

Mexico

Ethnicity in Mexico

Power relations

In the 2010 Census, 14,9% of the Mexican population auto-identified as "indigenous persons" (²⁰³⁶, 85). The majority of Mexico's population are mestizos (80,1%) (mestizos being persons with mixed indigenous and European ancestry).

The "Tlatelolco Massacre" in 1968 led to intensified mobilization - both violent and non-violent - of the discriminated indigenous population on a local level. During the 1970s indigenous peoples and other groups started to question the authoritarian political control and the one-party monopoly on state power. In 1975, indigenous peoples formed organizations at the national level, such as the National Council of Indigenous Peoples and the Association of Bilingual Teachers. In this period some progress was made recognizing indigenous rights: a) recognition of the right to vote of illiterate people, b) political reforms (1977), and c) a decentralization process (1980s).

In 1992, a new constitution recognized Mexico as a "pluricultural nation" (²⁰³⁷, 33).

The violent emergence of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army for National Liberation - EZLN) in the state of Chiapas in January 1994 brought the indigenous peoples' difficult social and economic situation back to public and political attention (²⁰³⁸, 99). First and foremost the EZLN is an indigenous movement of the Maya nationality (four of the five indigenous groups forming the EZLN belong to the Maya nationality; however, that does not imply that all Mayas support the EZLN; in fact, there are several Maya groups that oppose the movement) (²⁰³⁹, 217) although mestizos also participated, mostly in the beginning of the movement's actions. Nevertheless, EZLN did not only struggle for the Maya population but for the recognition of indigenous rights in general, thereby becoming one of the key actors in the Mexican and international indigenous movement (²⁰⁴⁰, 128).

After the failure of peace talks in 1994, the Zapatistas and the Mexican government began new negotiations in 1995 that ended in February 1996 with the signing of the so called San Andrés Accords. These Accords recognized a number of indigenous core rights (such as territorial and cultural rights), also including the concept of "indigenous autonomy" (referring to a certain - juridical, administrative and political - autonomy within the national structures). However,

²⁰³⁶ [Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2010]

²⁰³⁷ [Van Cott, 2001]

²⁰³⁸ [Van der Haar, 2004]

²⁰³⁹ [Espinoza-Martínez, 2006]

²⁰⁴⁰ [Sánchez, 1998]

to implement these Accords legal reforms were necessary but not realized so finally, in 1997, the EZLN abandoned the negotiation process. This stop of interaction with the Mexican government and the establishment of autonomous municipalities - see paragraph below - entail the codification of the Maya as "self-excluded" from 1998 on. Four years later, the San Andrés Accords were translated into the Ley Indígena ("Indigenous Law"). However, its content had been modified drastically, so that the Zapatistas rejected it publicly.

Due to the long lasting peace talks and the subsequent implementation process of the San Andrés Accords, the Zapatistas began to anticipate the realization of their rights by creating *Municipios Autónomos y Rebeldes Zapatistas* (Autonomous Municipalities and Zapatista Rebels – MAREZ). By 1998, 38 such municipalities had been established, mostly in the central and eastern parts of Chiapas, operating parallel to the "official municipalities" run by the state. As the MAREZ offer all kinds public services (including health care, education, land tenure, juridical and civil register services), Zapatista civilians are enabled to boycott state municipalities. However, the Zapatistas could not completely replace state municipalities, simply because the MAREZ do not encompass a continuous territory (this, in turn, results from the limited support for the Zapatistas by the local population), leading to a difficult co-existence of state and Zapatista administrative structures.

In 1998, the Chiapas state government launched both a military and political campaign against the Zapatistas, which caused the abandonment of the movement by many of its members (²⁰⁴¹, 99). This resulted in both a political and territorial re-organization process that was finished in 2003 and that originated the so called *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (Councils of Good Governance – JBG) and *Caracoles* (Snails). Both entities were created to guarantee the unobstructed functioning of Zapatista autonomy by introducing a new administrative level (in the context of the Mexican political structure, they occupy the level above municipalities; nevertheless they remain being inferior to the Mexican state). While the *Caracoles* can be described as political and cultural spaces that offer the possibility of communication and interchange of ideas (addressing Zapatistas as well as non-Zapatistas), the JBG are characterized as entities that institutionalize processes of political leadership on the regional level (²⁰⁴², 218)

²⁰⁴¹ [Van der Haar, 2004]

²⁰⁴² [Espinoza-Martínez, 2006]

In 2005, the EZLN declared to renounce its armed struggle in favor of peaceful political actions through institutional channels. In the 2006 elections, the Zapatistas organized the "Other Campaign" as an alternative movement and urged the people not to vote in the presidential elections to protest against the corrupt and clientelistic party system.

There is a minimum indigenous representation in Congress, but they do not have any executive power.

It may be important to note that there exist other indigenous movements as well. They are organized under the general umbrella

of indigeneity not focusing on (sub-) group specific demands (e.g. the Council of Indigenous Peoples). This is the reason why the residual group "other indigenous groups" was coded above.

Afro-Mexicans are estimated to represent between 0,5 and 10% of the population (²⁰⁴³). The first national formation of a network took place in 1997, in the form of the Encuentro de los Pueblos Negros (Meeting of Black Communities), which led to the creation of a first Afro-Mexican organization – the México Negro (Black Mexico). While the Encuentro de los pueblos Negros can be described as the "political arm" of the Afro-Mexican movement, México Negro is characterized as a relief organization providing economic and social assistance to the Afro-Mexican population. In comparison to the indigenous population, Afro-Mexicans lack official recognition. From 2004 on the struggle for constitutional recognition of the Afro-Mexican population became the primary concern of their organizations. However, until 2013 the government did not take any permanent action in such a direction. Other demands refer to the consideration in national censuses and (scientific) research about Afro-Mexican history (²⁰⁴⁴, 149). In the course of the 2010 Census, the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía edited an extra publication on the sociodemographic profile of Afro-Mexicans in the Oaxaca region (²⁰⁴⁵). Generally speaking, Afro-Mexicans still face social as well as economic discrimination and a lack of representation in the political sphere (²⁰⁴⁶, 144).

²⁰⁴³ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

²⁰⁴⁴ [Weltmann-Cisneros Tello, 2013]

²⁰⁴⁵ [Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2010]

²⁰⁴⁶ [Weltmann-Cisneros Tello, 2013]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Mexico

From 1946 until 1974

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Mestizos	0.801	DOMINANT
Other indigenous groups	0.142	DISCRIMINATED
Afromexicans	0.05	DISCRIMINATED
Maya	0.007	DISCRIMINATED

From 1975 until 1997

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Mestizos	0.801	DOMINANT
Other indigenous groups	0.142	POWERLESS
Afromexicans	0.05	IRRELEVANT
Maya	0.007	POWERLESS

From 1998 until 2013

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Mestizos	0.801	DOMINANT
Other indigenous groups	0.142	POWERLESS
Afromexicans	0.05	POWERLESS
Maya	0.007	SELF-EXCLUSION



Figure 495: Political status of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1946-1974.



Figure 496: Political status of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1975-1997.



Figure 497: Political status of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1998-2013.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Mexico

From 1946 until 2013



Figure 498: Map of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1998-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Mestizos	1 961 273	Statewide
■ Other indigenous groups	327 529	Regionally based
■ Maya	103 868	Regionally based
■ Afromexicans	15 880	Regionally based

Table 149: List of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1946-2013.

Conflicts in Mexico

Starting on 1994-01-01

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Mexico	EZLN	Maya	1994-01-01	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Mexico	EPR		1996-07-16			