández allowing individuals to choose the third category.

At this time, the US State Department does not have a Status of Forces Agreement in place for Argentina. Service members will be subject to local laws with regards to this topic.

# 6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

## Language Overview

Spanish is Argentina's official and the primary language of government, business, education, and the media.


## Spanish

Spanish conquerors brought their language to the region beginning in the 16th century (see p. 1-2 of *History and Myth*). Today, almost all Argentines speak Spanish, which they refer to as ***castellano*** (Castilian) after a region of Spain, instead of ***español*** (Spanish), the term commonly used in many other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Spanish uses the same alphabet as English with three additional consonants – ch, ll (usually pronounced like "y" as in yam or "j" as in jam), and ñ (pronounced like the "ny" in the word canyon). The similar alphabet, consistent spelling patterns, and Latin base make Spanish relatively easy for English speakers to learn.

Argentine Spanish differs from that of other LAC countries in its unique grammar forms, pronunciation, intonation, and slang. Many Argentines use the ***voseo***, use of second-person singular ***vos*** ("you") instead of ***tú*** (see "Forms of Address" below), along with its distinct verb forms. Argentina is also home to several regional Spanish dialects. ***Porteño*** ("port city person") typically refers to the dialect spoken in and around Buenos Aires. *Porteño*'s main pronunciation difference is use of the "sh" sound for words with "ll" and "y," such as by pronouncing "***pollo***" (chicken) as "po*sh*o." In Buenos Aires, many people also speak an informal slang called ***lunfardo*** that mainly derives from Italian. An example of the *lunfardo* speech pattern is to reverse the syllables of a word, such as "***gotan***" for ***tango***, a dance.

## Other Languages

Argentina is also home to speakers of other languages. Historically, official policy encouraged immigration from Europe

(see p. 6 of *Political and Social Relations*), resulting in some 752,000 speakers of Galician (a language primarily spoken in northwestern Spain) and 198,000 of Catalan (spoken primarily in eastern Spain and France). Other European languages are Polish (198,000), Romani (59,000), and Portuguese (58,000). In addition, nearly a million Argentines have some knowledge of Levantine Arabic (a dialect spoken in Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria), many of whom arrived in Argentina at the end of the 19th century. Another 159,000 residents speak Armenian.

Argentina is also home to about 14 indigenous languages (see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*), like Guaraní (224,000), Quechua (65,000), and Toba (30,000), most of which are spoken by immigrants or in rural areas.

**English:** Due to its increasing importance to global commerce, English is a common second language in Argentina, which has some 7 million speakers. Today, many students receive English instruction (see p. 5 of *Learning and Knowledge*). As of 2023, Argentina ranked 28th in the world and the highest in Latin America in an English proficiency index. Although widespread, many English speakers live in Buenos Aires.


**Italian:** Italian has affected Argentina's linguistic landscape for centuries. Most Italian immigrants arrived in Argentina in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*). Today, over 1.2 million Argentines speak Italian, mainly in Buenos Aires and other urban areas. Italian influenced the intonation of some regional dialects, as well as hand gestures (see "Gestures" below).

### Communication Overview

Communicating competently in Argentina requires not only knowledge of Spanish, but also the ability to interact effectively using language. This broad notion of competence includes paralanguage (rate of speech, volume, intonation), nonverbal communication (personal space, touch, gestures), and

interaction management (conversation initiation, turn-taking, and termination). When used properly, these forms of communication help to ensure that statements are interpreted as the speaker intends.

### Communication Style

Argentines tend to be expressive communicators and typically speak with animated gestures. Conversations are often energetic and emotional. Many Argentines ask personal questions, generally about family or finances, and may consider a conversation partner impolite if he does not make such inquiries. Argentines may interrupt the speaker during conversation, particularly when interested and passionate about the topic. Interruptions and raised voices do not necessarily indicate agitation or rudeness. Nevertheless, Argentines often imply their intended meaning rather than stating it directly and prefer to avoid confrontation by resolving the issue indirectly or in private. Accordingly, they are often diplomatic or measured in what they say to avoid potentially volatile situations.

Nonverbal communication is also crucial, and eye contact is especially important because it shows respect and attentiveness while listening and honesty while speaking (see p. 3 of *Time and Space*). Many Argentines, regardless of gender, touch their conversation partner's arm, shoulder, and back, actions they often consider a sign of friendliness and attentiveness. Argentines also tend to stand closer to each other than Americans, as they consider backing away from someone during conversation rude.

### Greetings

Argentines consider greetings as welcoming and conveying acknowledgement. The most common greeting is a light handshake with eye contact, particularly when meeting someone for the first time or in a formal setting. Argentine women and family or close friends of all genders typically

exchange cheek kisses. Some men may greet other men with an ***abrazo*** (hug) and give back slaps to good friends and family.

Greetings are usually accompanied by the phrase ***buenos días*** (good morning), ***buenas tardes*** (good afternoon), or ***buenas noches*** (good evening). Argentines often extend such greetings to neighbors or when passing someone on the street in smaller towns. Though not a formal greeting, many Argentines preface their greetings with "***che***," an Argentine Spanish word often used to informally gain someone's attention, similar to "hey".

### Names

An Argentine name typically comprises one or two first names and a surname. Some Argentines have two last names, usually their mother's and father's surnames, which convey their family heritage. Married women can opt to adopt their husband's name or keep their maiden name. Some married women use the preposition ***de*** (of) before their husband's surname. For example, in the name of Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Cristina is her first name, Fernández is her maiden name, and Kirchner is her husband's surname.

### Forms of Address

Titles depend on age, social status, and relationship but are generally formal and courteous. In many business or professional settings, Argentines typically use titles of respect such as ***señor*** ("Mr."), ***señora*** ("Mrs."), and ***señorita*** (for young/unmarried women), sometimes with last name. To demonstrate special deference to family members, Argentines may use only the relative's title but not the name. For example, an Argentine may address his aunt using just the title ***tía*** (aunt). Argentines also adjust their usage of "you" pronouns and verb conjugations depending on the level of formality required. Many residents use the formal *Usted* in business and professional settings, when speaking to those of higher status, or to indicate

respect. Nevertheless, *vos*, derived from the plural form of the informal "you," is more common, and Argentines often use it among family, friends, and strangers.

### Conversational Topics

After initial polite greetings, Argentines typically engage in light conversation about work and family. Other common topics of conversation are Argentine culture, cuisine, and natural landscapes. ***Fútbol*** (soccer) and other sports (see p. 2-3 of *Aesthetics and Recreation*) are also common conversational topics.

Foreign nationals should avoid sharing opinions about certain potentially offensive political issues, such as Juan Perón's first

Presidency (see p. 8-9 of *History and Myth*), and the territorial disputes with the United Kingdom over the Falkland Islands (see p. 12 of *History and Myth*) and with Chile over their shared border (see p. 9 of *Political and Social Relations*). If an Argentine raises one of these or other potentially sensitive subjects, foreign nationals should listen politely and with compassion.

### Gestures

Argentines often use gestures in conversation. They beckon by holding the palm of the hand upward while making a scratching motion with their fingers. Placing hands on the hips can be confrontational or signify boredom, while pointing with the index finger and using an inverted "OK" sign are considered offensive. Brushing fingertips underneath the chin can mean "I don't know" or "I don't care," and placing the index finger below the eye and pulling down slightly means "watch out" or "be careful."

### Language Training Resources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ and click on "Resources" for access to language training and other resources.

## Useful Words and Phrases

| English | Spanish |
|---|---|
| Hello | Hola |
| How are you? | ¿Cómo estás? / ¿Cómo andás? |
| I am well | Estoy bien |
| Excuse me | Disculpe / Perdón |
| Yes | Sí |
| No | No |
| Please | Por favor |
| Thank you | Gracias |
| You are welcome | De nada |
| I'm sorry | Lo siento |
| I don't understand | No entiendo |
| What is your name? | ¿Cuál es tu nombre? / ¿Cómo te llamás? |
| My name is ___ | Me llamo ____ |
| Where are you from? | ¿De dónde sos? |
| I am from the US | Yo soy de los Estados Unidos |
| Goodbye | Chau / Adiós |
| Good morning/day | Buenos días / buen día |
| Good afternoon | Buenas tardes |
| Good evening | Buenas noches |
| What does ___ mean? | ¿Qué significa ___? |
| What is this? | ¿Qué es esto? |
| I would like a ___ | Quisiera un/a ___ |
| How do you say ___? | ¿Cómo se dice ___? |
| …in English? | …en inglés? |
| …in Spanish? | …en español? |
| What do you want? | ¿Qué querés? |
| What time is it? | ¿Qué hora es? |
| Yesterday | Ayer |
| Today | Hoy |
| Tomorrow | Mañana |
| Where is the doctor? | ¿Dónde está el médico? |
| Who? | ¿Quién? |
| When? | ¿Cuándo? |
| Where? | ¿Dónde? |
| Which? | ¿Cuál? |
| Why? | ¿Por qué? |
| Car | Coche / Auto / Carro |
| Plane | Avión |
| Bus | Colectivo / Micro / Bondi / Omnibus / Bus |

# 7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

### Literacy

- Total population over age 15 who can read and write: 99%
- Male: 98.9%
- Female: 99.1% (2021 estimate)

### Early Education

Before the arrival of the Spanish (see p. 1-2 of *History and Myth*), indigenous communities informally transmitted values, beliefs, historical knowledge, and a sense of community to younger generations through stories, proverbs, fables, myths, and legends (see p. 15 of *History and Myth*). Rites of passage were also an important means of perpetuating morals and values (see p. 3 of *Family and Kinship*).

### Spanish Education

In the Spanish colonial era (see p. 2-3 of *History and Myth*), the primary focus of education was to impart basic literacy and instruction in Roman Catholicism. Various Roman Catholic orders founded schools for local elites and some indigenous groups (see p. 2-3 of *Religion and Spirituality*). In 1609, the Jesuits established ***reducciones*** (reductions, see p. 2 of *Religion and Spirituality*) for northern Argentina's indigenous Guaraní community. These communities initially focused on Spanish-language instruction and religious education. As the *reducciones* grew, the Jesuits added production of European-style handicrafts, military tactics, and standardization of the Guaraní language (see p. 2 of *Language and Communication*) to their educational offerings.

In 1610, the Jesuits founded Argentina's first university, the Collegium Maximum (present-day ***Universidad Nacional de Córdoba***, National University of Córdoba, or UNC). In the 18th century, the royal court in Spain expelled the Jesuits and transferred control of the university to the Franciscan order (see

p. 3 of *Religion and Spirituality*). Thereafter, the school expanded to offer degrees in law and politics, which were the country's first options for secular post-secondary education.

### Education After Independence

After Argentina's 1816 independence (see p. 4 of *History and Myth*), citizens of Buenos Aires petitioned the government to open that region's first post-secondary institution, the ***Universidad de Buenos Aires*** (University of Buenos Aires, or UBA), in 1821. As the school was state-run and secular, UBA's founding sparked conflicts over the role of the Catholic Church and its traditional authority over educational matters, which plagued the government for decades. Regardless, UBA grew and conferred degrees in law and medicine, later adding engineering and natural sciences faculties. UBA also took control of two prestigious secondary schools in the city, providing children of the region's elite the opportunity to receive rigorous secular education at the secondary level.

The Presidency of Domingo Sarmiento (1868-74), a former schoolteacher, significantly increased the accessibility of primary education to many Argentines. Sarmiento had a firm conviction in education as a necessary component for functioning democratic societies and used the national budget to invest significantly in building schools, teachers' colleges, libraries, and museums.

By the end of the 19th century, President Julio Roca (see p. 6 of *History and Myth*) had used his popularity to pass a series of educational reforms meant to standardize education in the country's largely disparate provinces. In 1884, he signed a law mandating that education be free, compulsory, and secular for every child in Argentina. While the institution of secular education created further friction with the Catholic Church (see p. 3 of *Religion and Spirituality*), schooling in Argentina would remain nonreligious until 1943.

### Education in the 20th Century

Major developments in education occurred in 1918, after a series of student protests at UNC spread through the country and threatened to turn violent. In response, the government instituted a series of broad-ranging reforms that allowed universities academic freedom and greater independence to manage their curricula, budgets, and research.

In 1943, the government allowed religious education in schools and began to support Catholic schools financially. This more conservative trend remained in place for the subsequent decades, particularly during the 1976-83 military dictatorship (see p. 11-12 of *History and Myth*), when the government censored books, materials, and subjects it considered left-wing or subversive. After Argentina's 1983 return to democracy and subsequent economic difficulties, President Carlos Menem (see p. 12-13 of *History and Myth*) made major changes to the country's school system, moving responsibility for funding secondary schools from the federal to provincial governments.

### Modern Education System

Today, education in Argentina is free and compulsory for all citizens, with a mandated minimum of 13 years of schooling starting at age 5. Most students attend free government-run schools, although some enroll in private, mainly religious schools. In 2020, about 26% of primary-age students attended private, fee-based schools, significantly lower than neighboring Chile (63%), but higher than neighboring Uruguay (17%) and the average in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC–20%).

The Ministry of Education oversees all school accreditation and is tasked with assuring that educators meet national benchmarks. Likewise, the federal government manages the funding for primary schools nationwide and provides support for some independent and religious schools that are registered with

the government (see p. 1 of *Religion and Spirituality*). The language of instruction is Spanish, although in some regions, notably Jujuy in northwestern Argentina, the government allows educators to conduct some schooling in indigenous languages to improve educational outcomes for traditionally marginalized communities (see p. 13-14 of *Political and Social Relations*).

Most schools run from March to mid-December and operate two daily shifts of classes, whereby students attend either morning or afternoon sessions. While this system allows for existing school infrastructure to serve many children, particularly in urban areas, critics protest that the system burdens teachers and minimizes the time students spend in class.

Some private schools that cater to middle- and upper-class Argentines, usually in urban areas, teach foreign curricula that are mostly European or North American. These schools also typically offer longer school days. In recent years, the government has sought to bridge the difference between public and private schedules, extending the former by an hour in 2022.

In 2022, Argentina spent about 5% of its GDP on education, slightly higher than the LAC average (4%), and Chile (4%), but lower than the US (5.4%), and Brazil (6%). Spending on education has consistently decreased from a high of 5.5% in 2015, largely due to strained budgets stemming from Argentina's financial instability (see p. 4 of *Economics and Resources*). In a 2018 assessment of student performance in reading, math, and science, Argentina ranked below the US and some other South American countries surveyed, with similar scores to Peru.

**Pre-Primary:** Argentine children aged 45 days to 5 years may attend free public pre-primary programs, though some attend fee-based private programs. Enrollment in pre-primary school is mandatory for 4-year-old children. Greater than 99% of children of the appropriate age attended pre-primary programs in 2021.

**Basic Education:** ***Educación Primaria*** (primary-level education) begins at age 6 and comprises grades 1-6. Most schools follow the national curriculum, which consists of Spanish, foreign languages such as English and Portuguese, physical education, arts, social studies, and natural sciences. Students are graded on a 10-point scale, whereby a score of four or higher in every class enables progression to the following year of studies. In public Argentine primary schools, both students and teachers wear a white ***guardapolvo*** (smock), which is a symbol of public education nationwide. Some 99% of children of the appropriate age attended primary school in 2021.

**Secondary Education:** After ***educación primaria,*** students must complete ***educación secundaria*** (secondary-level education), which begins at age 13 and comprises grades 7-12. The first 3 years of studies comprise ***ciclo básico*** (basic cycle), which is a continuation of primary school. The second portion is ***ciclo orientado*** (focused cycle), for which students elect an academic focus and take accelerated courses in their chosen track. Art, agricultural studies, economics, mathematics, social studies, tourism management, and other tracks are potential options. Some 95% of children of the appropriate age attended secondary school in 2021.

**Post-Secondary School:** Argentina has a large network of public universities that offer free tuition for Argentines. To determine admission, each institution typically administers its own entrance exam. Despite no tuition, the high cost of living in urban areas (see p. 1 of *Family and Kinship*), coupled with Argentina's economic instability, has negatively impacted the completion of post-secondary degrees. As a result, 25-34-year-old Argentines are less likely to have a degree than their elders. Likewise, Argentina has a lower rate of post-secondary completion than Brazil and Chile. For wealthier Argentines, private universities, such as the ***Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina*** (Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina), are a popular alternative to their public counterparts.

# 8. TIME AND SPACE

**Overview**
Argentines tend to view interpersonal relationships, formality, and etiquette as key to conducting successful business transactions. While many Argentines have casual attitudes regarding punctuality in personal relationships, they often value timeliness in professional settings. Argentines' personal space preferences typically vary by degree of familiarity.

**Time and Work**
Argentina's workweek runs Monday-Friday, and many shops also open on a reduced schedule on the weekends. Normal business hours are 9am-7pm, with a 2-hour break between 12pm-2pm for lunch. Banks, post offices, and government offices are typically open from 8am-4pm, but likewise close for an hour midday. Supermarkets and shopping centers are open 10am-9pm and also usually on national holidays. In rural areas, operating hours tend to be more informal, varying according to owners' preferences.

**Working Conditions:** Argentine labor laws establish a 48-hour workweek, national minimum wage, overtime pay, paid vacation, sick leave, and other benefits. Additionally, many Argentines receive two annual bonuses called ***aguinaldos***, one in June and the other during the December holidays. Despite these and other benefits and protections, lax legal enforcement sometimes results in unsafe working conditions. Likewise, around 49% of Argentines are engaged in informal employment (see p. 4 of *Economics and Resources*), whereby labor codes such as the minimum wage and other workplace standards are inapplicable.

**Time Zone:** Argentina's time zone, Argentina Time (ARG), is 3 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and 2 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST) in the US. Since Argentina does

not observe daylight saving time, it is only 1 hour ahead of US Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) during part of the year.

**Date Notation:** Like the US, Argentina uses the Western (Gregorian) calendar. Unlike Americans, Argentines write the day first, followed by the month and year.

**National Holidays**

- January 1: New Year's Day
- February/March: Carnival (dates vary)
- March 24: Day of Memory, Truth, and Justice
- March/April: ***Viernes Santo*** (Good Friday–dates vary)
- April 2: Veterans' Day
- May 1: Labor Day
- May 25: May Revolution (see p. 3 of *History and Myth*)
- June 17: Death of Manuel Belgrano
- June 20: Flag Day
- July 9: Independence Day
- August 17: Death of José de San Martín (see p. 3-4 of *History and Myth*)
- October 12: Discovery of the Americas
- November 20: Day of National Sovereignty
- December 8: Feast of the Immaculate Conception
- December 25: Christmas Day

Any holiday that falls on a weekend is observed on the closest weekdav.

### Time and Business

Most Argentines value punctuality and generally adhere to deadlines, especially when dealing with foreigners. They consider interpersonal relationships as key in business settings, and meetings often begin with substantial polite conversation to establish rapport (see p. 5 of *Language and Communication*). Likewise, some business discussions occur outside of working hours, during meals, or in more relaxed settings than at an office.

Argentine businesses tend to be hierarchical in structure, with final decisions typically requiring top-level approval, which can slow the pace of business.

### Public and Personal Space

As in most societies, personal space in Argentina depends on the nature of the relationship. Most Argentines maintain an arm's length when conversing with strangers but stand closer to family and friends, especially as compared to American social space.

**Touch:** In business settings, greetings usually include minimal touching beyond the initial handshake, while women usually clasp hands loosely and exchange cheek kisses. Argentines typically reserve physical affection for family and friends.

**Eye Contact:** Argentines typically make brief but direct eye contact during greetings and maintain eye contact in conversations, considering it evidence of interest, attentiveness, and honesty (see p. 3 of *Language and Communication*).

### Photographs

Some churches, museums, landmarks, and military installations prohibit photography. Foreign nationals should acquire an Argentine's consent before taking his photo. Explicit permission is particularly important when photographing children.

### Driving

In urban areas, roads tend to be well-lit and maintained. Nevertheless, drivers often disobey traffic laws and ignore lane markings while maneuvering congested streets. In isolated rural areas, poor road conditions, combined with a lack of lighting, signage, and security, often makes driving hazardous. Like Americans, Argentines drive on the right side of the road. Argentina's rate of traffic-related deaths was 9 per 100,000 people in 2021, lower than the US rate (14) and lower than the average in Latin America and the Caribbean (14).

# 9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

## Overview

Argentine clothing, arts, and recreation reflect the country's rich history, blend of European and folk traditions, and cultural diversity.

## Dress and Appearance

**Traditional:** Some rural Argentines don traditional dress for holidays and special events. Men typically wear clothing based on the traditional styles of ***gauchos*** (cowboys, see p. 3, 15 of *History and Myth*). The *gaucho* style consists of a wide-brimmed hat, ***bombachas*** (wide-legged capri pants), a white shirt, boots, and a colorful necktie. Rural women's traditional dress, known as ***paisana*** ("countrywoman") or ***china***, consists of *bombachas* or a skirt and a shirt with braided hair. Some rural men and women also wear ***alpargatas*** (colorful shoes made from canvas and rope) and ponchos, woven from llama and alpaca wool that protect against cold weather. Traditional dress is less common in urban areas.

**Modern:** Everyday dress is often modest among older people, with women preferring long skirts and blouses and men pants and shirts. Younger Argentines typically dress more casually in jeans, t-shirts, and tennis shoes. Many Argentine women prefer European over North American fashions, and often mix casual and formal clothing. In business settings, Argentines typically prefer formal styles, such as dark suits, dresses, and pantsuits.

## Recreation and Leisure

Argentines often spend their leisure time with family and friends. Typical activities are sharing meals (see p. 1 of *Sustenance and Health*), playing sports and games, and going to ***confiterías*** (pastry shops), parks, tango or jazz clubs, bars, and nightclubs.

**Holidays and Festivals:** Argentines hold a variety of festivals and community celebrations, many reflecting the country's

Catholic roots (see p. 2 of *Religion and Spirituality*), European traditions, and historical events. In some provinces, like eastern Entre Ríos and western Neuquén, residents observe Protestant Reformation Day in recognition of Argentina's growing Protestant population (see p. 6 of *Religion and Spirituality*).

Argentina hosts several ***fiestas*** (festivals) annually. Many residents celebrate the monthlong Carnival in February or March, coinciding with the week before Lent, and celebrations vary by region. In Gualeguaychú, a city in Entre Ríos near the border with Uruguay, parades and dance competitions attract thousands of visitors. Generally, the festivities include fireworks, music, parades, and processions of dancers in colorful, sparkly costumes.

Another notable *fiesta* is the annual Buenos Aires Tango Festival (see "Music and Dance" below). As the world's largest tango festival, it features some 2,000 performers, who dance in competitions across the city. Villa General Belgrano in central Argentina hosts Oktoberfest, a large beer festival that celebrates German culture, which features beer gardens and German food.

Some national holidays commemorate important dates in Argentine history. Argentina's ***Día de San Martín*** celebrates José de San Martín's defeating the Spanish (see p. 3-4 of *History and Myth*) and liberating Argentina, Chile, and Peru. Some associated traditions include a military reenactment and Catholic mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Buenos Aires.

### Sports and Games

Argentines participate in a wide variety of sports, such as soccer, basketball, field hockey, rugby, tennis, polo, and volleyball. In 1953, President Juan Perón (see p. 8 of *History and Myth*) declared ***el pato*** (the duck) the national sport. Originally played with a stuffed duck instead of a ball, *el pato* combines basketball and polo, with players on horseback tossing a six-handled ball

into a basket. Today, the game is more commonly played among wealthy Argentines.

Argentina participates in numerous international competitions, such as the Summer and Winter Olympics, FIFA World Cup, ***Copa América*** (America Cup), Pan American Games, and Rugby World Cup. Argentina has won the FIFA World Cup three times (1978, 1986, and 2022). Juan Manuel Fangio became a notable Formula One race car driver, winning five World Drivers' Championships in the 1950s. Other notable athletes are tennis player Gabriela Sabatini, who won the US Open title in 1990, and Diego Maradona, who won many soccer trophies, including the World Cup in 1986.

**Soccer:** ***Fútbol*** (soccer) is Argentina's most popular sport, with youth learning through pick-up games at school and amateur leagues. Many Argentines watch matches at local ***canchas*** (playing fields) or in ***La Bombonera*** ("The Chocolate Box") or ***Estadio Monumental*** (Monumental Stadium) in Buenos Aires that are home to La Boca and River Plate clubs, respectively. Argentina's national team, nicknamed ***La Albiceleste*** (The White and Sky Blue) won the *Copa América* in 2021 for the fifteenth time. In 2022, Argentina beat France to win the FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Professional footballer Lionel Messi led the national team to victory as captain and is widely considered one of the world's best-ever soccer players.

**Games:** Argentines play many games. One popular game, ***tejo*** (tile), is similar to bocce and lawn bowling. Competitors attempt to throw tile discs close to the small *tejo* target. Although people of all ages play the game, older men often play *tejo* or chess in public squares.

### Music and Dance

Argentina's rich musical and dance traditions primarily reflect European and indigenous influences. Originating in the 1600s in the Pampas region (see p. 2 of *Political and Social Relations*),

***malambo*** is a dynamic mix of drumming, stomping, and footwork. Influenced by *gaucho* traditions, with men wearing wide-brimmed hats and billowy pants, it features ***bombos*** (drums) and ***boleadoras*** (weapons made of cords and heavy stone). ***Chacarera*** refers to folk music and dance originating in Santiago del Estero in northern Argentina. It usually incorporates a *bombo* ***leguero*** (drum made from a hollowed tree trunk), vocals, and European instruments such as the guitar, violin, and accordion. Performed in pairs, the man circles the woman, stomps his feet, and waves a handkerchief to the rhythm. By contrast, ***murga*** is popular across the country during Carnival *fiestas*. *Murga* blends percussion-based rhythms from a *bombo* ***con platillo*** (drum with a cymbal) with singing and dancing that sometimes includes acrobatic moves. Many associated chants and lyrics reflect social criticism and political expression.

Originally from the northern Salta province, another notable folk dance is ***zamba***, which is performed in pairs, with both the man and woman waving white handkerchiefs. ***Cuarteto***, a dance from Córdoba in central Argentina that resembles Dominican merengue, is named after the four-piece bands that play cheerful and upbeat music with piano, violin, bass, and accordion. *Cuarteto* draws on 1940s-era Spanish and Italian immigrants' musical styles (see p. 6 of *History and Myth*).

**Nuevo Cancionero:** During the 1960s and 70s, ***nuevo cancionero*** ("new songbook") emerged as a genre blending traditional Argentine musical styles with lyrics focusing on social justice during a sequence of military dictatorships in Latin America. Folk musicians Chilean Violeta Parra and Argentine Atahualpa Yupanqui pioneered *nuevo cancionero* (also referred to as ***nueva cancion***, or "new song" in neighboring countries). Yupanqui's lyrics and guitar melodies often reflected hardships of life in the Andes. Mercedes Sosa was one of Argentina's and Latin America's most celebrated and respected folk singers. She has received international acclaim, such as several Latin Grammy awards for Best Folk Album.

**Tango:** This form is Argentina's national dance and an integral part of Argentine culture. While historians disagree on its origins, some believe tango originated in La Boca ***barrio*** (neighborhood) in Buenos Aires in the late 19th century. Tango combines styles like Cuban ***habanera*** ("Havana dance"), Spanish flamenco tango, and ***milonga***, a fast and sensual Argentine dance. Argentine tango is slower than *milonga,* with couples improvising movements in either a closed or open embrace. The dance and musical styles evolved from lively to melancholy in the early 1900s. The music features violins, piano, double bass, and ***bandoneones*** (similar to accordions), drawing influence from African and European rhythms.

Known as The King of Tango, French-born Argentine singer Carlos Gardel, is renowned across Latin America for his singing and acting. In the 1970s, Argentina's ***nuevo*** tango or tango ***joven*** (new or young tango) style emerged with jazz and classical music influences. Tango is still common today, with new bands shaping the musical style.

**Other Musical Genres:** Today, Argentines listen to a variety of foreign and Argentine musical styles like pop, ***rock nacional*** (national rock), ***reggaetón*** (a Spanish Caribbean-based genre), ***cumbia*** (a blended style originally from Colombia), classical, rap, electronic, and jazz. Formed in 1982, *rock nacional* band Soda Stereo is popular in Argentina and throughout Latin America.

### Literature

With roots in oral traditions, Argentina has a rich literary history. Around 1550, Pedro González de Prado and Matías Rojas de Oquendo wrote poetry and short stories, combining Amerindian oral poetry and Spanish styles.

*Gaucho* literature, also known as ***gauchesco***, developed in the 19th century, reflecting a romanticized national identity rooted in *gaucho* stories of conflict and struggle. José Hernández's epic poems *El Gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872) and its sequel *The Return of Martín Fierro* (1879) are examples of *gauchesco* style.

The 20th century produced Argentine Jorge Luis Borges, one of Latin America's most renowned authors. Although not well-known during his lifetime, Borges's poems and stories, such as the volume *Fictions* (1944), are considered classics today. Known for his writing style, Borges mixed myths, dreams, and reality in a genre known as magical realism.

Adolfo Bioy Casares collaborated with Borges on short stories and wrote novels. His *La Invención de Morel* (Morel's Invention) tells the story of a fugitive surviving on an island. A few decades later, author Julio Cortázar's novels and poetry gained extensive recognition. Experts describe his novel *Rayuela* (Hopscotch) as an anti-novel because the chapters explore different plot scenarios, while representing bohemian Argentina in the 1960s.

After the 1976-83 military dictatorship (see p. 11-12 of *History and Myth*), which forced many authors into exile, cultural freedom returned to Argentina. In 1984, author Ernesto Sábato received the Cervantes Prize (a prestigious Hispanic literature award) for his investigation of human rights violations during what became known by some as the dictatorship's ***Guerra Sucia*** (Dirty War). Sábato's work helped the prosecution of the military leaders responsible for killing civilians (see p. 12 of *History and Myth*). More recently published in 2017, Gabriela Cabezón Cámara's novel *The Adventures of China Iron* retells Hernández's *gaucho* epic with a female narrator.

### Folk Arts and Handicrafts

Argentina has a rich history of arts and crafts, including horn-carving, leather work, ceramics, weaving, and silver work.


***Fileteado porteño*** is a decorative painting style that uses intricate and bold patterns with colorful and ornate lettering. The style originated in Buenos Aires at the end of the 19th century to decorate wagons. Today, *fileteado porteño* can be seen on the sides of some buildings, buses, and store signs.

# 10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

## Sustenance Overview

Meals are often important social events, when family and friends linger for conversation and companionship. Argentine cuisine reflects the country's animal husbandry traditions, geographic diversity, and Italian, Spanish, and indigenous influences.

## Dining Customs

Most Argentines eat three daily meals and snack throughout the day. Traditionally, breakfast is light, while lunch, served in the early afternoon, is the heartiest meal. Business schedules in cities allow for relatively long lunch breaks (see p. 1 of *Time and Space*) but cause many Argentines to eat in the office or at a nearby restaurant instead of returning home, as was customary in previous generations. Dinner is often slightly smaller than lunch and served in the late evening at 9pm or later. Due to the late dinner time, most Argentines eat a ***merienda*** (snack) at some point between 5-7pm, which often consists of ***facturas*** (pastries), savory options like ***empanadas*** (meat or cheese turnovers), or ***sandwiches de migas*** (white bread sandwiches often made with ham and cheese).

When invited to an Argentine home, guests usually arrive a few minutes late and bring *facturas*, flowers, or a bottle of Argentine wine (see "Beverages" below) to thank the hosts for their hospitality. Hosts typically serve their guests first, who after finishing their portions, must decline several offers if they do not want additional food. Diners tend to take their time eating and often linger for hours over lively conversation. After-dinner espresso or liqueur typically follows an evening meal.

On weekends, many Argentines gather with friends and family to host ***asados*** (barbeques), where the menu typically consists of various cuts of beef served with ***chimichurri*** (a vinegar-based

sauce made with parsley, garlic, and oregano) and salad. While women traditionally prepare most meals, men usually use a ***parrilla*** (charcoal grill) to cook the meat, and the women prepare different salads or side dishes. In urban areas where Argentines may not have access to a *parrilla*, many locals frequent steakhouses or roadside grills instead of having their own *asado*.

### Diet

While varying by region and socioeconomic status, meals tend to highlight animal protein and starchy foods. Many Argentines' Italian heritage (see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*) influences much of the country's cuisine, resulting in the prevalence of wheat-based products like pasta, bread, and pizza in many meals and side dishes. Likewise, Argentina's vast grasslands and livestock sector allow for some of the world's highest levels of beef consumption, and to a lesser degree, pork, chicken, and lamb.

Other staples are potatoes and rice, which Argentines use often for their versatility and low cost. Animal fats also feature extensively, with cream, cheese, butter, and lard being popular ingredients in several dishes. The ***centolla*** (king crab) in Patagonia (see p. 2 of *Political and Social Relations*) is famous for its quality, though seafood does not feature as prominently in Argentine dishes as it does in some other Latin American cuisines, despite the country's long coastline. Common flavorings include parsley, oregano, black pepper, onion, mustard seed, and anise.

### Meals and Popular Dishes

Breakfast in Argentina is typically small and eaten quickly. It often features toast with fruit jams and cheese or butter or fruit and pastries like ***medialunas*** (croissants made with enriched egg dough). For lunch, dishes are heartier and more elaborate. Some popular dishes are ***milanesa*** (a thin breaded beef or chicken cutlet) served with French fries or in a sandwich, and ***carbonada*** (beef stew that features potatoes, corn, tomatoes,

and dried apricots, traditionally cooked in a hollow pumpkin). Likewise, Italian dishes, notably ***tallarines*** (fettucine pasta), ***ñoquis*** (gnocchi, dense potato dumplings), and ***provoleta*** (baked provolone-style cheese topped with herbs) are common options.

Dinner features similar lunch dishes. Options include pizza topped with ***fainá*** (a dense flatbread made with chickpea flour), ***tamales salteños*** (corn dough filled with meats and vegetables and steamed in a corn husk), or ***matambre*** (vegetables and hard-boiled eggs wrapped in beef). For dessert, Argentines often have sweets made with ***dulce de leche*** (caramelized condensed milk). Some popular choices are ***alfajores*** (*dulce de leche* sandwiched between butter cookies, sometimes rolled in shredded coconut, or dipped in chocolate), ***milojas*** (layers of alternating *dulce de leche* and puff pastry), and ***bolas de fraile*** (fried donuts filled with *dulce de leche*). Other popular sweets are flan, ***chocotorta*** (chocolate cake), ***dulce de membrillo*** (sweet quince, a Mediterranean fruit, paste) with cheese, and ice cream.

### Beverages

Some Argentines drink tea and coffee, particularly for breakfast. ***Café cortado*** (sweetened espresso with steamed milk) is a popular option in cafés and ***confiterías*** (pastry shops). Many Argentines consume ***yerba mate***, a herbal tea drunk from a gourd, throughout the day. The drink predates the arrival of the Spanish in Argentina (see p. 1 of *History and Myth*). Strict social conventions, like thanking the preparer after sipping the *mate* only when one no longer wants to receive the gourd again for another sip, govern its preparation and consumption.

Spaniards introduced grape vines to Argentina from neighboring Chile as early as the 16th century to make wine for use in Roman Catholic services (see p. 2 of *Religion and Spirituality*). In the mid-20th century, the wine industry rapidly developed after the arrival of European winemakers. In the 1990s, the “Malbec Boom,” a substantial increase in demand for Argentine wines,

particularly the Malbec varietals grown in the Mendoza region, brought global acclaim to the country's winemaking industry.

### Eating Out

Restaurants in urban centers like Buenos Aires and Córdoba range from upscale establishments specializing in international and local cuisine to inexpensive food stalls. Street food is popular in cities, and stalls often sell *empanadas* or sandwich varieties like ***choripán*** (*chorizo* with *chimichurri*), ***lomito*** (steak), ***bondiola*** or ***bondipan*** (pork shoulder), or ***panchos*** (hotdogs). A 10% tip is expected in most dining establishments.

### Health Overview

While the overall health of Argentines has improved in recent decades, they continue to face notably high non-communicable "lifestyle" diseases and other serious health challenges. Between 2000-23, life expectancy at birth increased from about 74 to 79 years, a figure slightly higher than the average of Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries (72) and lower than the US (81). Between 2000-23, infant mortality (the proportion of infants who die before age 1) decreased from about 18 deaths per 1,000 live births to 9, lower than the LAC average (14) and close to the US rate (5).

### Traditional Medicine

This treatment method consists of the knowledge, practices, and skills that are derived from a native population's beliefs, experiences, and theories. Traditional Argentine medicine relies on prayer and herbal treatments to identify and cure the causes of illness, both physical and spiritual. Today, some Argentines still use traditional religious and herbal remedies overseen by a ***curandero*** (healer) in addition to modern Western medicine. In 2018, municipal authorities in Neuquén Province, in northern Patagonia, founded Argentina's first hospital centered around the use of traditional indigenous medicines to serve the region's Mapuche community (see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*).

### Healthcare System

Argentina's healthcare system is a decentralized network composed of three entities. The largest is the social security system, which is funded by employer contributions and paycheck deductions. Trade unions run this scheme, which covers most formal-sector workers and their families (see p. 1 of *Time and Space* and p. 4 of *Economics and Resources*). Employers offer the coverage as a benefit, and providers cannot deny treatment to patients with preexisting conditions.

The public sector is the country's next largest medical services provider, covering some 35% of the population. In this system, provincial and municipal governments fund and manage hospitals and clinics, which provide free medical and dental care. While the quality of care in the public system is high, the large number of covered patients sometimes overburdens the system, leading to long wait times.

Argentina's private network traditionally caters to wealthy, urban Argentines, with only about 13% of the population having private coverage. Private hospitals and clinics typically offer a higher standard of care with shorter wait times. The disparity in the accessibility of medical care has led to unequal health outcomes among different segments of the population. Lower-income and rural Argentines are often unable to access nearby care.

Argentina has some of the LAC region's highest standards of healthcare and passed laws in 1988, 1995, and 2016 to improve healthcare accessibility and coverage. Likewise, changes to the country's constitution in 1994 (see p. 4 of *Political and Social Relations*) affirmed access to healthcare as a constitutional right. Government spending on healthcare has increased since 2003, with expenditures reaching about 10% of GDP in 2021, above the LAC average (8%) but below the US rate (17%). As of 2020, Argentina averages over 4 physicians per 1,000 people, above the LAC average (2.4) and US (3.6) but below Uruguay (4.9).

### Healthcare Challenges

The leading causes of death are chronic and non-communicable "lifestyle" diseases, which accounted for about 58% of deaths in 2021. Of these, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, diabetes, cancer, and Alzheimer's are the most common. Preventable "external causes," such as suicides, car accidents, and other injuries resulted in about 4% of deaths, lower than the US rate (6%). Argentines suffer from an elevated risk of cirrhosis (liver scarring that can lead to organ failure), which is frequently caused by excessive alcohol consumption. The disease has been among the leading causes of death for the past decade.

Public health experts underscore the lack of coordination between the three healthcare entities as a challenge to effective and equitable care. Provincial and municipal responsibility for the funding of local hospitals and clinics has led to disparate levels of public care between regions. Likewise, many private insurers do not cover complicated or expensive procedures to keep premiums relatively low. This shortfall further strains the public system and lengthens wait times for necessary care. About half of public hospitals and clinics are in the wealthy, populous central-eastern Pampas region (see p. 2 of *Political and Social Relations*), causing a disadvantage to residents of less populated areas of the country.

As of late-2024, the Argentine government confirmed over 10.1 million cases of COVID-19, resulting in over 130,867 deaths. Notably, some 84% of Argentines had received at least two doses of a vaccine against COVID-19, and 77% had received a booster or additional dose. To prevent the overburdening of the healthcare system at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Argentina implemented some of the world's strictest and longest quarantine measures in 2020, lasting some 6 months and heavily restricting non-emergency travel in the country (see p. 15 of *History and Myth*).

# 11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

## Overview

Argentina's early inhabitants (see p. 1 of *History and Myth*) were primarily nomadic hunter-gatherers, though some settled in small agricultural communities. Indigenous groups in northern Argentina, such as the Toba (or Qom), hunted and consumed local wildlife, while those further south and east, such as the Guaraní, developed settlements to farm vegetables like cassava (starchy root) and maize, and fished along rivers and the coast.

In the 16th century, Spain established colonies in Argentina (see p. 2-3 of *History and Myth*), but the land offered fewer economic advantages than other parts of its Empire. With the country's vast grasslands, livestock rearing for local consumption underpinned the colonial economy. Self-sufficient and dispersed regional economies developed from the 16-19th centuries. Over the years, trade grew between Buenos Aires and European merchants, who extracted fees from goods transiting the Paraná and Uruguay rivers. By the 18th century, growing wealth and immigration led Buenos Aires to become the region's administrative capital.

After Argentina gained independence in 1816 (see p. 4 of *History and Myth*), wheat, beef, and wool exports took on newfound importance. The Pampas region, with fertile soil and proximity to the Paraná River (see p. 2 of *Political and Social Relations*), underwent major economic development. Foreign manufacturers established operations in Argentina to export processed foods to Europe. In the early 20th century, Argentina became the world's leading meat exporter.

During the Baring Crisis of 1891, Argentina could not service its loans, prompting default and recession. World War I brought foreign investment to a standstill and another recession. Despite

these setbacks, fiscal instability proved transitory, as industrial production had grown during these financial crises. In 1913, Argentines' incomes equaled those of France and Germany.

Nevertheless, the Great Depression caused economic turmoil. A coup d'état in 1930 ushered in military rule under the Concordance, a political coalition that ruled from 1931-43, starting the "infamous decade" (see p. 7-8 of *History and Myth*). During this period, Argentina replaced foreign with domestic goods to protect local industries from foreign competition.


In 1946, former Labor Minister Juan Perón became President (see p. 8 of *History and Myth)*. In addition to enacting populist public service nationalization and revenue redistribution policies, Perón prioritized aid to industrial regions, raised wages, improved working conditions, and introduced the ***aguinaldo***, a working-class salary bonus (see p. 1 of *Time and Space*). Perón also increased public spending and enacted protectionist policies that raised the price of goods, increasing inflation. Further, the collapse of grain prices after World War II, combined with protectionist policies, made trade less profitable.

Successive military coups (see p. 10 of *History and Myth*) brought more economic instability to Argentina. Due to their protectionist policies, Perón's successors were unable to convince foreign creditors that Argentina was a sound investment destination. As a result, in 1958, the government devalued the currency to favor exporters and foreign investors, though loose monetary policy caused credit restrictions and high inflation. Protests arose in response to the ineffective economic policies that had led to a decline in living standards.

Juan Perón once again became President in 1973 (see p. 10 of *History and Myth)* and adopted policies of monetary stabilization, rigid price controls, wage regulation enforcement, and limits on agricultural exports. After Perón's death in 1974, his third wife, Isabel, assumed the Presidency and inherited an economy

suffering from rising oil prices and disease that was ravaging the livestock sector. In 1976, the Argentine Armed Forces removed her from power due to mounting economic troubles (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*), adopted free-trade economic policies, and relaxed price controls. Despite these reforms, wealth inequality plagued Argentine society. Further, labor strikes and protests in response to wage decline were one of the causes for Argentina's transition to democracy in 1983 (see p. 12 of *History and Myth*).

As the first President elected after the military dictatorship, Raúl Alfonsín introduced the Austral Plan, an austerity program that implemented a new currency, the ***austral***, and price controls. The Austral Plan was largely successful, reducing inflation and restoring Argentina's credit. However, in 1988, inflation rose to 388%. In response, President Carlos Menem advocated for tariff cuts and appointed Domingo Cavallo as Economy and Labor Minister, who replaced the austral with the new peso, privatized state-owned businesses, and enticed capital to return.

After Argentina adopted these free-market reforms, the economy improved but was left vulnerable to financial shocks. As financial crises befell emerging markets in the late 1990s, creditors viewed Argentina as a risky investment option. Inflation spiked, unemployment climbed to 25%, and GDP fell by 20%, as millions of Argentines lost their savings. The government limited bank account access and defaulted on foreign debts of about $85 billion. From 1998-2002, the Argentine Great Depression caused most Argentines economic strife, and the country remained an investment outcast.

In 2003, President Néstor Kirchner helped stabilize the economy by overseeing the restructuring of some foreign debt and harnessing the devalued peso and high soybean prices to make Argentine exports globally competitive. Between 2003-07, per-capita GDP growth averaged over 7.6%. Kirchner's wife and successor, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, nationalized private pension funds in 2008 and brought 90% of foreign debt into the

restructuring agreement, giving Argentina more time to pay off its debts and better withstand the 2008-09 global financial crisis.

Argentines' living standards improved, but inflation rose to over 30% in 2013, despite government manipulation of official data. Fernández de Kirchner was interventionist and turned Argentina inward. Massive public spending and confrontations with the bondholders who had not restructured their debts led to a $1.5 billion default in 2014.

President Mauricio Macri enticed the remaining bondholders to join the restructuring agreement in 2015, employed austerity measures, and ended high export taxes. However, in 2018, inflation rose to 50% as the Central Bank and Macri pursued conflicting economic policies. As a result, investors lost confidence in Argentina's economic liberalization, hurting its credit, and Argentina slid into recession.

COVID-19 pandemic restrictions (see p. 6 of *Sustenance and Health*) brought further economic pain to Argentina in 2020, when per-capita GDP declined by 10.8%. President Alberto Fernández reversed Macri's austerity measures to aid economic recovery, raising taxes on exports and high-income households, lowering interest rates, and increasing the minimum wage. In May 2020, Argentina lost access to international debt markets as the country defaulted on its debt payments for the ninth time.

Today, Argentina's debt is worth nearly 80% of GDP, which was $370 billion in 2023. Despite constant financial tumult, Argentina is Latin America's third-largest economy. While unemployment is high, it fell to about 6% in 2023, although informal employment accounts for some 48% of the labor force. Argentina also has one of the world's highest inflation rates, which rose above 100% in 2023. In late 2022, Argentina and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) came to an agreement to grant the country access to $3.9 billion to aid its economic recovery. Consequently, the near-term economic outlook is expected to improve, with a minor rise in GDP expected in 2023, due in part to the IMF agreement.

## Services

Comprising around 53% of GDP and 73% of the labor force in 2022, the services sector is the country's largest. Major subsectors are tourism, banking, and telecommunications.

**Tourism:** In 2023, over 13.4 million tourists, many from neighboring Brazil and Chile, visited natural sites like Iguazú Falls (see p. 2 of *Political and Social Relations*) or the Perito Moreno Glacier in Patagonia, and cities like Buenos Aires. Argentina's tourism subsector accounted for nearly $58.3 billion in 2023.

**Banking:** Argentina's financial system consists of 62 banks. The country's largest, ***Banco de la Nación Argentina*** (Bank of the Argentine Nation), is one of 13 state-owned banking institutions.

**Telecommunications:** Argentina is Latin America's third-largest telecommunications market, the revenue of which peaked at $8.2 billion in 2022. Today, Argentina has plans to expand its fiber optics networks to reach underserved rural regions and for its broadband services to eventually reach about 62% of residents.

## Industry

The industrial sector accounts for about 24% of GDP and employs 20% of residents. Major subsectors are manufacturing, mining, technology, and textiles.

**Manufacturing:** In 2022, manufacturing accounted for 16% of GDP. The most valuable manufactured exports are processed foods, worth about $29 billion. Argentina's manufacturers work closely with the agricultural sector, turning produce like wheat and soy into packaged goods. Argentina is also Latin America's third-largest vehicle manufacturer, employing 25,000 residents.

**Mining and Minerals:** In 2022, Argentina's mining exports were worth $3.8 billion. The subsector is one of the country's fastest growing, achieving 4% growth between 2018-22. Argentina

accounts for the world's third-most lithium reserves and exports. Other notable exports are gold, aluminum, boron, and uranium.

**Textiles:** This subsector generated about $5.61 billion revenue in 2023. Textile producers have expanded to neighboring markets in Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

### Agriculture

Agriculture accounts for about 7% of GDP and employs 7% of Argentines. Around 14% of Argentina is naturally arable, and agribusiness is vital to the economy. Unprocessed agricultural primary goods comprise about 25% of Argentine exports.

**Farming:** Argentina's major crops are soybeans, wheat, and corn and cattle is the most common livestock. In 2022, Argentina produced over three million tons of meat and exported nearly a million.

### Currency

Adopted in 1992, the Argentine ***peso convertible*** (shortened to ***peso*** or ARS) is issued in two coins (1, 2) and seven banknotes (2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, and 500). A peso divides into ***centavos*** issued in five coins (1, 5, 10, 25, and 50). From 2017-24, US$1 ranged between ARS$100-985.

### Foreign Trade

Exports, which totaled about $88.4billion in 2022, consisted of processed and unprocessed foods, animal fodder, vehicles, and gold sold to Brazil (14%), China (9%), the US (8%), Chile (6%), and India (5%). Imports totaled $81.5 billion and consisted of cars, vehicle parts, refined petroleum, natural gas, and soybeans from China (22%), Brazil (20%), the US (13%), Germany (3%), and Bolivia (3%).

### Foreign Aid

Argentina is a recipient of foreign aid, which primarily supports democratic stability (see p. 5-6 of *Political and Social Relations*), HIV/AIDS prevention, and border security efforts. In 2022, Argentina received about $9 million in official development aid, with $3.8 million from the US. Other major donors include the World Bank and issue-specific non-governmental organizations.

# 12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

### Overview

In recent decades, Argentina's physical and telecommunications infrastructures have grown considerably but still face challenges due to economic and geographical barriers, especially in rural areas. While the Argentine constitution provides for freedom of expression, journalists face occasional harassment, violence, and government interference, often in the name of combatting disinformation.

### Transportation

Most Argentines travel primarily by public transport. Residents use buses for long- and short-distance trips, while trains offer mostly intra-city and limited inter-city travel. Buenos Aires has a six-line ***subte*** (metro) with 90 stations. ***Colectivos*** (buses) are popular and often crowded. In large cities, luxury buses known as ***diferenciales*** offer more comfortable seats and air conditioning. Most cities also have a main bus terminal with set schedules and routes offering long-haul services on ***micros*** or ***omnibuses***. Argentina has Latin America's most privately registered vehicles per capita, with about 70% of Argentines having access to one. Taxis and ride-sharing services are widely available in big cities. Although many Argentines walk and ride bikes, biking is often unsafe due to dangerous road conditions (see *Time and Space*).

**Roadways:** About 18,000 miles of Argentina's 453,655 mi of roadways are paved. Argentina's geography and large swathes of sparsely populated land (see *Political and Social Relations*) make travel by road between regions or to remote areas difficult. Some rural roads are poorly maintained and dangerous, particularly in mountainous areas in Patagonia and near the border with Chile.

**Railways:** State-owned ***Trenes Argentinos Operaciones*** ("Argentine Trains Operations") manage Argentina's 22,939 mi of railways. Renationalized in 2008, the rail network transports

freight and passengers. Some train lines, such as the ***Tren a las Nubes*** ("Train to the Clouds") that runs from Salta to the Chilean frontier, are also tourist destinations.

**Ports and Waterways:** Argentina has about 6,835 mi of navigable waterways that mostly converge on the ***Río de la Plata*** ("River Plate") basin. Major Paraná River ports are Arroyo Seco, Rosario, and San Lorenzo-San Martín. Argentina's 3,100 mi of coastline are also critical to trade, with major seaports in Bahía Blanca, Buenos Aires, La Plata, Punta Colorada, and Ushuaia.

**Airways:** Argentina has 756 airports, 161 of which have paved runways. Buenos Aires's Ezeiza International Airport (EZE), also known as Ministro Pistarini International Airport, is the country's main hub. EZE served around 10.3 million passengers in 2023. Argentina is home to four major airlines. Aerolíneas Argentinas, the national flag carrier, is based in Buenos Aires and flies to around 60 destinations, primarily in the Americas.

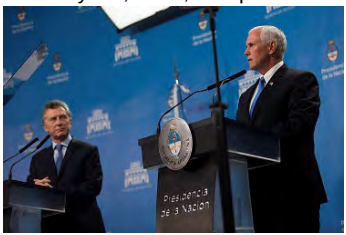
## Energy

As of 2023, Argentina generates about 59% of its energy from fossil fuels, 22% from hydroelectric, 12% from other renewables, and 5% from nuclear plants. The government plans to expand renewable energy production in the coming years. Today, Argentina is South America's largest nuclear and fourth-largest hydropower energy producer. The country has the world's second-largest shale gas reserves after China. In addition, Argentina has some 24,762 mi of gas, liquid petroleum gas, oil, and refined petroleum products pipelines.

## Media

Argentine law secures freedoms of expression and the press. While the Argentine Supreme Court has affirmed the rights of journalists to report on public individuals, interests, and government-related debates, journalists and media outlets often face political pressure. Some journalists have faced persecution when reporting on sensitive topics such as homosexual rights

and corruption. Media ownership is also highly concentrated. A few large corporations control many TV, radio, and print media outlets. In 2022, Argentina placed 29 of 180 countries in a press freedom ranking.




**Print Media:** Argentina has robust print media that offer daily, weekly, and monthly publications. Most national print media are based in Buenos Aires, although smaller cities also tend to have local papers. Major national dailies are *Clarín* and *La Nación*, while the *Buenos Aires Times* is a major English-language newspaper. Argentina also has many tabloid-style publications focused on sports and entertainment that are widely available for purchase, often from street vendors.

**TV and Radio:** TV is a popular entertainment and news source. Argentina has six major national TV networks, one of which (*Televisión Pública*) is state-owned. Some Argentines purchase cable or TV packages with global programming via satellite, broadband, or Internet providers. Radio is also popular and a viable source of news and information, particularly in rural areas, where TV stations are less accessible. Argentina has about 1,300 radio stations that offer news, entertainment, music, and sports content. Most programs broadcast in Spanish, though a few in English (see *Language and Communication*).

### Telecommunications

Argentina's telecommunications network covers many rural areas, though some lack coverage. In 2022, Argentina had about 17 landlines and 132 mobile devices per 100 people. The government has prioritized mobile network expansion, as most Argentines access the Internet via mobile devices.

**Internet:** As of 2021, about 87% of Argentines access the Internet daily. With the rapid expansion of mobile phone use, Argentina has just 21 broadband subscriptions per 100 people. While Internet access is generally unrestricted, the Argentine government occasionally blocks access to some websites.

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