

Cuba

Ethnicity in Cuba

Group selection

According to the 2012 Census, 9.3% of Cuban population identify as black, 26.6% as mestizo (also including mulattos which make up the majority of this group) and 64.1% as white (¹²⁹⁹). Due to the fact that ethnic discussions in Cuba are dominated by a Black-White differentiation and mulattos face similar problems as the black population (¹³⁰⁰, ¹³⁰¹), we identify **Blacks** and **Whites** as politically relevant ethnic groups, including mestizos/mulattos in the black group.

It is important to keep in mind that for official purposes, Cubans seemingly prefer to self-identify as “white” rather than as “mulatto” (or the government prefers white identifications), because earlier estimations put the Blacks/Mulattos at a much higher number (cf. ¹³⁰²).

Power relations

1946-1959

Ethnicity only played a significant part in Cuban politics until Castro’s revolution that was finished in 1959. In the era of slavery in the plantation society, **Blacks** formed the lowest strata of Cuban society. Until 1959, Cuban politics were dominated by a small, upper-class white circle. Afro-Cubans were socially and politically excluded (¹³⁰³, 343). Therefore, between 1946 and 1959, **Whites** are coded as “Senior Partner” and Blacks as “Powerless”.

1960-2017

After the revolution, Castro implemented anti-discrimination measures and declared the ethnicity/race problem as solved; ethnicity is no longer coded as relevant from this point on. Indeed, people’s sense of ethnic identity weakened and a more overarching Cuban identity formed, and Afro-Cubans certainly benefited from the wide-reaching economic and social reforms in post-revolution Cuba (¹³⁰⁴, 343-4; ¹³⁰⁵). The traditional white elite was replaced by a more representative government (¹³⁰⁶, 344). At the same time, Afro-Cubans were (and still are) thinly represented in the higher echelons of the ruling Communist Party and the Civil Service. Likewise, the World Directory of Minorities does not list a single organization for Afro-

¹²⁹⁹ [Oficina Nacional de Estadística e Información, 2012]

¹³⁰⁰ [Fuente, 2000]

¹³⁰¹ [Schmidt, 2008]

¹³⁰² [Minority Rights Group International, 2011]

¹³⁰³ [Levinson, 1998]

¹³⁰⁴ [Levinson, 1998]

¹³⁰⁵ [Minority Rights Group International, 2011]

¹³⁰⁶ [Levinson, 1998]

Cubans in its account of Minority Based & Advocacy Organizations (1307).

¹³⁰⁷ [Minority Rights Group International, 2011]

After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, which affected the Cuban economy significantly, ethnic discrimination reappeared more obviously (De La Fuente, 699); by the end of the 1990s, Cuban leaders acknowledged the existence of ethnic differences in Cuban society. In a surprising election outcomes in the 2008 National Assembly elections, where 35% of the elected representatives were Afro-Cubans or mulattoes, though race was not stressed in the discourse around the election (De La Fuente, 718). Ethnic mobilization/representation is hardly possible in the absence not only of political movements but civil society in general. (The World Directory of Minorities does not list a single organization for Afro-Cubans in its - usually opulent - account of Minority Based & Advocacy Organizations .) Discourses of racial discrimination are confined to side spots (like arts) (World Directory of Minorities - MRGI).

The death of Fidel Castro did not significantly alter the (in)significance of ethnicity in the political system and political discourse. Cuba's main cleavage is still about political loyalty to the ruling socialist system rather than about ethnicity (¹³⁰⁸: 25). Yet, in recent years increased inequality between whites and blacks - partly attributed to the economic reform - and continuing political underrepresentation of the latter is observed in some sources (¹³⁰⁹: 21, 25; ¹³¹⁰). Reported discrimination against black people in the context of job opportunities, mainly in the highly paid tourism sector (see ¹³¹¹: 21; ¹³¹²: 25), could further enhance ethnic division in the future.

¹³⁰⁸ [BTI, 2016]

¹³⁰⁹ [BTI, 2016]

¹³¹⁰ [Freedom House, 2017]

¹³¹¹ [BTI, 2016]

¹³¹² [USDS, 2017]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Cuba

From 1946 until 1959

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites	0.641	DOMINANT
Blacks	0.359	POWERLESS

From 1960 until 2017

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites	0.641	IRRELEVANT
Blacks	0.359	IRRELEVANT



Figure 245: Political status of ethnic groups in Cuba during 1946-1959.

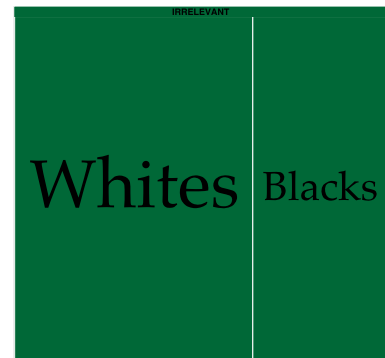


Figure 246: Political status of ethnic groups in Cuba during 1960-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Cuba

From 1946 until 1959

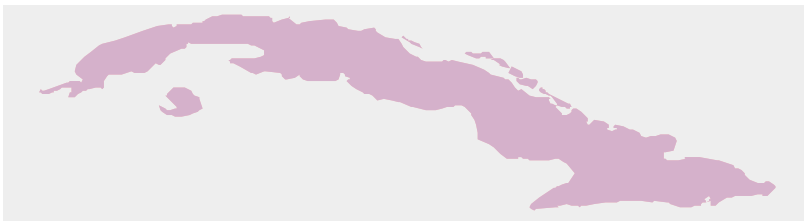


Figure 247: Map of ethnic groups in Cuba during 1946-1959.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Blacks	109 098	Statewide
■	Whites	109 098	Statewide

Table 76: List of ethnic groups in Cuba during 1946-1959.

Conflicts in Cuba

Starting on 1953-07-25

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Cuba	M-26-7	Whites	1953-07-25	No	No	No
Government of Cuba	Cuban Revolutionary Council	Whites	1961-04-16	No	No	No