

# Colombia

## *Ethnicity in Colombia*

### *Power relations*

Colombians (mestizos & whites), indigenous peoples (3,4% belonging to 87 different groups) and Afro-Colombians (20-25%) are the politically relevant ethnic groups in Colombia <sup>(658)</sup>. In July 1991, a new Constitution was enacted as a result of violent confrontations and social and political pressures. The new Constitution gave place to a more comprehensive recognition of indigenous languages and cultures, their rights over their territories, and political representation for indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombians in the Congress (ethnic quota). Before that, indigenous people were not recognized as equal citizens within the Colombian state. They were treated by the terms of a law created in 1890 which reduced indigenous people to the status of children or "minors" <sup>(659)</sup>.

Colombia's new constitution provides a high degree of legal and political autonomy to specified indigenous and Afro-Colombian territories, but the groups are not represented in the national executive. Indigenous peoples managed to gain title to more than 24% of the national territory while Afro-Colombians gained title to 2% of the national territory. Overall, Afro-Colombians – who had started to politically mobilize in the early 1980s – failed to gain the same collective rights as the indigenous groups during the National Constituent Assembly in 1991 <sup>(660, 76-7)</sup>. (Also compared to the achievements of Afro-Ecuadorians in 1998, Afro-Colombians fared less well in 1991 <sup>(661, 276)</sup>.) In 2007, president Uribe appointed the first black female minister but still Afro-Colombians cannot be considered more than "powerless" <sup>(662)</sup>.

In the 1991 elections the first indigenous individuals got elected at the local level and in 1997 one regional governor was indigenous.

Indigenous as well as Afro-Colombian representatives have been elected to central political institutions (House of Representatives, Senate) in the 2010 elections. Taking into consideration that indigenous representatives occupy those two seats reserved to them by quota and Afro-Colombian representatives occupy slightly more seats than reserved by quota <sup>(663)</sup>, the political influence of both groups on the national level must still be considered as "powerless".

Since 2009 indigenous peoples were able to augment their officially recognized lands to 29.8% of Colombia's territory thereby gaining more regional autonomy (UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of

<sup>658</sup> [US State Department, 2008]

<sup>659</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

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<sup>663</sup> [US State Department, 2013]

human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people 2010). There are cases where this autonomy was ignored and the necessary prior consultation procedure was not applied by government officials (e.g. in the case of oil prospecting or drilling).

In contrast, the Afro-Colombian population does not possess any form of regional autonomy. The so called „Community Councils“, entities that should guarantee the administration of legally recognized Afro-Colombian territory, offer autonomy to a certain degree but more on the local than regional level (UN expert on minority issues 2011). Additionally, formally recognized Afro-Colombian territory did not augment significantly since 2009 <sup>(664, 77)</sup>.

<sup>664</sup> [González, 2011]

Still, indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombians face persecution, displacement and disappearances when their territories are in conflict with the state system or the interests of powerful stakeholders. Nevertheless, Van Cott considers Colombia as one of the Latin American countries most strongly committed to multiculturalism providing a "high degree of legal and political autonomy in specified indigenous territories“ <sup>(665)</sup>.

<sup>665</sup> [Van Cott, 2007]

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## Political status of ethnic groups in Colombia

*From 1946 until 1979*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.73	MONOPOLY
Afrocolombians	0.23	IRRELEVANT
Indigenous peoples	0.034	DISCRIMINATED

*From 1980 until 1991*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.73	MONOPOLY
Afrocolombians	0.23	POWERLESS
Indigenous peoples	0.034	DISCRIMINATED

*From 1992 until 2013*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.73	DOMINANT
Afrocolombians	0.23	POWERLESS
Indigenous peoples	0.034	POWERLESS

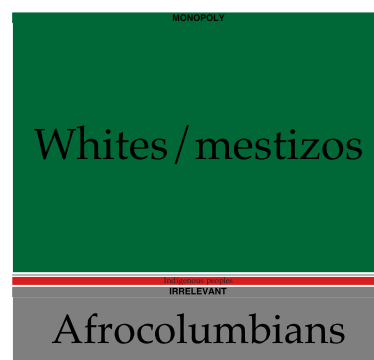


Figure 164: Political status of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1946-1979.

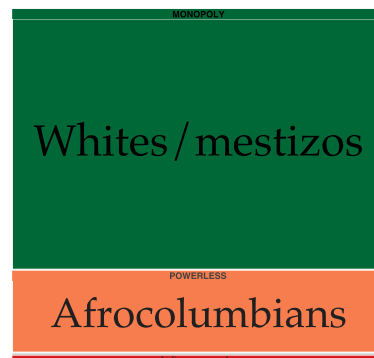


Figure 165: Political status of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1980-1991.



Figure 166: Political status of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1992-2013.

## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Colombia*

*From 1946 until 2013*

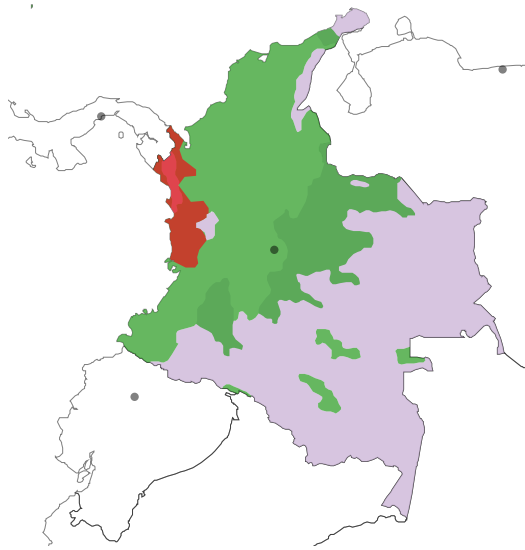


Figure 167: Map of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1992-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
Indigenous peoples	734 377	Regionally based
Whites/mestizos	555 156	Statewide
Afrocolumbians	41 782	Regional & urban

Table 51: List of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1946-2013.

## *Conflicts in Colombia*

*Starting on 1964-12-31*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Colombia	FARC		1964-12-31			
Government of Colombia	ELN		1965-01-07			
Government of Colombia	EPL		1968-01-06			
Government of Colombia	M-19		1978-01-15			