

THE AMERICAS AND OCEANIA: METHODS USED TO ESTIMATE PERCENT OF INDIGENOUS AND COMMUNITY LANDS

The following paragraphs outline the methods for estimate indigenous and/or community lands for select countries in North America, Central America, and Oceania. Methods are organized by region and country.

North America

UNITED STATES

The U.S. Census Bureau provides information on the American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian areas. The total land area encompassing reservation, trust lands and Alaska native villages is 48.5 million hectares, representing 5.0% of the total land area of the United States (see data provided at https://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/data/cbf/cbf_aiannh.html). Some indigenous territorial claims still exist with the US, such as over the Black Hills, but their total area is not quantifiable.

CANADA

Since 1973, Canada has signed 26 comprehensive land claims and 4 self-government agreements with indigenous peoples. These settlements have granted aboriginal ownership over 60 million hectares of land, i.e. 6% of total Canadian land area (See <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100030577/1100100030578>). Quantifying land claims not officially recognized by the government was not done due to a lack of data.

MEXICO

Mexico's 30,000 ejidos and communities cover around 50 percent of the national territory. ([UN-REDD, 2012](#), p19)

Central America

GUATEMALA

According to information from the National Council for Protected Areas, in 2008 Guatemala had a total of 1,213 groups on communal land covering 14.7 percent of national territory. ([UN-REDD, 2012](#), p17)

BELIZE

No information available.

HONDURAS

The territory claimed by indigenous peoples count for approximately 2 million hectares, with only 10% having a guaranteed property title ([IWGIA, 2014](#), p85)

EL SALVADOR

No information available.

NICARAGUA

In the autonomous region of the North Atlantic (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte (RAAN)), 13,913 km² have been titled and 11,468km² are additionally claimed. In the autonomous region of the South Atlantic (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur (RAAS)), 6,481 km² have been titled and 14,936 km² are additionally claimed. In the center of the country, 2,229 km² have been titled and 13,375 km² are additionally claimed (PNUD, 2011). ([See HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and RRI](#)).

PANAMA

According to GIS data and spatial analysis, the indigenous territories that were legally established as comarcas, combined with all of the claimed lands, represent 31.6% (23,470 km²) of Panama's total area. With a total of 27 separate areas, the mapped claimed lands represented 9.2% (6,850 km²) of the country's total area. (See [Vergara-Asenjo and Potevin, 2014](#))

South America

COLOMBIA

Indigenous reserves: In 2005, there were 710 titled indigenous reserves, covering 34 million hectares, representing 29.8% of the national territory.

Collective territories of afro-descendant communities: In 2007, there were 159 titled territories for Afro-descendant communities covering 5.18 million hectares.

See [Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística \(DANE\)](#)

VENEZUELA

The Ministry of Popular Power for Indigenous Peoples stated on 8 October 2013 that the national government had issued 80 collective land titles to indigenous peoples in all, covering an area of more than 2,800,000 ha. It furthermore indicated that, of 108 requests submitted in this regard, 80 had now been resolved, and it established a goal of finalizing the 28 remaining requests by the end of 2014, without prejudice to the submission of new ones. ([IWGIA, 2014](#)).

GUYANA

Most of the indigenous communities in Guyana now have legal title to their collectively held lands. The holdings total some 29,000 km² or 13% of the national territory. See [Minority Rights Group International](#).

SURINAME

No information available.

FRENCH GUYANA

The Areas of Collective Use Rights (ZDUC) cover a total of 669,686 hectares, representing 8% of the country. Of the 27 ZDUC, 24 benefit indigenous communities, and 3 benefit Maroon communities. ([Davy and Filoche, 2014](#))

ECUADOR

There are 12 indigenous territories in Ecuador. 4.8 million hectares are occupied land, and 3.8 million are titled lands. Thus, they represent in total 30.6% of the country's land area. See [IUCN et al, 2008](#)

PERU

The total area of lands held and used, either formally recognized or not, represent 17.8 million hectares for "comunidades nativas" and 39.9 million hectares for "comunidades campesinas". Both of these communities are indigenous. In addition to these numbers are the territories for isolated indigenous peoples, which include 2.8 million hectares of recognized territorial reserve, and almost 4 million hectares of proposed territorial reserves. Thus, indigenous lands total 64.6 million hectares, representing 50.2% of the land area of the country. See [IBC, 2014 - La seguridad territorial en el limbo: El estado de las comunidades indígenas en el Perú](#).

BOLIVIA

As of 2010, 20.4% of Bolivia was titled as indigenous territories and 12.9% were in the process of titling. See [Fundación TIERRA, 2010](#).

BRAZIL

Indigenous peoples: Indigenous Lands (Terras Indígenas or TIs) are 654 territories with a total area of 115.5 million hectares, which is 13.6% of the national country area. (See [HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and RRI](#)). In addition are territories that do not have initiated identification and demarcation processes estimated to total 123, according to Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI) and are all located in Mato Grosso do Sul ([IWGIA, 2014](#)).

Quilombolas: According to the official agency of agrarian reform (INCRA), 481 Quilombolas (Afro-descendant communities) territories are currently either titled or in the process of demarcation, totalizing 3.5 million hectares. 1,290 other claims are waiting to be studied. So far, recognized

territories have a mean area of 7,400 ha, thus the total area of those claims is approximately 9.5 million hectares. (See [INCRA website](#))

PARAGUAY

No information available.

CHILE

No information available.

ARGENTINA

According to INAI estimates, out of the 12 million hectares claimed as indigenous lands, only 4.5 million hectares have already been recognized and titled. See [IPSNews, 2013](#).

URUGUAY

No information available.

Oceania

NEW CALEDONIA

The Agency for Rural Development and Land Management (ADARAF) is responsible for the land reform emerging from land and identity claims expressed in the 1970's by the Kanaks, New Caledonia's indigenous peoples. To date, the agency has recognized 1,823,800 ha of customary land and has 13,300 ha to answer future claims. These two numbers were combined to account for the country's estimation. See [ADRAF website](#).

AUSTRALIA

Different types of Aboriginal land rights occur in Australia. The professor Jon Altman summarizes the situation as of 2013 in a paper sourced below. It includes both officially recognized land and land claims registered by the Native Title Tribunal, waiting for a court decision. They total 70% of Australian land area. Other potential types of land claims are not quantifiable. See [ALTAMAN and Markham, 2013](#)

NEW ZEALAND

Two types of land are held by Maori indigenous peoples in New Zealand: Maori freehold land and Maori customary land. 1.47 million hectares is designated as Maori land, representing 5% of land in New Zealand. See [Maori Land Court](#).

General Notes:

1. **Estimates of indigenous and community lands are conservative.** The calculation of the amount of land held and/or used by indigenous peoples and/or communities is based on literature review and estimates from official or reputable organizations. In many cases, this information is only available for officially recognized land rights, and sometimes they can include lands that are in the process of titling. As a result, land held and/or used by indigenous peoples and/or communities lacking formal recognition are rarely taken into account into the estimates, unless specifically available. However, when the number of indigenous peoples and communities asking for land rights recognition is known but not the total area they represent, this information is displayed in the attribute table although not included in the total area estimation.
2. **Accuracy is mixed.** A few organizations provide estimates of the total area held and/or used by indigenous peoples and/or communities lacking official recognition. Methods to assess such numbers can vary. In most cases, only the number of concerned indigenous peoples and communities is known. Thus, if this information is displayed in the attribute table when known, these lands are not taken into account in the final estimation of the total area held and/or used by indigenous peoples and/or communities.

3. **Percentages apply strictly to *lands*.** Many coastal and lakeside indigenous peoples and communities claim rights to adjacent foreshore and waters. This set of data explicitly excludes both marine and permanent major inland water bodies.
4. **Estimates include official and unofficial recognition.** The percentages represent community lands that are recognized by national law and/or those that are not.

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