Mexico

Ethnicity in Mexico

Group selection

In the 2010 Census, 14,9% of the Mexican population auto-identified as "indigenous persons" ([3394], 85). The majority of Mexico's population are **Mestizos** (80,1%), who also form the dominant political group throughout Mexico's history.

Mayans are considered a separate category within indigenous peoples. The violent emergence of the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion 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 ([3395], 99). The EZLN is a Mayan movement (although there are several Maya groups who oppose the movement), and some Mestizos also participated in the movement ([3396], 217). It should be noted that the 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 ([3397], 128).

Other indigenous movements exist 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. Throughout all of the periods, there was a minimum indigenous representation in Congress, but never any executive power.

Afro-Mexicans are estimated to represent between 0,5 and 10% of the population ([3398]). 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 Mexico Negro (Black Mexico). While the Encuentro de los Pueblos Negros can be described as the "political arm" of the Afro-Mexican movement, Mexico 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

[3394] [Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Geografia, 20

[3395] [Van der Haar, 2004]

[3396] [Espinoza-Martinez, 2006]

[3397] [Sanchez, 1998]

[3398] [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

Afro-Mexican history ([3399], 149). In the course of the 2010 Census, the Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Geografia edited an extra publication on the sociodemografic profile of Afro-Mexicans in the Oaxaca region ([3400]). Generally speaking, Afro-Mexicans still face social as well as economic discrimination and a lack of representation in the political sphere ([3401], 144).

No quotas exist in order to secure representation of minority groups in the national political arena where indigenous peoples continue to be underrepresented ([3402]: 18). Although reliable figures about ethnic minority representation in government are lacking (see [3403], 18), the indigenous umbrella group must be regarded as powerless in the executive branch of national government. The same is true for Afro-Mexicans, which - by 2017 - have still not obtained constitutional recognition, even though they were included in the national census of 2015 for the first time in Mexican history ([3404]).

Power relations

1946-1974

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).

This means that we code indigenous groups as "discriminated" until 1974. In 1992, a new constitution recognized Mexico as a "pluricultural nation" ([3405], 33).

1975-1997

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 Andres Accords. These accords recognized a number of indigenous core cultural rights as well as "indigenous autonomy" (referring to juridical, administrative and political autonomy within the national structures). However, to implement these Accords, legal reforms were necessary but not realized. 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 Andres Accords were translated into the Ley Indigena ("Indigenous Law"). However, its content had been modified drastically, so that the Zapatistas rejected it publicly.

[3399] [Weltmann-Cisneros & Tello, 2013]

[3400] [Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Geografia, 20

[3401] [Weltmann-Cisneros & Tello, 2013]

[3402] [USDS, 2017]

[3403] [USDS, 2017]

[3404] [Arena Publica, 2017]

[3405] [Van Cott, 2001]

1998-2016

The areas controlled by the Zapatistas are characterized by de facto autonomy, according to BTI ([3406]: 6). From 1998 on, the Maya are to be coded as self-excluded on the national level as well as possessing regional autonomy. In contrast, the residual indigenous umbrella group does not qualify for a coding of "regional autonomy": They are provided with some autonomy rights on a local scale (see USDS, 2015: 20) but lack executive power on the regional level ([3407], 86).

[3406] [BTI, 2016]

[3407] [Rousseau, 2017]

Due to the long lasting peace talks and the subsequent implementation process of the San Andres Accords, the Zapatistas began to anticipate the realization of their rights by creating Municipios Autonomos 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 ([3408], 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 ([3409], 218).

[3408] [Van der Haar, 2004]

[3409] [Espinoza-Martinez, 2006]

In 2005, the EZLN declared the renunciation of 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.

In recent years, the Zapatista movement has slowly regained visibility due to increased efforts in national mobilization. However, the meetings and campaigns aim at the education of indigenous movements in establishing autonomy and are described as being part of

a mobilization process clearly outside of the formal political sphere
(^{3410}, 104).

^{3410} [Rousseau, 2017]

2017-2021

The general elections of 2018 were historical, with the left-wing candidate Andrés Manuel Lopéz Obrador of the National Regeneration Movement (Morena) being elected as president with 53%. For the first time in Mexican history, independent presidential candidates were allowed during the election (^{3411}). The EZLN-backed National Indigenous Congress (CNI) presented the indigenous woman María de Jesús Patricio Martínez (Marichuy) as their independent presidential candidate. After Marichuy disqualified from the presidential race over insufficient signatures, the Zapatistas announced that they will not back any other presidential candidate and even vowed to boycott voting in the elections as a way to protest a political system that is excluding them (^{3412}; ^{3413}; ^{3414}).

^{3411} [Concheiro, 2017]

Even though Marichuy belongs to the ethnic group of the Nahua, she was backed by the EZLN. The idea of having an independent indigenous presidential candidate in the 2018 elections stemmed from the Zapatistas (^{3415}; ^{3416}). This implicates that the Zapatistas are more present in the national political arena, which is why the Mayas are not coded as self-excluded anymore, but as a powerless ethnic group. The EZLN still holds autonomous control over several municipalities, which is why Mayas are coded as enjoying regional autonomy (^{3417}, 6-7; ^{3418}).

^{3412} [TeleSUR, 2018a]
^{3413} [TeleSUR, 2018b]
^{3414} [Villoro, 2018]

^{3415} [Concheiro, 2017]
^{3416} [Cultural Survival, 2017]

^{3417} [BTI, 2018]
^{3418} [Mexico News Daily, 2019]

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Political status of ethnic groups in M[...]

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 2016

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

From 2017 until 2021

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

Figure 680: Political status of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1946-1974.

Figure 681: Political status of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1975-1997.

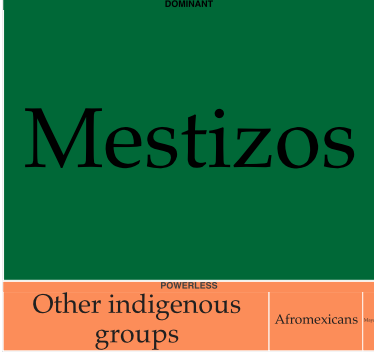Figure 682: Political status of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1998-2016.

Figure 683: Political status of ethnic groups in Mexico during 2017-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Mexico

From 1946 until 1974

Figure 684: Map of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1946-1974.

Table 255: List of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1946-1974.

	Group name	Area in km^2	Type
	Mestizos	1 956 759	Statewide
	Other indigenous groups	306 754	Regionally based
	Maya	135 656	Regionally based
	Afromexicans	15 824	Regionally based

From 1975 until 1997

Figure 685: Map of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1975-1997.

Table 256: List of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1975-1997.

	Group name	Area in km^2	Type
	Mestizos	1 956 759	Statewide
	Other indigenous groups	306 754	Regionally based
	Maya	135 656	Regionally based

From 1998 until 2021

Figure 686: Map of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1998-2021.

Table 257: List of ethnic groups in Mexico during 1998-2021.

	Group name	Area in km^2	Type
	Mestizos	1 956 759	Statewide
	Other indigenous groups	306 754	Regionally based
	Maya	135 656	Regionally based
	Afromexicans	15 824	Regionally based

Conflicts in Mexico

Starting on 1993-12-31

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Mexico	EZLN	Maya	1993-12-31	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Mexico	EPR		1996-07-15			