

# Dominican Republic

# *Ethnicity in Dominican Republic*

## *Group selection*

The **Dominicans** are the main group in the Dominican Republic.

The **Dominican Haitians** are the largest ethnic minority.

The migration of Haitian citizens into the country dates back to 1920. They were a source of cheap labour for the Dominican and American sugar mills as sugarcane cutters (<sup>1635</sup>,10). Over time, they settled down in slums next to the sugar plantations and migration continued even after the decline of the sugar industry in the 1980s (<sup>1636</sup>). Discrimination has been a long standing issue for this community and its descendants. One of the most significant and defining moments of their discrimination can be traced back to the Trujillo era (mid-1930s), where 150'000 to 300'000 Haitians were massacred by the Dominican army under the pretext that they supported Dominican exiles that were plotting to overthrow Trujillo's regime (<sup>1637</sup>). Since then, discrimination has persisted even though migration from Haiti continued up to this date. For instance, in 2004 the government passed a new migration law (No. 285-04), which casts foreign workers and migrants as "in transit", preventing their children (if born in the Dominican Republic) to obtain citizenship despite being entitled to it (<sup>1638</sup>).

While there is a widespread and strong social and state-led political discrimination against Haitian immigrants and their descendants (<sup>1639</sup>), an important distinction needs to be made between three different groups of Haitians in the Dominican Republic: First, there are those that we refer to as "Dominican Haitians," who are a group of Dominican born children to a majority of unauthorized Haitians migrants, where a small fraction of them are documented and have citizenship (<sup>1640</sup>). The second group consists of a large community of long-term residents that were born in Haiti, who have now settled permanently in the Dominican Republic. The last group concerns temporary Haitian workers (<sup>1641</sup>,10). In the EPR dataset, we only consider the Dominican Haitians as politically relevant, as hundreds of them were stripped of the Dominican nationality in 2013, depriving them from all political rights, while also exacerbating the already entrenched discrimination (<sup>1642</sup>).

Apart from Haitian residents and migrants, the Dominican population is stratified by class, which strongly overlaps with skin color. Like other Caribbean populations, Dominicans can be categorized

<sup>1635</sup> [Ferguson, 2003]

<sup>1636</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2018]

<sup>1637</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2018]

<sup>1638</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2018]

<sup>1639</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

<sup>1640</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2018]

<sup>1641</sup> [Ferguson, 2003]

<sup>1642</sup> [George, 2018]

into blacks (11%), mulattoes (73%), and whites (16%) (<sup>1643</sup>), with the blacks forming the lowest socio-economic stratum. The ruling economic and political circle is constituted by a small number of white families (<sup>1644</sup>, 345). However, these class-color-based differences are not politicized.

Indigenous peoples neither are a politically relevant ethnic category. Due to a racist and xenophobic ideology towards the Afro descendant population coming up in the mid-19th century, an idealization of indigenous elements in Dominican culture took place (it were Taíno-Arawak groups that originally inhabited the island; <sup>1645</sup>). This results in ethnic perceptions that are very different from U.S. American or Europeans ones: while blacks are declared to be “indios oscuros” (dark indigenous people), most Dominicans are considered to be white (“blanco”), Indian (“indio”) or a mixture of both before mentioned ethnicities (“mestizo”). It is especially the indigenous component that helped to construct a Dominican national identity, that nowadays is defined as white, Catholic and Hispanic, by distinguishing it from Spanish and Haitian culture (<sup>1646</sup>, 150-151).

## *Power relations*

### *2014-2021*

In 2013, a constitutional court ruling (also known as Judgment 168-13 or ‘*la sentencia*’) considerably worsened an already difficult situation for the Haitian population in the Dominican Republic. The ruling affirmed that children born in the Dominican Republic to parents with irregular immigration status - mostly of Haitian descent - were not entitled to Dominican citizenship. The application of this judgement also resulted in the revocation of nationality (denationalization) of nearly 280’000 Haitians descendants that were born in the Dominican Republic (<sup>1647</sup>, 1; <sup>1648</sup>, 45-46). While estimates of the impact from the legislative vary, it is certain that the lives of hundred thousands were seriously affected.

A year later, the government tried to improve to the situation by issuing a new law (169-14) with the aim to alleviate the harsh consequences of the retrospective character from the previous ruling. However, this law was not implemented comprehensively and a majority of the affected people remain without nationality documents. Moreover, implementing law 169-14 has been slowed down and obstructed by the Central Electoral Board (hereinafter CEB) (<sup>1649</sup>, 23). Instead of restoring their nationality and recognizing them as full citizens, the government has opted to circumvent its own system by creating the so-called “book of foreigners” and other registries, where Dominicans of Haitian descent are listed, but not as nationals, and thus remain stateless (<sup>1650</sup>). The constant politicization of this issue also prevents facilitating or accelerating the process (<sup>1651</sup>, 28). Meanwhile, since 2015, deportations started to take place and are being continued up to date (<sup>1652</sup>, 1653: 5; <sup>1654</sup>, <sup>1655</sup>: 1).

The large minority of Haitian immigrants and of Dominicans of

<sup>1643</sup> [CIA, 2014]

<sup>1644</sup> [Levinson, 1998]

<sup>1645</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

<sup>1646</sup> [Duany, 1998]

<sup>1647</sup> [USDS, 2017]

<sup>1648</sup> [Agase et al. 2015]

<sup>1649</sup> [BTI, 2020]

<sup>1650</sup> [George, 2018]

<sup>1651</sup> [BTI, 2020]

<sup>1652</sup> [George, 2018]

<sup>1653</sup> [BTI, 2016]

<sup>1654</sup> [COHA, 2017]

<sup>1655</sup> [USDS, 2017]

Haitian descent are discriminated against on a daily basis and they have not managed to mobilize or organize sufficiently in order to turn the issue into a cleavage that would be manifested by a political party (<sup>1656</sup>,35). Overall, the Dominican government has failed to properly restore the nationality to several thousands of individuals that are entitled to regular citizenship. There was a symbolic effort in 2020 by the government to regularise the status and allow the naturalization of around 750 people born and raised in the country, who were previously deprived of citizenship due to the immigration status of their parents (<sup>1657</sup>). However, this is far from the estimates, where there are at least 133,770 individuals that remain without legal documentation and are entitled to it (<sup>1658</sup>). Hence, from 2014 to 2021, the Dominican Haitians are coded as discriminated.

<sup>1656</sup> [BTI, 2020]

<sup>1657</sup> [UNHCR, 2020]

<sup>1658</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2018]

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## *Political status of ethnic groups in Dominican Republic*

*From 1946 until 2013*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Dominicans	0.93	IRRELEVANT

*From 2014 until 2021*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Dominicans	0.93	MONOPOLY
Dominican Haitians	0.023	DISCRIMINATED

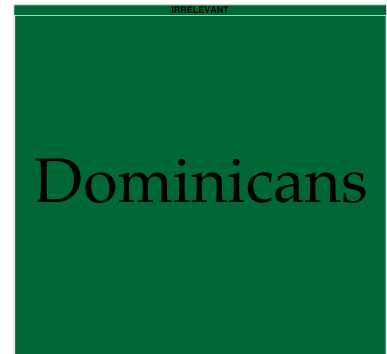


Figure 313: Political status of ethnic groups in Dominican Republic during 1946-2013.



Figure 314: Political status of ethnic groups in Dominican Republic during 2014-2021.

# Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Dominican Republic

*From 2014 until 2021*

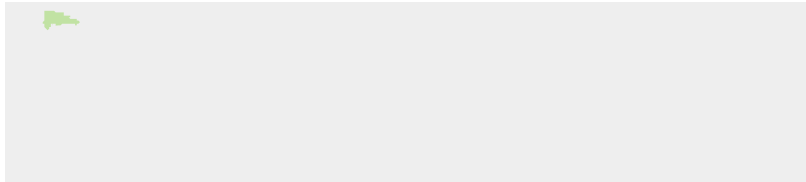


Figure 315: Map of ethnic groups in Dominican Republic during 2014-2021.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Dominicans	48 314	Statewide
■	Dominican Haitians	0	Dispersed

Table 108: List of ethnic groups in Dominican Republic during 2014-2021.

# *Conflicts in Dominican Republic*

*Starting on 1965-04-23*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Dominican Republic	Military faction (constitutionalists)	Dominicans	1965-04-23	No	Yes, from EGIP	Split