

# Afro-descendants of Latin America: Selected Resources

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The United Nations (UN) [estimates](#) that approximately “200 million people identifying themselves as being of African descent live in the Americas.” Congress has long demonstrated interest in the status of Afro-descendants abroad through its legislation and hearings. Since 1993, the U.S. Department of State includes a section on “National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities,” in the annual [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) to Congress. This CRS Insight focuses on global resources that relate to the human rights of Afro-descendants of Latin America, including socioeconomic status ([Table 1](#)), international organizations ([Table 2](#)), and international declarations and conventions ([Table 3](#)). Most of the resources below are also available in one or more foreign languages.

This CRS Insight uses the umbrella term “Afro-descendant.” The World Bank’s 2018 report [Afro-descendants in Latin America: Toward a Framework of Inclusion](#) details that the term was “first adopted by regional Afro-descendant organizations in the early 2000s, and describes people united by a common ancestry but living in very dissimilar conditions.”

For Latin America’s Afro-descendants, human rights challenges are intertwined with socioeconomics. The 2002 [UN Durban Declaration](#) emphasized, “poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion and economic disparities are closely associated with racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and contribute to the persistence of racist attitudes and practices which in turn generate more poverty.” For example, the [World Bank’s LAC \(Latin America and the Caribbean\) Equity Lab](#)’s March 2024 data illustrates that in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay, a higher percentage of Afro-descendants are poor (living on less than \$6.85 per day in 2017 purchasing power parity terms), compared to the national average.

**Table 1. Socioeconomic Status of Afro-descendants in Latin America: Resources**

Title	Author	Resource Type
<a href="#">LAC Equity Lab: Ethnicity</a> (last updated 2024)	World Bank	Website with data on socio-demographics, poverty, and access to services.

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Title	Author	Resource Type
<a href="#">Afro-descendant Peoples' Territories in Biodiversity Hotspots across Latin America and the Caribbean: Barriers to Inclusion in Conservation policies (2023)</a>	Rights and Resources Initiative, Process of Black Communities, Pontifical Universidad Javeriana's Observatory of Ethnic and Campesino Territories, and National Coordination of Articulation of Rural Black Quilombola Communities	Report examines the territorial presence of Afro-descendants in 16 Latin American countries.
<a href="#">Maternal Health Analysis of Women and Girls of African Descent in the Americas (2023)</a>	UN Population Fund, UN Children's Fund, UN Women, Pan American Health Organization, and the National Birth Equity Collaborative	Report compares data across the Americas about Afro-descendant women's maternal health and provides analysis and recommendations.
<a href="#">Afro-descendant Inclusion in Education: An Anti-racist Agenda for Latin America (2022)</a>	Germán Freire et al., World Bank Group	Report examines educational disparities across several countries and its relationship to regional sustainable growth.
<a href="#">Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights of Persons of African Descent: Inter-American Standards to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Structural Racial Discrimination (2021)</a>	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights	Report covers the challenges of statistical visibility, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) context, and violence, as well as Inter-American standards to combat racial discrimination.
<a href="#">Health of Afro-descendant People in Latin America (2021)</a>	Pan American Health Organization	Report identifies key data gaps on Afro-descendant health in the region, and makes recommendations.
<a href="#">Children of African descent in Latin America (2019)</a>	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	Briefing note on population, childhood inequalities, health, and education indicators.
<a href="#">Afro-descendants in Latin America: Toward a Framework of Inclusion (2018)</a>	Germán Freire et al., World Bank	Report covers terms, population distribution, poverty, and education.
<a href="#">Afrodescendent women in Latin America and the Caribbean: Debts of equality (2018)</a>	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	Report on Afro-descendant women's economic, physical, and decision-making autonomy.

**Source:** Compiled by CRS.

Several international organizations have expressed concern about the human rights of Afro-descendants (**Table 2**). In 1966, the UN proclaimed March 21 as the [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#). In August 2021, a unanimously adopted resolution established the [UN Permanent Forum of People of African Descent](#). This advisory body works with the UN Human Rights Council and [held](#) its third session in April 2024. The UN and the Organization of American States (OAS) also have rapporteurs, established in [1993](#) and [2005](#), respectively, which work to combat racial discrimination through various means. The OAS' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights holds hearings, some categorized under the [Rights of Afro-Descendants/Against Racial Discrimination](#), and may recommend cases to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

**Table 2. Rights of Afro-descendants in Latin America: Resources from International Organizations**

Title	Author	Resource Type
<a href="#">International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024</a>	United Nations	Website with resources, events, regional meeting information and more.
<a href="#">Rapporteurship on the Rights of Persons of African Descent and against Racial Discrimination</a>	Organization of American States	Website with reports, hearings, and press releases.
<a href="#">Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism</a>	United Nations	Website with thematic and country reports.
<a href="#">Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent</a>	United Nations	Website with thematic and country reports.

**Source:** Compiled by CRS.

Various international organizations have also issued declarations and conventions concerning Afro-descendants' human rights (**Table 3**). In 2017, several UN groups began [work](#) on a draft “Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of the Human Rights of People of African Descent.”

**Table 3. International Declarations and Conventions regarding Human Rights of Afro-descendants of Latin America**

Title	Author	Date adopted Date of entry into force
<a href="#">Inter-American Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance</a>	Organization of American States	June 5, 2013 February 20, 2020
<a href="#">Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance</a>	Organization of American States	June 5, 2013 November 11, 2017
<a href="#">World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance: Declaration and Programme of Action</a> ( <i>also known as the Durban Conference</i> )	United Nations	2002 (See also <a href="#">related webpage</a> .)
<a href="#">Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice</a>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	November 27, 1978
<a href="#">International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination</a>	United Nations	December 21, 1965 January 4, 1969

**Source:** Compiled by CRS.

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