

# verdadecu: An R Package for the Analysis of Data from the Truth Commission in Ecuador

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## Abstract

verdadecu is an R package that provides access to data collected by the Truth Commission in Ecuador. It allows users to extract and analyze systematized information for human rights research. The package contains 16 datasets documenting human rights violations from 1984 to 2008, including victim characteristics, violation types, perpetrators, and geographic distribution.

## Introduction

Human rights violations represent critical breaches of fundamental freedoms that demand comprehensive documentation, analysis, and accountability mechanisms. Truth commissions have emerged as essential institutional frameworks for investigating systematic abuses, providing recognition to victims, and establishing foundations for transitional justice processes.

In the last decades, truth commissions have become one of the main official mechanisms to reveal human rights abuses and to enhance recognition and reparation (Hayner, 2011). In May 2007, a Presidential Decree in Ecuador created the Truth Commission to investigate human rights violations that occurred between 1984 and 1988, as well as similar events, and to determine probable indications of responsibility (Comisión de la Verdad, 2010). The Commission collected information from January 2008 to September 2009, declassified over 300 thousand documents, and analyzed over 600 testimonies. The final report, published in 2010 and organized in five volumes and an executive summary, presented the cases of 456 victims and 831 human rights violations between 1984 and 2008 (mainly occurring between 1984 and 1988 during the government of León Febres Cordero). The violations were categorized in six groups: illegal deprivation of liberty, torture, sexual violence, enforced disappearance, violation of the right to life, and extrajudicial execution.

Despite the comprehensive data collection effort, access to systematized information remains limited, hindering academic research, policy analysis, and a broader understanding of the human rights landscape. *verdadecu* is an R package that provides access to data collected by the Truth Commission in Ecuador. It allows users to extract and analyze systematized information for human rights research.

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## Detail of the package

The package contains 16 datasets documenting human rights violations from 1984 to 2008, including victim characteristics, violation types, perpetrators, and geographic distribution.

1. `hechos_anio`: Number of human rights violations by year and type of violation during the period 1984–2008.
2. `hechos_sexo`: Number of human rights violations by type of violation and sex of the victim.
3. `hechos_victimas_anio`: Number of victims by type of human rights violation and year.
4. `hechos_victimas_rama`: Number of victims by type of human rights violation and according to the involvement of branches of the Armed Forces and the National Police.
5. `responsables`: Names of the alleged perpetrators of human rights violations and the cases in which they were identified.
6. `responsables_institucion`: Number of alleged perpetrators of human rights violations by the institution to which they belong.
7. `victimas`: Names of the victims of human rights violations.
8. `victimas_anio`: Number of victims by year.
9. `victimas_edad`: Number of victims by sex and age group.
10. `victimas_educacion`: Number of victims by educational level.
11. `victimas_lugar`: Number of victims of human rights violations that occurred in police or military facilities.
12. `victimas_nacionalidad`: Number of victims by nationality.
13. `victimas_ocupacion`: Number of victims by occupation.
14. `victimas_presidente`: Number of victims according to the presidential term during which the human rights violations occurred.
15. `victimas_provincia`: Number of victims by province where the human rights violations took place.
16. `victimas_sexo`: Number of victims by sex.

## Conclusions

Contemporary human rights scholarship requires accessible datasets that enable rigorous quantitative and qualitative analysis. Researchers investigating patterns of state violence, institutional accountability, victim and perpetrator characteristics, and geographic distribution of violations face significant barriers when primary data remains fragmented or difficult to access. To our understanding, only the *pinochet* (Freire et al., 2019) and *verdata* (Gargiulo et al., 2024) packages provide access to data about human rights violations. The *verdadecu* R package addresses this gap by providing access to Ecuador’s Truth Commission data. We aim that this resource enables researchers to conduct analyses of human rights violations, supporting evidence-based policy recommendations, academic scholarship, and broader efforts toward justice and non-repetition.

## References

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