

Venezuela

# *Ethnicity in Venezuela*

## *Group selection*

According to the 2011 census, 2,7% of Venezuelans belong to indigenous groups. The population size of Afro-Venezuelans is more complicated: The 2011 census was the first census that included questions regarding the self identification as Afro-Venezuelans ("Afrodescendiente") which 0,7% answered positively. There was also the possibility to chose "black" ("negro") as a response which 2,9% of the population did (<sup>5455</sup>). These findings stand in stark contrast to estimations pronounced by the Interamerican Development Bank and several Non Governmental Organizations that assess that 10 to 15% of Venezuela's population are of African descent (<sup>5456</sup>, p. 225). Thus, we identify the following politically relevant ethnic groups: **Afro-Venezuelans, White/Mestizos, and Indigenous peoples.**

<sup>5455</sup> [Instituto Nacional des Estadística, 2012]

<sup>5456</sup> [García, 2007]

## *Power relations*

### *1946-1972*

During the "military decade" (1948-1958) (<sup>5457</sup>, p. 205) and the first decades of bipartisan democracy neither indigenous (<sup>5458</sup>, p. 156) nor Afro-Venezuelan people had any relevant influence on the political sphere (<sup>5459</sup>, 224) or were organized politically. Ethnicity is coded as politically irrelevant for all groups during this period.

<sup>5457</sup> [Rodríguez and Caripe, 2013]

<sup>5458</sup> [Angosto, 2012]

<sup>5459</sup> [García, 2007]

### *1972-1999*

For indigenous peoples, their political situation began to change gradually since 1973, when the first regional indigenous organisation was created: the Federación de Indígenas del Estado de Bolívar (Indigenous Federation of the Bolívar State - FIB). It was the FIB that, in 1989, played a prominent role in the foundation of Venezuela's first national indigenous federation - the Consejo Nacional Indio de Venezuela (National Indian Council of Venezuela - CONIVE) (<sup>5460</sup>, p. 52). Until then Venezuelan indígenas did not have any platform to " (...) present themselves as a concrete and valid interlocutor in national politics (...)" (<sup>5461</sup> p. 53).

<sup>5460</sup> [Van Cott, 2003]

<sup>5461</sup> [Van Cott, 2003]

Therefore, during this period, indigenous peoples are considered "powerless", whites/mestizos as holding a monopoly on political power, and Afro-Venezuelans as politically irrelevant.

*2000-2017*

Political support for the indigenous cause improved when Hugo Chávez became president in 1998 and initiated a constitutional reform process. The new constitution, adopted in 1999, guaranteed several distinctive rights to indigenous people, among others a quota for local, regional and national parliaments (<sup>5462</sup>, p. 155); indigenous peoples are coded as having regional autonomy from 2000 on. In the regional elections of the year 2000, an indigenous representative was elected as governor of the Amazon state “Amazonas”. He was re-elected twice (in 2006 and 2012) (<sup>5463</sup>). Problematically, the representation of Indigenous peoples in Venezuelan politics has even been reduced in recent years, due to reasons found in political repression strategies rather than in ethnical discrimination: The three seats in the national assembly, constitutionally guaranteed to the indigenous peoples, remain empty after the December 2015 elections, due to annulation by the TSJ because of alleged voter fraud (<sup>5464</sup>: 35). On the regional level, elections of 2016 have been postponed to the end of 2017 by the National Electoral Council (CNE) (<sup>5465</sup>: 2). In the meantime the Indigenous governor of the Amazon state, a prominent member of the opposition movement, was banned from office for 15 years in May 2017 (see <sup>5466</sup>). However, the January-1st coding rule implies that “regional autonomy” holds true for the indigenous peoples throughout 2017.

On the contrary, Afro-Venezuelans are still not officially recognized as a minority group (<sup>5467</sup>, para. 12). In 2000, the “Red de Organizaciones Afrovenezolanas” (an umbrella organization that unites 23 regional Afro-Venezuelan organizations under its roof) was created, thereby allowing Afro descendants to articulate their demands more effectively (<sup>5468</sup>, p. 230), and justifying the inclusion of Afro-Venezuelans as politically relevant. Afro-Venezuelans remain underrepresented in politics and still face inequalities in access to education and health, despite recent efforts of the government to counter such problems (<sup>5469</sup>: 7; <sup>5470</sup>: 2). Since the 2011 census, people at least are given the opportunity to self-identify as Afro-descendants (<sup>5471</sup>: 2). Those improvements have not yet translated into any mandates in executive politics on the national or regional level. Thus, Afro-Venezuelans are coded as “powerless”.

*2018-2021*

A new period is coded owing to the loss of regional autonomy by the Indigenous peoples, whose indigenous governor of the Department of the Amazonas, after being banned from office (<sup>5472</sup>), was replaced by a member of the regime’s party in the 2017 regional elections (<sup>5473</sup>). Otherwise the indigenous peoples continue to be excluded from executive power, and their interests are often ignored by political authorities in decisions concerning indigenous issues (<sup>5474</sup>). Their loss of seats in the legislature in 2015 was further exacerbated when the opposition-controlled National Assembly was replaced by the

<sup>5462</sup> [Angosto, 2012]<sup>5463</sup> [Consejo Electoral Nacional, 2012]<sup>5464</sup> [USDS, 2016]<sup>5465</sup> [Freedom House, 2017]<sup>5466</sup> [The Guardian, 2017]<sup>5467</sup> [UN Committee, 2013]<sup>5468</sup> [García, 2007]<sup>5469</sup> [Freedom House, 2017]<sup>5470</sup> [MRGI, 2016]<sup>5471</sup> [MRGI, 2016]<sup>5472</sup> [The Guardian, 2017]<sup>5473</sup> [Consejo Electoral Nacional, 2017]<sup>5474</sup> [USDS, 2019]

government-backed National Constituent Assembly in March of 2017 (<sup>5475</sup>). Similarly, the situation of Afro-Venezuelans has not changed significantly and they continue to be coded as “powerless” (<sup>5476</sup>).

<sup>5475</sup> [Freedom House, 2018]

<sup>5476</sup> [Díaz, 2018]

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## Political status of ethnic groups in V

*From 1946 until 1972*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.848	IRRELEVANT

*From 1973 until 1999*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.848	MONOPOLY
Indigenous peoples	0.027	POWERLESS

*From 2000 until 2017*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.848	DOMINANT
Afrovenezuelans	0.125	POWERLESS
Indigenous peoples	0.027	POWERLESS

*From 2018 until 2021*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites/mestizos	0.848	DOMINANT
Afrovenezuelans	0.125	POWERLESS
Indigenous peoples	0.027	POWERLESS



Figure 1106: Political status of ethnic groups in Venezuela during 1946-1972.



Figure 1107: Political status of ethnic groups in Venezuela during 1973-1999.



Figure 1108: Political status of ethnic groups in Venezuela during 2000-2017.



Figure 1109: Political status of ethnic groups in Venezuela during 2018-2021.

*Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Venezuela*

*From 1973 until 1999*

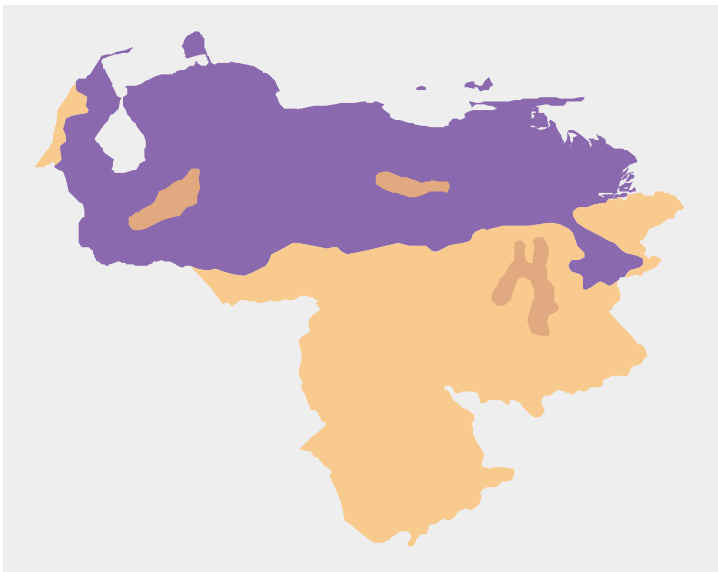


Figure 1110: Map of ethnic groups in Venezuela during 1973-1999.

Group name		Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Whites/mestizos	480 559	Regionally based
■	Indigenous peoples	463 898	Regionally based

Table 403: List of ethnic groups in Venezuela during 1973-1999.

*From 2000 until 2021*

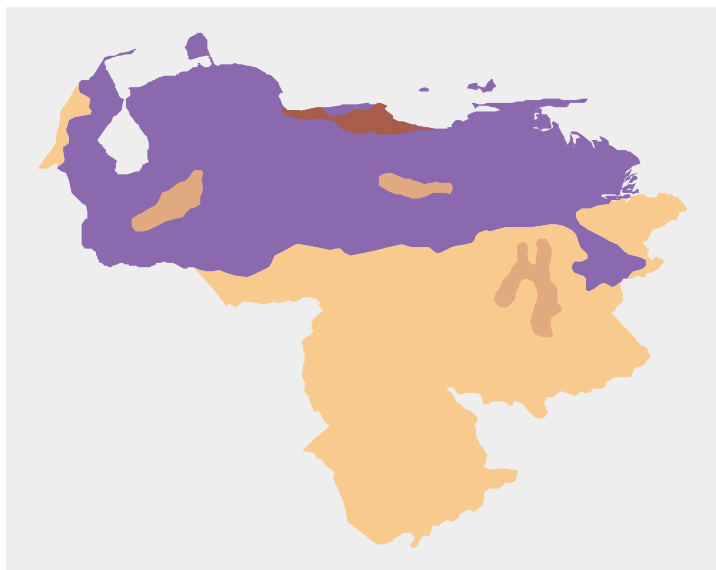


Figure 1111: Map of ethnic groups in Venezuela during 2000-2021.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
Whites/mestizos	480 559	Regionally based
Indigenous peoples	463 898	Regionally based
Afrovenezuelans	11 436	Regionally based

Table 404: List of ethnic groups in Venezuela during 2000-2021.

# Conflicts in Venezuela

*Starting on 1962-06-02*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Venezuela	Military faction (navy)		1962-06-02			
Government of Venezuela	Bandera Roja		1981-11-29			
Government of Venezuela	Military faction (forces of Hugo Chávez)		1992-02-03			