

**Argentina**

# *Ethnicity in Argentina*

## *Group selection*

Approximately 97% of the Argentinian population are European descendants or mestizos (<sup>123</sup>). A complementary census for Indigenous Peoples ECPI (<sup>124</sup>) cites 600'329 indigenous persons (1.5%) belonging to more than 31 different ethnic groups. The literature, i.e. IWGIA (<sup>125</sup>) estimates the effective number to be higher (3-5%). The INAI (Instituto Nacional para Asuntos Indigenas - National Institute for Indigenous Affairs) estimates a number of 1 million to 1.5 million indigenous persons.

We consider both **Whites/Mestizos** and **Indigenous groups** as politically relevant ethnic groups.

## *Power relations*

### *1946-1975*

About half of Argentina's indigenous people live in cities which gives the group an urban character seldom observed in Latin America. One consequence of this pattern was the existence of urban indigenous intellectuals already in the middle of the 20th century (<sup>126</sup>, 185-187). However, the situation of the rural part of the group was precarious, characterized by dreadful conditions of exploitation – enforced by brutal military repression – and a lack of full citizenship rights (<sup>127</sup>). This situation changed with the rise to power of Juan Domingo Peron. Peron improved the conditions of the country's indigenous people considerably. Through patronage, he politically incorporated a small circle of urban indigenous figures creating a small class of co-opted indigenous bureaucrats (<sup>128</sup>, 187). Most important, however, were Peron's measures of improvement for the broader mass of the indigenous granting them important political and social rights. Indigenous people received ID documents for the first time and were allowed to participate in elections. The "Estatuto del Peron" improved the labor conditions in rural areas, a law from which indigenous groups also benefited (<sup>129</sup>, 14).

The emergence of a more visible indigenous movement also dates back to the era of Peronism. In 1946, Kolla people from the north-west walked all the way to Buenos Aires to demand land titles. This "malon de la paz", raid of peace, was consciously arranged in a way to create a generic, coherent image of indigenous peoples in the country and came to be seen as the departure point of the indige-

<sup>123</sup> [Central Intelligence Agency, 2014]

<sup>124</sup> [Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas y Censos, 2014]

<sup>125</sup> [International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2014]

<sup>126</sup> [Van Cott, 2005]

<sup>127</sup> [Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003]

<sup>128</sup> [Van Cott, 2005]

<sup>129</sup> [Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003]

nous struggle (<sup>130</sup>, 14). Political mobilization increased further in the 1960s but really gained momentum in the early 1970s when it developed more salient organizational structures (<sup>131</sup>, 17; <sup>132</sup>, 177).

Thus, Argentina's indigenous groups were sufficiently mobilized to code them as politically relevant from 1946 on. The more inclusionary state policies initiated by Peron make a coding of "powerless" for the period 1946- 1975 plausible.

### *1976-1983*

The 1976 coup against Isabel Peron resulted in Argentina's brutal military dictatorship. Its repression also selectively targeted the indigenous movement whose leaders were jailed and its organizations dismantled (<sup>133</sup>, 189). The junta consciously reconstituted old discourses of the "savage Indians" and commingled them with other "subversives" to "elements alien to" the national community (<sup>134</sup>, 18). Thus, during the military dictatorship the indigenous movement was literally crushed. Consequently, the indigenous peoples are coded as "discriminated" from 1976 to 1983.

### *1984-2021*

The return to democracy in 1983 reopened the political space for the indigenous movement. Indeed, increased mobilization and political activism brought the "indigenous issue" back on the political agenda (<sup>135</sup>, 18; <sup>136</sup>, 189) and finally resulted in what Gordillo and Hirsch (2003, 18) have termed "the breakup of non-recognition". Indigenous peoples received a special legal status and their collective rights were recognized in the constitution. The government created some mechanisms to include indigenous peoples in political decision, i.e. the INAI, which was established in 1985. The INAI's objective is to ensure indigeneous peoples' exercise of their citizenship and to guarantee their rights, as stated in the constitution. Besides, indigenous territorial rights were recognized and bilingual education was officially allowed. With the Amendment to the Argentinian constitution in 1994, indigenous peoples were recognized constitutionally for the first time. Both the right to territory and the right to bilingual/intercultural education were incorporated into this Amendment (<sup>137</sup>). In 2008, the Consejo de Coordinacion (Council of Coordination) and the Consejo Asesor (Council's Advisor) were created.

Indigenous representatives do not occupy any relevant position in the government. On the political level indigenous peoples need to be considered as one group, even if there are different indigenous organizations representing indigenous subgroups on the national level (i.e.: Organizacion de Naciones y Pueblos Indigenas en Argentina (Indigeneous Nations and Peoples Organization in Argentina), Coordinador de Educacion Intercultural, Bilingue y Cultural (Coordinator of Cultural, Bilingual and Intercultural Education), Confederacion Mapuche Neuquina (Neuquen Mapuche Confederation), Asociacion Centro Mapuche (Mapuche Central Organization), Coordinadora de

<sup>130</sup> [Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003]

<sup>131</sup> [Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003]

<sup>132</sup> [Van Cott, 2005]

<sup>133</sup> [Van Cott, 2005]

<sup>134</sup> [Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003]

<sup>135</sup> [Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003]

<sup>136</sup> [Van Cott, 2005]

<sup>137</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

Organizaciones Mapuche (Coordinator of Mapuche Organizations), Asociacion Indigena de la Republica Argentina (Indigenous Association of the Argentine Republic), Asociacion de Comunidades del Pueblo Guaraní (Association of Communities of Guaraní People), and Centro Kolla (Kolla Center). Although different mechanisms for participation in decision-making were created, indigenous peoples are not represented in the government and do not have access to executive power. They are thus coded as ‘powerless’ from 1984 on, the year after the end of the dictatorship.

Indigenous peoples’ influence on political decision-making has not increased in recent years (<sup>138</sup>). On the contrary, according to various sources indigenous communities face huge difficulties in having their constitutional rights implemented in practice (<sup>139</sup>: 2; <sup>140</sup>: 1; <sup>141</sup>: 4; <sup>142</sup>: 19; <sup>143</sup>; <sup>144</sup>). This gap between laws and actual implementation is what international observers consider to be one of the main issues concerning indigenous peoples in Argentina today (<sup>145</sup>; <sup>146</sup>). One of the major challenges is the protection of indigenous land rights against oil and gas exploration and forced eviction still takes place (<sup>147</sup>; <sup>148</sup>; <sup>149</sup>). The National Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INAI), started a survey on indigenous territories in 2006 in order to enhance the land titling process. Originally planned to be conducted within four years, the time frame for the survey has been extended several times, the next deadline being 2021 (<sup>150</sup>). As of today, indigenous peoples in Argentina lack representation in executive bodies of either the national or regional level and have little influence on the decision-making affecting their life.

<sup>138</sup> [USDS, 2015]

<sup>139</sup> [CERD, 2017]

<sup>140</sup> [Human Rights Watch, 2017]

<sup>141</sup> [UNHRC, 2017]

<sup>142</sup> [USDS, 2017]

<sup>143</sup> [Amnesty International, 2019]

<sup>144</sup> [Amnesty International, 2018]

<sup>145</sup> [Amnesty International, 2019]

<sup>146</sup> [Human Rights Watch 2020]

<sup>147</sup> [BTI, 2016]

<sup>148</sup> [Freedom House, 2017]

<sup>149</sup> [USDS, 2016]

<sup>150</sup> [Human Rights Watch 2020]

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# Political status of ethnic groups in A

*From 1946 until 1975*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.97	MONOPOLY
Indigenous peoples	0.015	POWERLESS



Figure 25: Political status of ethnic groups in Argentina during 1946-1975.

*From 1976 until 1983*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.97	MONOPOLY
Indigenous peoples	0.015	DISCRIMINATED



Figure 26: Political status of ethnic groups in Argentina during 1976-1983.

*From 1984 until 2021*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.97	MONOPOLY
Indigenous peoples	0.015	POWERLESS



Figure 27: Political status of ethnic groups in Argentina during 1984-2021.



# Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Argentina

From 1946 until 2021

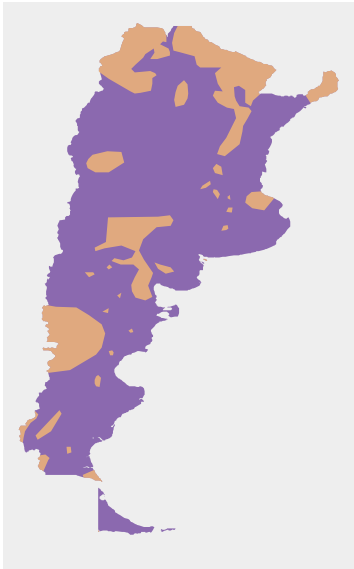


Figure 28: Map of ethnic groups in Argentina during 1946-2021.

Group name		Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Whites/mestizos	2 780 951	Statewide
■	Indigenous peoples	676 975	Regional & urban

Table 11: List of ethnic groups in Argentina during 1946-2021.

## *Conflicts in Argentina*

*Starting on 1955-06-15*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Argentina	Military faction (forces of Samuel Toranzo Calderón)		1955-06-15			
Government of Argentina	Military faction (forces of Eduardo A. Lonardi Doucet)	Whites/mestizos	1955-09-15	No	Yes, from EGIP	No
Government of Argentina	Military faction (colorados)	Whites/mestizos	1963-04-01	No	Yes, from EGIP	No
Government of Argentina	Montoneros	Whites/mestizos	1970-05-31	No	Yes, from EGIP	Split
Government of Argentina	ERP	Whites/mestizos	1970-09-17	No	Yes, from EGIP	No

*Starting on 1982-04-01*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Argentina	Government of United Kingdom		1982-04-01			