Ecuador

Ethnicity in Ecuador

Group selection

Ecuador's indigenous peoples can be divided into two main cultural groupings. **Indigenous highland peoples** are generally Kichwa who form part of the larger Quechua ethno-linguistic group, the largest surviving indigenous language in the Americas. The indigenous population in the eastern Amazonian lowlands (**Indigenous lowland peoples**) is smaller and more fragmented, consisting of about ten different language groups (e.g. lowland Kichwa, Shuar, Huaorani, Achuar etc.) ([1672], 4; [1673], 10).

[1672] [Becker, 2011]
[1673] [Lucero, 2008]

Due to the geographic and historico-political differences, the ethnic mobilization processes have developed quite differently in these two regions. In the highlands, ethnic mobilization started within a classist (or unionist) framework, directed against the injustices of the hacienda system – a feudal agricultural system based on large estates owned by wealthy landlords – and only took on an ethnic character in the 1980s ([1674], 61; [1675], 96-9). In contrast, the lowland groups can be considered pioneers of ethnic mobilization in Ecuador and in Latin America as a whole. Faced by the increasing agricultural colonization of the Amazon region and the impact of oil production, they successfully linked ecological grievances to a discourse of ethnic group survival ([1676], 6-7; [1677], 57-60; [1678], 100-110). Indigenous people at the coast, despite a certain "ethnic reawakening" in the last decades, are politically largely irrelevant ([1679], 4, 9; [1680], 10).

[1674] [Gerlach, 2003]
[1675] [Lucero, 2008]
[1676] [Becker, 2011]
[1677] [Gerlach, 2003]
[1678] [Lucero, 2008]
[1679] [Becker, 2011]
[1680] [Lucero, 2008]

Ethnic group sizes in Ecuador are highly controversial. The estimates for the size of the country's indigenous population range from about 7% (in the 2001 national census) to 40% (figure provided by the national indigenous organization CONAIE) ([1681], 3; [1682], 44-45). In this coding, the analysis follows Mijeski and Beck ([1683], 45) who consider the estimate given by the System of Indicators of the Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador (SIDENPE) of 2000 (14%) as the most reasonable approximation. According to Lucero ([1684], 10), about 85% of all indigenous people in Ecuador are Kichwa highlanders. Hence, the indigenous highland group is coded as constituting about 12% of the total country population, and the lowland groups about 2%. About 5% of the total population are Afro-Ecuadorians ([1685], 76).

[1681] [Becker, 2011]
[1682] [Mijeski & Beck, 2011]
[1683] [Mijeski & Beck, 2011]
[1684] [Lucero, 2008]
[1685] [Antón Sánchez, 2011]

Whites and mestizos can be combined into one single politically relevant ethnic group.

Power relations

1946-1979

After independence, Ecuador was a politically and economically divided state. The highlands and the coast constituted largely self-sufficient economies, which from the outset were involved in constant political rivalries ([1686], 25-26). Through property and literacy requirements large sectors of the population remained excluded from the right to vote – this affected particularly the indigenous people, most of whom were illiterate in Spanish ([1687], 46-8; [1688], 26, 30). At the same time, however, the disenfranchised indigenous population continued to finance the state with their taxes. Although the tribute and slavery were abolished in the second half of the 19th century, indigenous farm laborers (called "huasipungueros") remained trapped within the system of forced labor, which remained in place until the early 20th century ([1689], 26-9). The exclusionary literacy requirement for voting rights was only abolished with the return to civilian rule in 1979 and the new constitution that was promulgated in August of the same year. This highly oligarchic, ethnically (or racially) stratified power structure is reflected in the coding of this period, which indicates the whites and mestizos as enjoying monopoly power in Ecuador. All other groups are politically discriminated.

[1686] [Gerlach, 2003]

[1687] [Becker, 2011]

[1688] [Gerlach, 2003]

[1689] [Gerlach, 2003]

1980-2000

According to EPR's January-1st-rule, the new period starts in 1980. As a consequence of the new constitution, voter turnout among indigenous people rose from 19% to 45% between 1979 and 1986 ([1690], 113). The first self-identifying indigenous parliamentarian was elected in 1984 ([1691], 50-1). However, steep economic inequalities persisted or were even aggravated in the context of the neoliberal austerity programs imposed by the international donors from the mid-1980s on. These conditions formed the background for Ecuador's impressive surge in ethnic mobilization in the last quarter of the 20th century. In the lowlands, numerous provincial and local organizations, founded mostly in the 1970s, joined forces in 1980, forming the regional umbrella organization Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, CONFENIAE) ([1692], 6-7; [1693], 51-60; [1694], 100-6). In the highlands, the regional organization Confederación de Pueblos de la Nacionalidad Kichwa del Ecuador (Confederation of Peoples of the Kichwa Nationality, ECUARUNARI) was founded in 1972.

The peak of this pyramidal structure of ethnic mobilization was erected in 1986 with the national umbrella organization Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE) which vociferously advanced indigenous demands for land reform, territorial rights, bilingual education, official recognition of the indigenous identity and of the multi-ethnic nature of the state ([1695], 9; [1696], 70). Finally

[1690] [van Cott, 2005]

[1691] [Becker, 2011]

[1692] [Becker, 2011]

[1693] [Gerlach, 2003]

[1694] [Lucero, 2008]

[1695] [Becker, 2011]

[1696] [Gerlach, 2003]

(and above all, at the instigation of lowland leaders), indigenous activists founded their own electoral vehicle Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik (Pachakutik Movement for Plurinational Unity) in 1995, which despite the many non-indigenous allies, would cooperate closely with CONAIE ([1697], 43-6). The strong ethno-political mobilization soon started to yield fruits. In 1998, Ecuador ratified the ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. Moreover, the creation of state agencies for indigenous peoples under the control of indigenous organizations, such as the Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (Directorate of Bilingual Education, DINEIB) provided real power in specific domains, a number of bureaucratic posts, and considerable financial resources ([1698], 128; [1699], 146-7). In January 2000, President Jamil Mahuad was replaced in a bloodless coup by a tripartite junta that lasted for less than a day and was composed of military colonel Lucio Gutiérrez, CONAIE leader Antonio Vargas, and former Supreme Court justice Carlos Solórzano. Hence, for the first time in Ecuador's history, an indigenous person arrived at the highest spheres of political power – even though it did not last more than a few ephemeral hours, until the high command of the military restored order and installed a new interim president.

[1697] [Becker, 2011]

[1698] [Lucero, 2008]

[1699] [Pallares, 2007]

Overall, indigenous people cannot be considered more than "powerless" during this period, according to EPR's definition. Yet, their strong political protagonism (of both the highland and lowland groups), the new state institutions created for them, and the slowly improving political representation indicate a clear change to the discriminatory regime of the foregoing period. Motivated by, but in the shadow of, the indigenous movement, Afro-Ecuadorian organizations became more dynamic political actors in the 1990s. Just as the indigenous highland organizations, the rural Afro-Ecuadorian mobilization had first followed a classist approach of mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s, before gradually taking on an ethnic character, focusing on issues of racial discrimination and collective rights to ancestral territories ([1700], 88-116, 182-95). Despite the similar agenda (for example, regarding education, health, and territorial rights), Afro-Ecuadorian organizations have followed a mobilization strategy that was very different from that of the indigenous movement. Instead of the politics of pressure, protest, and large-scale demonstrations, the focus has been on gaining access to the state apparatus through specific individuals. The scarce public protest events were usually sponsored and co-organized by state institutions ([1701], 173-4). There was also little in the way of a concerted strategy of agenda setting through the media, which – if at all – show little openness towards the concerns of black Ecuadorians. Overall, the movement was still very weakly institutionalized, guided much more by specific individuals (mostly operating within the state apparatus) than consolidated organizations. Hence, although Afro-Ecuadorian demands became more audible in the 1990s, they are still mostly ignored by state leaders. Therefore, the Afro-Ecuadorian group is also coded as

[1700] [Antón Sánchez, 2011]

[1701] [Antón Sánchez, 2011]

"powerless" in this period.

2001-2004

This period starts with the elections of May 2000. (Again, due to EPR's January-1st-rule, the start year of the period is moved to 2001.) In these elections, Pachakutik won five provincial prefectures (three with their own candidates and two more through allied candidates) and nineteen municipal governments ([1702], 71; [1703], 207-208). In the central highland province of Cotopaxi, for instance, which has a high indigenous population share, Pachakutik candidate César Umajinga, backed by the regional CONAIE affiliate, was the first indigenous politician to be elected prefect of the region ([1704]). This capture of local and regional power by indigenous leaders has resulted in novel forms of participatory democracy directly influenced by indigenous organizations, thus carving out spaces of autonomous political power (Ospina, Santillana, and Arboleda 2008; [1705], 231; [1706]). Yet, since César Umajinga in Cotopaxi was the only indigenous provincial prefect elected in the 2000 elections, only the highland Kichwa group can be coded with "regional autonomy" from 2001 on.

[1702] [Becker, 2011]
[1703] [Guerrero and Ospina, 2003]
[1704] [Ospina, 2006]
[1705] [van Cott, 2005]
[1706] [van Cott, 2008]

In the November 2002 presidential election, CONAIE endorsed ex-putschist colonel Lucio Gutiérrez who defeated his opponent Álvaro Noboa and became president in 2003. As a reward for this support, Gutiérrez appointed three figureheads of the indigenous movement to important posts: Luis Macas as Minister for Agriculture, Nina Pacari as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Lourdes Tibán as undersecretary in the Ministry for Social Welfare. However, they quickly became marginalized within the executive, and the alliance broke apart after only six months ([1707], 84, 87). Gutiérrez then appointed CONAIE's ex-president and his former companion in the three-man junta of 2000, Antonio Vargas, to the post of Minister for Social Welfare ([1708], 91). Yet, because of his fallout with CONAIE, Vargas did not have the support of the indigenous population and was called a "traitor" by indigenous movement leaders. Overall, this indigenous participation in the executive was too short-lived and uninfluential as to be considered real political inclusion as defined by EPR. Hence, both indigenous groups continue to be coded as "powerless" at the level of the central state.

[1707] [Becker, 2011]
[1708] [Becker, 2011]

2005-2021

In the 2004 elections, four indigenous provincial prefects were elected. Apart from Mariano Curicama in the highland province of Chimborazo, these included Jaime Edmundo Mejía Reinoso (of the Pachakutik party) in Morona Santiago who was the first lowland indigenous person elected as provincial prefect. He was later joined by others, such as Salvador Quishpe (in Zamora Chinchipe) and Marcelino Chumpi (in Morona Santiago) who were elected in 2009 and later reelected. Also the highland indigenous people have

maintained regular access to regional power through elected provincial prefects, such as Blanca Guamangate and Jorge Guamán (both in Cotopaxi). Hence, from 2005 on, both the highland and the lowland indigenous groups can be coded with “regional autonomy". In contrast, access to national-level political power has remained tokenistic at most. In fact, under the presidency of Rafael Correa, Ecuador's indigenous movement has suffered from a serious backlash. In addition to the impact of the systematic co-option of selected indigenous leaders, this has much to do with the state-orchestrated clientelism, boosted by the massive influx of state revenues due to high oil prices, and the increasing repression and judicial persecution of the indigenous movement under Correa ([1709], 177-181, 219, 233).

[1709] [Becker, 2011]

As concerns the Afro-Ecuadorians, the 2008 constitution gives them many of the same rights that it provides to indigenous people. Moreover, the Executive Decree 60 of 2009 put into force the “Plurinational Plan to Eliminate Racial Discrimination and Ethnic and Cultural Exclusion" obligating the Ecuadorian state to combat discrimination and promote inclusive citizenship. Together with the 2006 Law for the Collective Rights of the Afro-Ecuadorian People, these provisions constitute the main political achievements of the Afro-Ecuadorian movement ([1710], 17, 151-152, 235-40). However, their political influence is even more marginal than that of the country's indigenous groups.

[1710] [Antón Sánchez, 2011]

Despite continuing advancements in legislative provisions in favor of indigenous people, in reality their political influence on executive decisions on the national level has remained marginal ([1711]: 25; [1712]: 799). The Correa administration continued to systematically weaken indigenous organizations, like CONAIE (see [1713]: 15; [1714]: 799) as well as Afro-Ecuadorian ones ([1715]: 160). In fact, CONAIE retired in 2018 from talks started in 2017 with the subsequent Moreno administration, given the lack of concrete results in important indigenous issues ([1716]). After the national elections in 2013 no indigenous or Afro-Ecuadorian candidates managed to enter the cabinet ([1717]: 26). The same holds for the national elections in 2017 ([1718]). The only exception in the later Moreno administration concerns the Secretariat of Water, whose Secretary from 2017 to 2019 was Humberto Cholango, of Kichwa origin and a prominent member of the Pachakutik party ([1719]; [1720]). However, this is, at best, a case of “tokenistic" representation, since the Secretariat of Water constitutes one of many political organs, and had not a ministerial quality until it was fused with the Ministry of Environment in 2020 ([1721]).

[1711] [BTI, 2016]
[1712] [Vogt, 2016]
[1713] [BTI, 2016]
[1714] [Vogt, 2016]
[1715] [Antón Sánchez, 2011]
[1716] [USDS, 2019]
[1717] [USDS, 2014]
[1718] [Ecuavisa, 2017]
[1719] [Ecuavisa, 2017]
[1720] [Romero, 2019]
[1721] [TeleAmazonas, 2020]

Regional autonomy is still positively coded for both of the indigenous groups, based on the reelection of their members as provincial prefects (Jorge Guamán, Cotopaxi; Mariano Curicama, Chimborazo; Salvador Quishpe, Zamora Chinchipe; Marcelino Chumpi, Morona Santiago) in 2014 ([1722]) and in 2019 (Jorge Guamán, Cotopaxi; Rafael Antuni, Morona Santiago) ([1723]).

[1722] [CNE, 2016]
[1723] [CNE, 2020]

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Political status of ethnic groups in E

From 1946 until 1979

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.81	MONOPOLY
Indigenous highland peoples (Kichwa)	0.12	DISCRIMINATED
Afro-Ecuadorians	0.05	DISCRIMINATED
Indigenous lowland peoples (Shuar, Achuar etc.)	0.02	DISCRIMINATED

Figure 317: Political status of ethnic groups in Ecuador during 1946-1979.

From 1980 until 2000

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.81	MONOPOLY
Indigenous highland peoples (Kichwa)	0.12	POWERLESS
Afro-Ecuadorians	0.05	POWERLESS
Indigenous lowland peoples (Shuar, Achuar etc.)	0.02	POWERLESS

Figure 318: Political status of ethnic groups in Ecuador during 1980-2000.

From 2001 until 2004

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.81	DOMINANT
Indigenous highland peoples (Kichwa)	0.12	POWERLESS
Afro-Ecuadorians	0.05	POWERLESS
Indigenous lowland peoples (Shuar, Achuar etc.)	0.02	POWERLESS

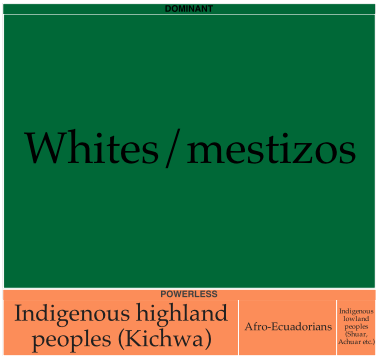

Figure 319: Political status of ethnic groups in Ecuador during 2001-2004.

From 2005 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.81	DOMINANT
Indigenous highland peoples (Kichwa)	0.12	POWERLESS
Afro-Ecuadorians	0.05	POWERLESS
Indigenous lowland peoples (Shuar, Achuar etc.)	0.02	POWERLESS

Figure 320: Political status of ethnic groups in Ecuador during 2005-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Ecuador

From 1946 until 1970

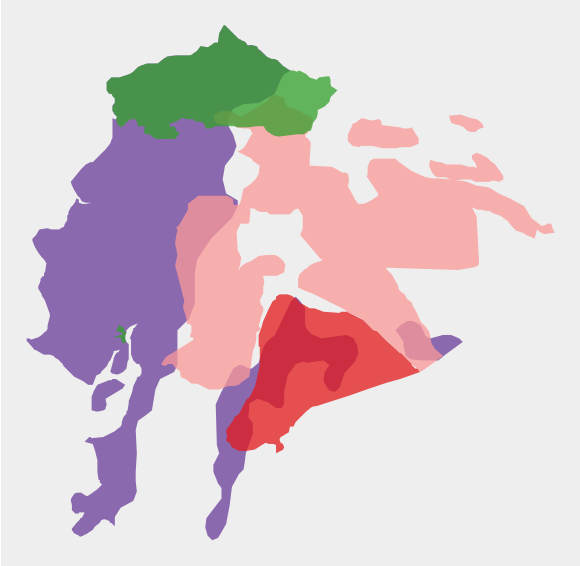

Figure 321: Map of ethnic groups in Ecuador during 1946-1970.

	Group name	Area in km^2	Type
	Whites/mestizos	99 048	Regional & urban
	Indigenous highland peoples (Kichwa)	74 067	Regional & urban
	Afro-Ecuadorians	23 481	Regional & urban
	Indigenous lowland peoples (Shuar, Achuar etc.)	22 846	Regionally based

Table 109: List of ethnic groups in Ecuador during 1946-1970.

From 1971 until 2021

Figure 322: Map of ethnic groups in Ecuador during 1971-2021.

	Group name	Area in km^2	Type
	Whites/mestizos	255 269	Statewide
	Indigenous highland peoples (Kichwa)	74 067	Regional & urban
	Afro-Ecuadorians	23 481	Regional & urban
	Indigenous lowland peoples (Shuar, Achuar etc.)	22 846	Regionally based

Table 110: List of ethnic groups in Ecuador during 1971-2021.

Conflicts in Ecuador

Starting on 1995-01-25

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Ecuador	Government of Peru		1995-01-25			