

Colombia

Ethnicity in Colombia

Group selection

Mestizos/Whites, Indigenous peoples (3,4%, belonging to 87 different groups) and **Afro-Colombians** (20-25%) are the politically relevant ethnic groups in Colombia ⁽⁹⁷³⁾.

⁹⁷³ [US State Department, 2008]

Power relations

1946-1979

During this period, Afro-Colombians were politically irrelevant, indigenous groups were discriminated, and whites/mestizos had a monopoly on power. 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" ⁽⁹⁷⁴⁾.

⁹⁷⁴ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

1980-1991

Afro-Colombians started to politically mobilize in the early 1980s and henceforth are coded as politically relevant ^(975, 76-7).

⁹⁷⁵ [Van Cott, 2000]

1992-2017

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).

Indigenous peoples are coded as having **territorial autonomy** status starting in 1992 (January 1st rule). Colombia's new constitution provided a high degree of legal and political autonomy to specified indigenous and Afro-Colombian territories (the latter to a much more limited degree), but the groups were 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 ^(976, 76-7). In 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 human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people 2010). There are

⁹⁷⁶ [Van Cott, 2000]

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 2014 the government issued a decree aimed at the protection of land rights in indigenous areas and consultation mechanisms of minority groups were included in the 2016 peace accord (⁹⁷⁷: 120; ⁹⁷⁸: 4; ⁹⁷⁹: 7). In the 1991 elections, the first indigenous individuals got elected at the local level and in 1997 one regional governor was indigenous.

Overall, Afro-Colombians failed to gain the same collective rights as the indigenous groups during the National Constitutional Assembly in 1991 (⁹⁸⁰, 76-7, 276). The 1991 Constitution gave indigenous peoples regional autonomy rights, but did not give the same rights to Afro-Colombians. 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 (⁹⁸¹). Additionally, formally recognized Afro-Colombian territory did not augment significantly since 2009 (⁹⁸², 77).

Regional autonomy remains to be coded for the indigenous peoples only, since Afro-Colombian self-governance is limited by the local scope of the community councils. According to the OHCHR (2016a: 17) Colombia’s remarkable constitutional recognition of indigenous and Afro-Colombian rights to collective land, political inclusion as well as autonomy is not yet fully implemented in practice. Especially in the context of the armed conflict or resource extraction both groups remain disproportionately affected by displacement and violence. Furthermore, some of their rights continue to be challenged by interests of powerful stakeholders (⁹⁸³: 125; ⁹⁸⁴: 1; ⁹⁸⁵: 5,7; ⁹⁸⁶: 8; ⁹⁸⁷: 30, 44).

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 (⁹⁸⁸). For both groups, actual influence on decisions on the national level has not increased significantly in recent years: Indigenous peoples as well as Afro-Colombians still lack representation in executive positions of national government (see ⁹⁸⁹: 35) In 2007, president Uribe appointed the first black female minister but still Afro-Colombians cannot be considered more than “powerless” (⁹⁹⁰). Indigenous peoples are also considered “powerless”, though whites/mestizos are downgraded to politically “dominant” (⁹⁹¹: 35).

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

⁹⁷⁷ [IWGIA, 2016]

⁹⁷⁸ [Freedom House, 2017]

⁹⁷⁹ [USDS, 2017]

⁹⁸⁰ [Van Cott, 2000]

⁹⁸¹ [UN expert on minority issues 2011]

⁹⁸² [González, 2011]

⁹⁸³ [IWGIA, 2016]

⁹⁸⁴ [MRGI, 2015]

⁹⁸⁵ [Freedom House, 2017]

⁹⁸⁶ [OHCHR, 2016b]

⁹⁸⁷ [USDS, 2017]

⁹⁸⁸ [US State Department, 2013]

⁹⁸⁹ [USDS, 2015]

⁹⁹⁰ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

⁹⁹¹ [USDS, 2015]

territories” (992).

⁹⁹² [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 2017

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



Figure 188: Political status of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1946-1979.



Figure 189: Political status of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1980-1991.



Figure 190: Political status of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1992-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Colombia

From 1946 until 1979

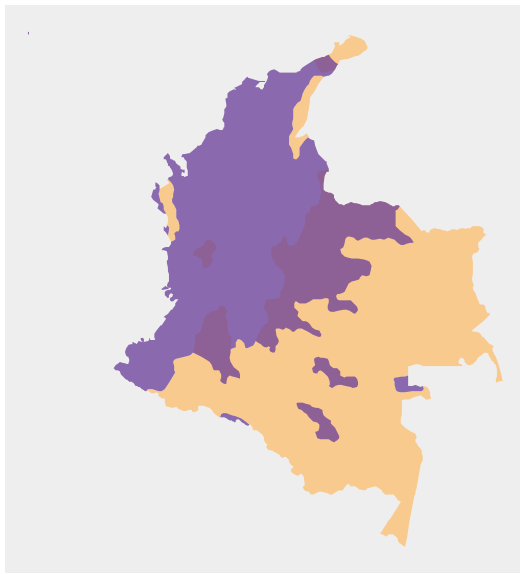


Figure 191: Map of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1946-1979.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Indigenous peoples	746 995	Regionally based
Whites/mestizos	558 386	Statewide

Table 60: List of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1946-1979.

From 1980 until 2017

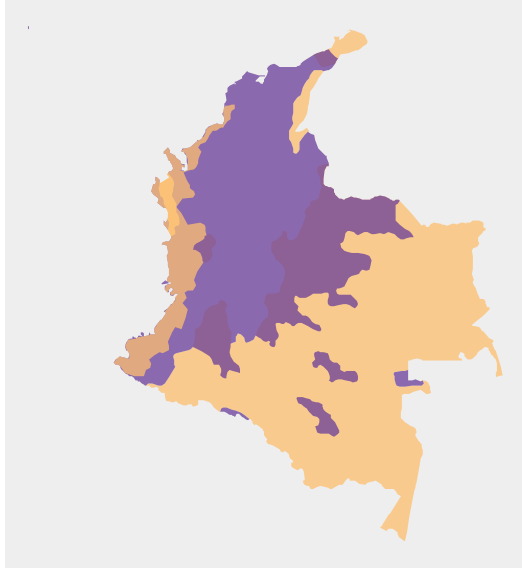


Figure 192: Map of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1980-2017.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Indigenous peoples	746 995	Regionally based
Whites/mestizos	558 386	Statewide
Afrocolombians	79 425	Regional & urban

Table 61: List of ethnic groups in Colombia during 1980-2017.

Conflicts in Colombia

Starting on 1964-12-30

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Colombia	FARC		1964-12-30			
Government of Colombia	ELN		1965-01-06			
Government of Colombia	EPL		1968-01-05			
Government of Colombia	M-19		1978-01-14			