

Antiracism in ECUADOR

Within the framework of the Project Latin American Anti-Racism in a “Post-Racial” Age (2017-18), we conducted research on antiracist practices and discourses in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico.

In these countries, anti-racism faces the ideology of mestizaje, that is, the idea that the historical mixture between people of European, African and Native American ancestry produced mestizo nations in which racism was a minor problem that is steadily becoming less important.

More recently, multiculturalism has recognized ethnic minorities, without always confronting problems of racism and racial inequality.

What is racism?

It is an ideology and a practice that justifies and produces relations of oppression and inequality between groups, based on the perception of physical differences (skin color, hair shape, body, and facial features) and cultural differences (language, dress, and customs). Inequalities can be in terms of access to privileges, benefits, valorization, power, and security.

What is anti-racism?

Anti-racism refers to practices and discourses that confront, erode, change and/or eradicate the relations of inequality caused by racism. These actions are almost always linked to other struggles (for cultural recognition, human rights, gender equity, land rights, and greater social equality).

Racism in Ecuador

Many social organizations consider that racism is a problem in daily interactions, institutions and society, negatively affecting Afro-Ecuadorian and Indigenous people, and benefiting white and mestizo (mixed-race) people, although mestizos can also be victims of racism.

Increasingly, the society and Ecuadorian State have recognized this problem. According to the first national survey on racism in 2004, **64%** of Ecuadorians admit that there is racism in the country.





According to the 2010 census

Afro-Ecuadorians represent 7.2% of the national population.



Indigenous peoples 7.1%

there are 14 indigenous peoples.



The population self-identified as white is 6.1% of the total.



79.6% of people self-identify as mestizo.



← **Everyday racism and stigmatization in Ecuador**

Racism, as a form of stigmatization that denigrates, humiliates, and undermines the dignity of people because of their physical and/or cultural traits, manifests itself in daily aggressions, insults, and jokes.

This type of racism is experienced in: >>

Public places (public transport, public roads, shopping centers, banks, night-clubs).

Work spaces (difficulty finding a job, pigeon-holing in low-paid jobs).

Housing (difficulty leasing or buying a place to live).

School contexts (humiliation, bullying, belittling among students; inadequate attention from teachers)

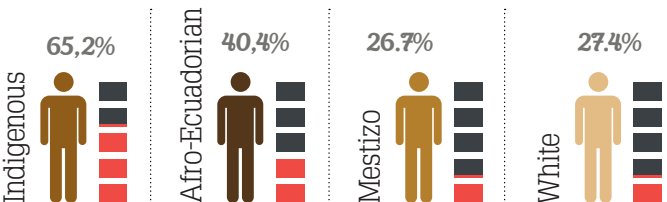
Legal institutions, health, police (being ignored, underestimated, or insulted; receiving poor service).

Media (denigrating stereotypes in TV and radio programmes, magazines, and advertising).

Structural Racism in Ecuador >>

Structural racism is understood as the historical inequalities that make it difficult for racialized people to access opportunities and/or resources (income, health, work, education, justice, land, food, etc.).

Poverty due to Unsatisfied Basic Needs



Employment



of the white population

are employed in the formal labour market,



of the Afro-Ecuadorian population

compared to only



of indigenous people.

Unemployment for Afro-Ecuadorians is at a rate of **9.5%** compared to a national level of **5.2%**.

Education

» illiteracy rates are higher among

19,2%

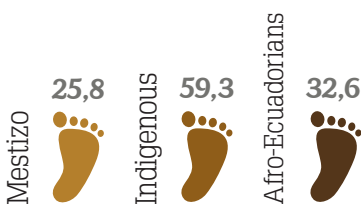


indigenous people

» than among Afro-Ecuadorians (**5.4%**), whites (**5.3%**) and mestizos (**4.1%**).

More white and mestizo people complete basic education compared to Afro-Ecuadorians and especially indigenous people.

Infant mortality



Rate per thousand live births.

Chronic malnutrition

Affects especially the indigenous population, reaching **48.4%**, compared to the national level of **23.9%**.

Despite the improvement in some social indicators between 2007 and 2017, the *structure of inequality* between Afro-Ecuadorian, indigenous, mestizo and white groups *remains* or has deepened.

What did we learn?

Our research showed that there are various anti-racist strategies in Ecuador. Some actions are explicitly anti-racist, while others do not talk about racism so explicitly.

Actions

⦿ Juridical strategies

Laws and instruments that prevent racial discrimination and tackle racial inequality,



e.g. collective land rights in the Constitution; decree 60 of 2009 promoting inclusive employment in the public sector; article 177 of the penal code created the offence of hate crime, which in 2016 led to the first conviction for a hate crime against an Afro-Ecuadorian

Promotion of autonomy of indigenous justice systems.

⦿ Labour strategies

Affirmative action for inclusive employment in the Foreign Ministry (but not in other institutions).

⊙ Educational strategies

Affirmative action (admissions quotas and scholarships for indigenous people and Afro-Ecuadorians).

Promotion of bilingual intercultural education and ethno-education.

⊙ Territorial-environmental strategies

Struggles against evictions in indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian territories; struggles against the harmful effects of extractive industries on the environment and health.

⊙ Identity-based strategies

Practices that strengthen the visibility and recognition of racial identity and enhance self-esteem.

⊙ Media strategies

Complaints against media that reproduce racist stereotypes.

Challenges for anti-racism in Ecuador

The power of the *mestizaje* ideology produces the following challenges:

- ❶ Racism is minimized. The moral and psychological position of those who denounce racism is undermined, by accusing them of having an inferiority complex and being over-sensitive, or of exaggerating the problem.
- ❷ The struggle against racism is seen as a distraction from class and gender struggles.
- ❸ It is assumed that indigenous peoples suffer less racism than black populations.
- ❹ Some of social movements prefer to talk about cultural discrimination and avoid reference to racism; this helps to hide the persistence of racism.
- ❺ White and mestizo people are reluctant to recognize the benefits that racism guarantees them.

These challenges restrict the impacts of affirmative action, processes of territorial restitution, and the legal framework that guarantees rights and reparations for Afro-Ecuadorian and indigenous populations.

Proposals and Pathways

- ❶ Integrate the anti-racist strategies of indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian peoples.
- ❷ Strengthen and expand affirmative action with sustainable economic funding.
- ❸ Generate sustainable anti-racist media campaigns integrated with anti-sexist proposals.
- ❹ Make visible and mobilize the antiracist dimensions of territorial struggles.
- ❺ Raise awareness among white and mestizo people about their role in the reproduction of racism.
- ❻ Promote the effective implementation of antiracist laws and decrees.