

Guyana

Ethnicity in Guyana

Group selection

According to the 2002 census, 43.5% of the population are Indo-Guyanese (descendants from East-Indian immigrants), 30,2% are Afro-Guyanese, 16.7% are of mixed ancestry, and 9.2% are indigenous peoples (Amerindians). During the first years after independence in 1966, Guyana was ruled in an autocratic manner by the People's National Congress (PNC), a party dominated by Afro-Guyanese people. The PNC regulated the executive recruitment process (¹⁴⁸²) and human rights and civil liberties were suppressed.

¹⁴⁸² [Center for Systemic Peace, 2008]

Power relations

The first free and fair elections took place in 1992. The PNC lost to the People's Progressive Party (PPP), which is dominated by Indo-Guyanese people. Although the elections in 1997 and 2001 were declared fair and free, there were violent clashes. The most recent elections in 2006 took place without any political violence. Guyana's government points at the multi-ethnic character of the cabinet (Afro-Guyanese Prime Minister and Cabinet Secretary, three Amerindian Ministers), but some observers speak of tokenism (e.g. ¹⁴⁸³), particularly because these black members of the executive are from the Indo-Guyanese PPP and thus not seen as "true" representatives of the Afro-Guyanese group. Also Birnir (¹⁴⁸⁴, 177) codes the Afro-Guyanese group as not having had any ethnic representative in the country's cabinet between 1992 and 2004. Thus, the group is coded as "powerless" here since 1992.

¹⁴⁸³ [UN Human Rights Council, 2009]

¹⁴⁸⁴ [Birnir van Cott, 2007]

Various organizations are representing the interests of the indigenous peoples, among other the Amerindian's Peoples Association. For the 2001 elections, indigenous organizations created a political party, captured two seats in parliament and swept local elections in an indigenous-majority region. Although local governments theoretically maintain a degree of autonomy, decisions often cannot be made without the consent of the central government. Van Cott (¹⁴⁸⁵, 132) places Guyana in the lowest category within Latin America concerning indigenous rights and the degree of political autonomy in indigenous territories. And although 3 out of 20 cabinet ministers have been indigenous in the period since 2006, it is too little (and too early) to code them as more than powerless here.

¹⁴⁸⁵ [Van Cott, 2007]

The 2011 election returned the Indo-Guyanese dominated PPP

to the presidency, with a cabinet composition similar to previous administrations (mostly Indo-Guyanese). Although in this election opposition parties, of which the Afro-Guyanese PNP is the largest, won a majority of seats in the legislature, this is still not enough to code the Afro-Guyanese as politically included at the level of executive power. There were no reported changes to the populations of each group—although a census was fielded in 2012, the government has not yet made demographic information on ethnicity available. There was no indication that the power status of indigenous peoples was altered during the time period, so a new period was not established for them.

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Political status of ethnic groups in Guyana

From 1966 until 1991

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Indo-Guyanese	0.435	POWERLESS
Afro-Guyanese	0.302	DOMINANT
Indigenous peoples	0.092	POWERLESS

From 1992 until 2013

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Indo-Guyanese	0.435	DOMINANT
Afro-Guyanese	0.302	POWERLESS
Indigenous peoples	0.092	POWERLESS



Figure 321: Political status of ethnic groups in Guyana during 1966-1991.



Figure 322: Political status of ethnic groups in Guyana during 1992-2013.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Guyana

From 1966 until 2013

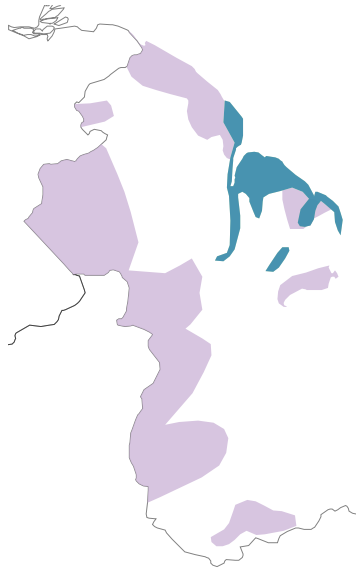


Figure 323: Map of ethnic groups in Guyana during 1992-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Indigenous peoples	76 085	Regionally based
Afro-Guyanese	10 831	Regional & urban
Indo-Guyanese	10 831	Regional & urban

Table 95: List of ethnic groups in Guyana during 1966-2013.