AFRO-DESCENDANT INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

An anti-racist agenda for Latin America

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND INCLUSION | EDUCATION

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN REGION

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ABBREVIATIONS

AD
Afro-descendant

BAE
Economic Support Scholarship
(Beca de Apoyo Económico)

CAF
Development Bank of Latin America
(Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina)

CE
Education Commitment Scholarship
(Becas de Compromiso Educativo)

CEA
Chair of Afro-Colombian Studies
(Cátedra de Estudios Afrocolombianos)

CQ
Carlos Quijano Scholarship (Becas Carlos Quijano)

ECLAC
Economic Comission for Latin
America and the Caribbean

GDP
Gross domestic product

IBGE
Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
(Instituto Brazileiro de Geografia e Estatística)

ILO
International Labour Organization

ITU
International Telecommunication Union

LGBTI+
lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex,
and other gender-diverse (people)

OECD
Organisation for Economic
Cooperation and Development

PISA
Programme for International Student Assessment

PPP
Purchasing power parity

ProUni
University for All Program
(Programa Universidade para Todos)

SEDLAC
Socio-Economic Database for Latin
America and the Caribbean

UNICEF
United Nations Children's Fund

FOREWORD

Education is the most powerful tool for eradicating racial discrimination and fostering the inclusion of people of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean. A World Bank report published in 2018 highlighted that poverty and exclusion in the region had a markedly ethnoracial component. Afro-descendants represent one quarter of the population but account for half of those living in extreme poverty in the countries for which there are data available. In Brazil alone, they comprise about three quarters of the poor.

Education also provides the best opportunities to break the cycle of chronic poverty affecting a disproportionate number of Afro-descendant households. Yet, even when Afro-descendants had access to a high-quality education, they were not receiving the expected knowledge, skills, and economic gains. In this report, we examine the potential drivers underlying these disparities in educational outcomes and identify practical recommendations for building ethnoracially inclusive education systems.

We are aware that the challenges Afro-descendants face in education are part of a broader learning crisis. Latin America and the Caribbean saw an unprecedented expansion of education systems to all corners in the last three decades, but this was not accompanied by the quality that the region needed. Results from the 2019 Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study showed that, on average, almost half of the children in third grade had not reached the expected level of reading proficiency, and more than two thirds did not reach this proficiency by sixth grade. COVID-19 only aggravated this situation.

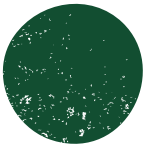
Afro-descendants are among the hardest hit by this crisis in education. Despite having equal access to schools, dropout rates among Afro-descendants are double the regional average, and they are overwhelmingly concentrated in lower-quality institutions—schools that are poorly funded, understaffed, and ill equipped to meet their needs.

During the long school closures that followed the COVID-19 outbreak, Afro-descendant children and youths were particularly ill prepared for distance learning, as they had much lower access to the internet and computers.

It will probably take several years to fully assess the impact of the pandemic on the region. Still, it has been estimated that the enormous losses in learning, human capital, and productivity may translate into a decline in potential aggregate earnings for the region of US$2.1 trillion, or approximately 20 percent of total baseline earnings.

Returning to school and learning is, therefore, one of the most important priorities if the region wants to get back to a path of sustainable growth. But this report shows that the efforts to realize the potential of education need to take into account the particular needs and aspirations of Afro-descendant children and youths. Hence, the region needs to take concrete actions to eliminate racial barriers in education.

This means that all children should have access to schools. Policies should focus on reenrolling the children and youths left behind during the pandemic and helping them recover from the dramatic learning losses through adequate strategies and programs. It also means that classrooms should be turned into safe spaces for all, irrespective of their race, where all children can develop the necessary knowledge and abilities to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives.

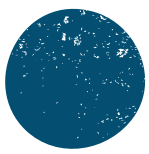


The good news is that the region has been accumulating experience on many fronts, delivering key lessons and insights on how to better include Afro-descendants in education. Countries like Brazil, Colombia, and Uruguay have created affirmative action programs for higher education. Others have passed antidiscrimination laws centered on education and incorporated black history and anti-racism themes into national curricula.

Local governments, civil society organizations, and school communities have spearheaded many programs of ethnoracial inclusion. The achievements and setbacks of these efforts are the foundations of the sustained inclusion of Afro-descendants in education.

Although many of the region's ethnoracial inclusion policies have historically targeted higher education, we believe that primary and secondary education are the stepping-stones for generating change that leads to social mobility. Without eliminating exclusion at schools, affirmative action policies in the job market and tertiary education will continue to fail the most vulnerable and marginalized Afro-descendant households.

At the World Bank, we are committed to ending poverty, but we know this will not happen without uprooting structural discrimination from our societies and our economies. Education is a fundamental part of the solution. I hope this report contributes to the discussions that are needed to realize the region's amazing potential.



Carlos Felipe Jaramillo

Vice-President for the Latin America and Caribbean Region

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are about 34 million Afro-descendants of schooling age in Latin America.[1] They live in highly heterogeneous conditions, from the Afro-indigenous communities of the Atlantic coast of Central America to the urban households of Brazil or Uruguay, but they all share a common history of displacement and exclusion that has important consequences for their education. Afro-descendant children and youths face unequal opportunities in school, achieve lower learning outcomes, and have a higher likelihood of leaving the education system early.

About one in five Afro-descendant children leave the education system before completing school, for example, which is about twice the regional average, and fewer than two thirds complete high school—against three fourths among non-Afro-descendants. At college level, Afro-descendants represent a quarter of the population ages 25 years and above in the region, but they account for only 12 percent of those with a tertiary-level degree in the same age group.

1 For the definition of Afro-descendant used in this report see box 1.1.

All the evidence suggests that these gaps have been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, but many were widening even before the crisis. Addressing Afro-descendants' exclusion from education is therefore more critical today than ever, as leaving Afro-descendants behind will not only perpetuate centuries of injustice, but also hamper the prospects of the entire region finding a path to sustainable and inclusive recovery.

This report examines the potential drivers underlying the disparities in educational outcomes between Afro-descendants and other Latin Americans, with the goal of highlighting actionable recommendations to build ethnoracially inclusive educational systems. The report builds on the findings of an earlier publication that looked at the broader structural conditions that propelled the exclusion of a majority of Afro-Latin Americans.[2] Here we delve further into the quantitative data available in the region to understand aspects of participation in education, completion rates, learning outcomes, access to new technologies, as well as the returns Afro-descendant students get for their investments in education, and the terms of their inclusion in the labor market.[3]

However, the study goes beyond the metrics of education to explore some of the underlying causes of exclusion, including explicit or implicit forms of discrimination. The qualitative analysis examines why certain outcomes persist or remain ignored, and what factors might be driving Afro-descendant children and youths to opt out of or be marginalized from the education system. The report draws on a robust review of the available literature and a systematic analysis of textbooks of primary and secondary education from 10 countries to inquire into implicit and explicit representations of race and race relations in school syllabi.

2 Freire et al. 2018. *Afro-descendants in Latin America: Toward a Framework of Inclusion.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

3 This includes the earliest household data available (2015–2019) from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay (SEDLAC). We also build on an earlier assessment of educational trends among Afro-descendant children and youths, drawing on census data from 16 countries and harmonized household survey data from the same countries, which gives us a timespan of analysis covering a decade and a half (2005–2019). See Freire et al. 2018.

The final chapter of this report provides recommendations to tackle the structural drivers of discrimination in educational settings. Such recommendations are meant to catalyze actions across many levels, from legal and institutional reforms to changes within school communities. These recommendations have benefited greatly from a series of informal consultations and interviews carried out with Afro-descendant representatives, activists, and experts from Latin America and the United States of America over the past year. As such, they seek to amplify their voices and perspectives on the changes that are needed for closing the gaps that affect ethnoracial minorities in the region.

Afro-Descendants in Education Systems of Latin America

The story of ethnoracial exclusion in Latin American schools is not so much about access as it is about permanence. School attendance in general has been improving over the past two decades throughout the region, irrespective of race and ethnicity, while access to secondary education has more than doubled since the 1980s. The number of Afro-descendants without a primary and secondary degree dropped between the last two census rounds. In fact, when looking at school-age members in households, today Afro-descendants have attendance rates on par with non-Afro-descendant peers, with girls having slightly better rates than boys.

Nonetheless, Afro-descendant children and youths have exceptionally high dropout rates. Completion rates fall dramatically for Afro-descendant children already in primary education—there is a 21 percent gap in completion rates between them and non-Afro-descendants at primary level, which grows to 32 percent and 71 percent at secondary and tertiary levels, respectively. Even though girls tend to have better completion rates across the region, irrespective of race, the gender gap is more pronounced among Afro-

descendants. Rural Afro-descendant communities also have considerably lower rates of school completion compared to rural white children. What is more concerning, in many countries these gaps had been growing even before the pandemic struck, despite relative progress for the rest of the population.

The main challenges to retain Afro-descendants in school emerge at the secondary level. On average, fewer than two thirds of Afro-descendants who complete primary go on to complete high school in the six countries analyzed (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay)—the same average for non-Afro-descendants is three in four. The hurdles in secondary school also truncate their participation in higher education, where their rates of completion are significantly lower and the gap between Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants is even more prominent. Higher education attainment for Afro-descendants in Panama, the country with the highest rate among those included in this study, is barely at 14 percent, while in Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay Afro-descendants have attainment rates that are about half the rate of the rest of the population. Such low levels of professionalization limit Afro-descendants' prospects of social mobility and career development.

The exclusion of Afro-descendant children and youths from education is the result of a complex interaction of societal, economic, and political factors that lead to disadvantaged outcomes. To begin, Afro-descendant households are disproportionally affected by chronic poverty, so many Afro-descendant families cannot cover the direct or indirect costs of education and are also unable to afford the forgone income of keeping young adults out of the job market. This puts pressure on their children and youths to leave school early. Furthermore, even if they live in cities, Afro-descendants are twice as likely to reside in informal neighborhoods, or slums, putting households at a disadvantage in terms of the quality of the educational services available to them. The informal city also imposes tangible and intangible costs that make staying in school harder, such as longer commuting times, a disproportionally high exposure to violence, crime, and environmental risks, as well as the stigma associated with living in slums.

There is therefore a sharp difference between the type and quality of the education Afro-descendant children and youths receive compared to their white peers. Limited public funding, inadequate facilities and class materials, unsupported faculty, and a small number of Afro-descendant teachers—who could be more sensitive to their experience and serve as role models—are other factors that limit the academic performance of Afro-descendant children and youths. Schools attended by Afro-descendants also tend to have fewer instructors per grade, or an incomplete roster of grades.

Such differences in quality are amplified by the tendency of economically better-off households to send their children to private institutions, to compensate for largely underfunded public systems. About one in seven Afro-Brazilians attend private primary schools, compared to one in three white Brazilians. And only about one in ten Afro-Brazilians attend private secondary institutions, against one in four white Brazilians. While that says little about the quality of education per se, it does suggest indirect forms of segregation in schooling, determined by other factors such as place of residence and the socioeconomic status of the family. Differences in quality of education also have an impact on ethnoracial disparities between peers, as low-quality institutions generally have the widest gaps in outcomes between white and Afro-descendant students, despite attending the same institution.

One direct consequence of these disparities is the contrast in learning poverty (that is, the inability to understand age-appropriate texts), which affects ethnoracial minorities more severely. In Brazil, for example, data from 2017 show that learning poverty affects nearly 35 percent of Afro-descendant girls and 46 percent of boys, compared to 28 percent of non-Afro-descendant girls and nearly 39 percent of boys. In Colombia, 70 percent of Afro-descendant girls and 73 percent of boys could not understand an age-appropriate text in 2019, compared to 49 percent of non-Afro-descendant girls and 54 percent of boys.

These disparities are further aggravated by digital exclusion. Access to internet services among Afro-descendants is relatively low across all countries analyzed. Access to computers, telephones, and television sets was also low. In all countries analyzed, more than half of the Afro-descendant students in either primary or secondary education lacked the basic resources to access virtual schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Brazil, while 92 percent of students were able to participate in remote learning activities in the South region of the country (with lower concentrations of Afro-descendants), only 52 percent of students were able to do so in the North region (with the highest concentration of Afro-descendants).

Another process potentially contributing to Afro-descendants' higher tendency to drop out of the education system is the way they are included in the labor market. Afro-descendants not only tend to be relegated to low-paying jobs in the informal sector at higher rates but, holding all else constant, receive significantly lower returns for their years of schooling, in terms of wages, than do white workers. In many countries, the wage gap in fact increases with every year of education they accrue, which makes staying in school a seemingly irrational economic decision.

Finally, hostile interactions in school also hinder Afro-descendants' academic performance or force them to drop out. Though Latin America has a strong body of laws and international agreements protecting Afro-descendants' rights, which outlaw expressions of racism in all countries, discriminatory attitudes and outcomes persist in schools. Such racial hierarchies are manifested in myriad ways, including a differential probability of receiving verbal praise or criticism, an uneven distribution of nonverbal practices demonstrating or withholding affection, or pedagogical practices that—consciously or not—reinforce racial stereotypes or the invisibility of Afro-descendants. But they can also be present in the pedagogical materials themselves, such as in the images and content of textbooks.

Afro-descendants in Textbooks

Textbooks are one among many pedagogical tools available to both teachers and students. Yet, they represent a good proxy for understanding how issues of race and racism are addressed in the classroom. Drawing from 40 official or officially recommended textbooks of history, social sciences, social studies, and language courses of recent years used for primary and early secondary education in 10 countries,[4] this report offers a glimpse of the visual and textual representations of Afro-descendants across the region. The analysis focuses on how textbooks describe Afro-descendants' contributions to the historical narrative of each country, including representations of slavery and abolition, anti-racist struggles, and, in general, the inclusion or absence of Afro-descendant figures, events, and issues in the syllabi. It also examines how biased ideas appear around discussion of "the family," professional and status roles, and social norms.

While the region has been slowly moving away from the reported representations of the 1980s, where Afro-descendants usually appeared in stereotypically subservient roles (such as maids and construction workers), there still are important biases and prejudices, both in the number of appearances and the variety of roles that Afro-descendants take on, as well as in the situations they are commonly associated with. From the 5,121 images analyzed, averaging 512 per country, Afro-descendants are represented in only 15 percent of them, varying from 9 percent to 23 percent of the total images in the selected textbooks, despite representing about one fourth of the Latin American population. In countries with a large Afro-descendant population, such as Brazil or the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, whiteness still dominates the iconography of textbooks.

4 Including Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Moreover, even in cases where Afro-descendants appear profusely, the images mostly portray them in stereotypical ways, closely linked to folklore, dance, and music. Their plights are often portrayed as foreign. Textbooks analyzed from Peru and Uruguay, for example, showcase images of Afro-descendants, but they prioritize foreign figures, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, failing to properly recognize Afro-descendants from their own nationalities. Across the region, Afro-descendants are rarely seen in portraits or close-ups, or singled out as notable individuals or historical characters, with remarkable exceptions. Most often, they are presented as part of a collective or in the background, typically in folklore-ridden fashion. While these representations are not harmful per se, they do reinforce the dominant prejudice that historically excluded minorities are inevitably anchored to the past and tradition.

Regarding the professional world, Afro-descendants are frequently represented in occupations and activities associated with music, dance, and sports, as well as with rural, manual, or industrial labor, which reflects a narrow and discriminatory view of the potential and actual roles that Afro-descendants play or have played in Latin American societies. Furthermore, there is a disproportionate presence of Afro-descendants in images of public demonstrations, which might racially link blackness with legal transgression or disorder.

Racism is touched upon unevenly across the region, but in most cases it is treated superficially or entirely omitted. Slavery and miscegenation are mentioned in many texts, but none of the 40 books analyze or discuss—let alone contest—deeply rooted exclusionary concepts such as racial democracy, blanqueamiento (whitening), or mestizaje (an ideology that celebrates racial mixing). The majority of the few textbooks that do include discussions of racism and civil rights do it in reference to the United States and South Africa, omitting references to their own racial tensions and struggles. This reinforces by implication strong-held misconceptions, such as the myth that Latin American societies live in a state of racial harmony. In Uruguay, for example, history books talk about racial discrimination, but the characters featured in

the discussion are Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Nelson Mandela. This is surprising, as the country was home to some of the oldest Afro-descendant political organizations in the region and is internationally recognized for its forward-looking and inclusive policies, including affirmative action programs.

Overall, the textbooks analyzed fail to promote the recognition of Afro-descendant identities and, on the contrary, frequently disseminate stereotypical representations of them. With very few exceptions, Afro-descendants are still strongly boxed into a few areas, but without meaningful recognition of their contributions to the history, economy, or social compact of their countries. Their plight in the face of racism and slavery is mostly ignored or mentioned in passing, with notable exceptions, such as Brazil, and there is a marked tendency to cast racism as something that happened or happens elsewhere, as if race and racial inequality were not a fundamental part of the history and the current makeup of the region. Changing how textbooks discuss race relations and racism is a first step in the broader process of crafting an anti-racist education agenda for the region.

Toward an Anti-Racist Agenda in Education

Overall, learning environments in the region fail to address the needs of ethnoracial minorities. Discrimination permeates school systems in numerous ways, from staff that minimize or are indifferent to acts of racism to teachers that (consciously or not) treat differently or have lower expectations for nonwhite students. The lack of ethnoracial sensibility is also salient in curricula and textbooks, which continue to promote stereotypical views about the contributions of Afro-descendants to their country's history and present. For the most part, instructional materials used today shy away from promoting critical conversations about racism, which are a stepping-stone for building an inclusive and anti-racist society. This is all compounded by the limited

availability of training opportunities for instructors and staff on ethnoracial issues, as well as the negligible number of Afro-descendant teachers in most countries. In 2015, the World Bank made an appeal to improve the quality of teachers in the region as a crucial move to expedite the region's educational progress.[5] Such efforts must include the generation of skills and knowledge to unburden the school environment of the lingering impact of structural racism.

Below we provide some broad, nonexhaustive ideas that could help trigger the sort of changes needed to tackle the structural drivers of discrimination in education. The first set of recommendations are aimed at improving outcomes in primary and secondary education. We focus on these levels not only because Afro-descendants tend to fall behind or drop out overwhelmingly before completing secondary school, but also because many of the region's ethnoracial inclusion policies have historically targeted higher education (through affirmative action). Primary and secondary education are crucial agents to generate change that leads to social mobility. Without fixing exclusion at these levels, affirmative action policies in the job market and in tertiary education will continue to fail the most vulnerable and marginalized Afro-descendant households. The second set of recommendations are geared toward improving and expanding ongoing affirmative action programs and higher education in general, as well as addressing barriers in the job market that directly affect Afro-descendant college graduates.

5 Bruns, Barbara, and Javier Luque. 2015. *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

Eliminating Ethnoracial Barriers in Primary and Secondary Schools

Address the Socioeconomic Disparities That Hit Afro-descendants

Education is the single most important factor in explaining declines in the probability of being poor for Afro-descendants in the region. Yet, realizing the full potential of education will not happen unless countries remove the socioeconomic barriers that keep Afro-descendant children and youths from thriving at school. The first step in that direction is to recognize that exclusion has a material underpinning. While actions will vary tremendously from one case to another, it is sufficiently clear from the data available that countries need to invest more in the institutions that are heavily attended by Afro-descendant children and youths.

A more inclusive education might not necessarily demand new programs or additional funding, but targeted strategies in the existing ones—from cash transfers to subsidies and other forms of aid that have been shown to have positive effects on the educational prospects of vulnerable households. These targeted strategies and programs should look at the special conditions of Afro-descendant families to eradicate the direct and indirect economic obstacles that keep their children and youths from thriving academically. To counter the inertia of exclusion, the region could also introduce financial incentives for schools to meet secondary school completion targets, provide scholarships for the inclusion of Afro-descendants in private institutions, and create or scale up ongoing efforts that identify and bring back to school former Afro-descendant students that dropped out for economic and other reasons.

Digital inclusion is another area where socioeconomic disparities are especially salient. Digital gaps can prevent Afro-descendant students from enjoying the same quality of instruction that their white peers enjoy. This has been particularly relevant as the COVID-19 pandemic has made remote education the norm and laid bare the digital inequalities of the region. The region needs to expand access to the internet, computers, television, and other technological devices to Afro-descendant households. To bridge the digital gap, countries could also invest more in forms of targeted trainings aimed at Afro-descendant students, their families, and communities on the use of online tools and platforms. For all the tragedy the pandemic has brought, it also represents a unique opportunity for long overdue investments in technology and digital access.

Eliminate Racial Discrimination in the Classroom

Another crucial step to advance the inclusion of Afro-descendants in education is to openly acknowledge and address the intangible factors that keep Afro-descendant children and youths away from education. Despite the growing recognition of exclusion and the policies implemented thus far, education systems in the region
remain disinclined to make schools anti-racist spaces.
Latin American schools were instrumental in disseminating ideologies of mestizaje and the myth of racial democracy as collective values. Improving Afro-descendants' inclusion in education cannot happen without debunking these discourses, which implicitly preclude the possibility of talking openly about racism. Rather than stirring tensions, recognizing racial inequalities can transform schools into critical agents for building more inclusive societies.

Schools that are hostile toward ethnoracial minorities contribute to early dropout in primary and secondary education. Changes to the school culture can heighten the well-being and sense of belonging of Afro-descendant students and help them advance their academic success. They can also

address the biased mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors of members of the school community as a whole. One potential step for the region is to create and expand complaint mechanisms for reporting and redressing acts of racial discrimination. These mechanisms could be further strengthened by zero tolerance school policies, which can deliver explicit assurances that all students will be respected, and that expressions of racism are not tolerated. Furthermore, schools can make modifications to their culture by hosting and encouraging open and honest conversations about racism or racial relations in the community. Such regular conversations can make schools more responsive to the views and needs of ethnoracial minorities.

If learning spaces are indifferent to or tolerant of acts of discrimination, it is implausible that students coming from ethnoracial or other diverse backgrounds will see them as safe spaces where they can thrive academically and socially. To achieve their intended goals, schools must make sure to frame these efforts as a matter of historical reparation, inclusive development, and social justice—and not as part of a political agenda. Without this, measures that advance ethnoracial inclusion risk being seen by the public as irrelevant or can be easily distorted or politicized.

Support Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teachers are, for the most part, unprepared to advance ethnoracial inclusion in the classroom. This is reinforced by school leaders that tend to be either unsupportive of or opposed to pedagogies that are sensitive to racial issues. If teachers view ethnoracial education as irrelevant or inappropriate, efforts to tackle Afro-descendants' exclusion in schools are likely to fail. The region must thus expand the pre-service and in-service training opportunities for teachers and school staff. This means equipping them with the knowledge and skills for teaching about race and racism in class, creating a safe environment that welcomes and valorizes students from diverse backgrounds, and enforcing a zero tolerance policy toward racist expressions. Such efforts must also

make instructors more sensitive to identifying subtle, indirect manifestations of racial bias in the classroom, including forms of unequal praise and lower expectations toward nonwhite students.

Design Racially Inclusive Textbooks

Countries must eradicate all expressions of racial bias from textbooks and design learning materials that are better aligned with the goals of ethnoracial inclusion. Textbooks must discuss race as a cross-cutting theme, making it relevant for different disciplines and themes beyond the domain of culture. This would allow students to think of race and ethnicity not as something circumscribed or restricted to personal identity, but as a structural reality that permeates many aspects of life (from health and employment to politics and education). Textbooks should also strike a balance between stories of oppression and victimization with those of resilience and agency. This means shifting the gaze to episodes and processes that are silenced by the official history, including slavery and discrimination, but also the actions and voices of Afro-descendants in colonial Latin America and the emancipation wars, their perspectives and involvement in nation-building processes, the ideas of black intellectuals and political leaders that shaped the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and contemporary developments—from the rise of black social movements and the changing racial politics in the hemisphere to issues of structural racism and police brutality against Afro-descendant youths.

Improve Data and Analytics

Change cannot be achieved without a solid understanding of the divergent needs and characteristics of Afro-descendants in each country. Statistical inclusion must tackle the biases that are still imbricated in data collection practices, from how questions and racial categories are formulated or collected to outright absence from critical statistics. It demands careful and targeted analyses that help recalibrate public policies and school practices,

using and refining the ethnoracial data available. But measuring enrollment or attainment of Afro-descendant students is not enough. Data instruments must also be comprehensive in scope, incorporating ethnoracial variables when gathering information on school materials, academic progress, teacher training resources, or school quality.

Similarly, we know very little about how much Afro-descendants are learning in school, as assessment tools rarely capture pertinent data. Ethnoracial variables should be included in international standard tests, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other national tests (such as admission tests to university), for education systems to have a minimal understanding of the learning process among Afro-descendant children and youths. Such variables could also be integrated into internal evaluations at the school level, including teacher assessments or reports on dropout or substandard performance.

While statistical data provide an entry point for getting a general picture of ethnoracial equity in education, countries must also invest in funding targeted studies that delve more deeply into the substandard experience of Afro-descendants at school. This can involve research that traces the dynamics and consequences of other overlapping disadvantages, for example those linked to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or geographic location. Similarly, beyond collecting quantitative data on advancement, grade attainment, and learning indicators, countries should support research that focuses on perceptions, mindsets, and attitudes across the school community, and the impact they exert on academic performance. Generating a more comprehensive and nuanced description of ethnoracial dynamics in schools and education systems is an essential step for addressing structural racism in societies at large.

Eliminating Ethnoracial Barriers in Tertiary Education and Beyond

Support and Expand Affirmative Action in Higher Education

Affirmative action has delivered good results and has tremendous potential for making universities more diverse and equitable. However, countries with quota systems often highlight the need to address the issues that are keeping Afro-descendants from finishing high school, to be able to fill in the available slots. Quotas can fail to promote social mobility and equal access if conceived in isolation, especially when they do not address other important layers of exclusion that affect vulnerable minorities, such as poverty, societal prejudices, and spatial segregation. To boost completion rates in secondary and primary education countries have piloted a myriad of strategies, from direct financial aid to subsidies in tuition fees and school supplies.

An additional limitation of affirmative action policies, however, is the lack enforcement mechanisms or penalties for noncompliance. In many instances, quotas are not filled simply because there are minimal incentives for institutions to meet the desired targets. Mechanisms for processing complaints or receiving feedback regarding affirmative action policies are thus necessary, especially in local or regional institutions. Such forms of oversight must have the resources, enforcement capacity, and geographic outreach to be effective. Affirmative action policies are a powerful tool for inclusion when implemented adequately, but they are not a magical fix that can easily undo all racial gaps. Quotas need to be considered within other long-term structural strategies that are sensitive to the cumulative disadvantages faced by Afro-descendants from the day they are born.

Invest in Ethnoracial Inclusion in the Job Market and Support Continuing Education for Afro-descendants

As countries invest in schools, students, and teachers, it is equally important to tackle the detrimental conditions in the job market for ethnoracial minorities. If labor markets remain unchanged, the human capital gains acquired in school will not lead to social mobility. Some countries have passed laws for stimulating the recruitment of Afro-descendants into the government bureaucracy. Others have partnered with the private sector to launch job fairs targeted at Afro-descendant candidates. The region can also draw from experiences in the United States of America to enact principles of diversity in workplaces—to encourage hiring of personnel from ethnoracial minorities—and collaborate with job placement agencies or online services to expand the outreach to Afro-descendant prospective applicants.

Furthermore, for many Afro-descendant adults, continuing education or professional or technical instruction might be a more viable path for acquiring new skills that can make them competitive in the job market. The region could thus broaden these professional training options, for example by opening or expanding training centers, professional schools, or vocational institutions. Expanding the options beyond formal education could help persons that, due to their age and life trajectory, never received a primary or secondary degree but are eager to acquire new skills and technical knowledge.

Generate Roadmaps for Ethnoracial Policies with Clear Goals, Budgets, and Funding

In the past two decades, the region has made meaningful strides in advancing an antidiscrimination legal agenda, with positive implications for the educational field. Yet, legal reforms must go beyond declarations of intent and lead to concrete actions. For this to happen, programs that target Afro-descendants need to have clear and measurable goals, adequate funding, concrete methodologies, and proper enforcement mechanisms.

For a region so clearly divided by race and ethnicity, it is striking how reluctant Latin American school systems have been to acknowledge and confront structural racism. Schools can catalyze vital changes by providing spaces, resources, and skills to think critically about the past and project Latin American societies into a better, more inclusive future. If schools were instrumental in the dissemination of racial ideologies that—consciously or not—led to the exclusion of ethnoracial minorities, they must now be transformed into the engines for their inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the World Bank published the report Afro-descendants in Latin America: Toward a Framework of Inclusion, which exposed the predominantly ethnoracial face of poverty and exclusion in the region.Afro-descendants represent one fourth of the population, but account for about half of those living in extreme poverty in the countries for which there are data.[6] In Brazil alone, the most populated country in the region, they represent over 70 percent of the poor. They are also two and a half times more likely to remain poor over time, reflecting the existence of structural conditions that anchor them to chronic poverty. When compared to other Latin Americans, Afro-descendants have in fact lower levels of human capital accumulation, some of the worst conditions of labor market participation, and very poor access to quality services. They are also underrepresented in decision-making positions, which makes it difficult for them to challenge the status quo and have their views and aspirations included in the development agenda.

6 See box 1.1 for a discussion on the definition of Afro-descendance used in this report.

Although the exclusion of Afro-descendants is a complex and multilayered phenomenon, the report highlighted that education was both one of the areas showing the largest gaps between Afro-descendants and other Latin Americans, and the greatest hope for breaking the protracted cycles of exclusion. Latin America's racial inequality is reflected in the significant racial disparities in educational outcomes. Afro-descendants have on average nearly twice the regional rate of illiteracy (World Bank 2022). And while the region has made tremendous progress in the expansion of education systems, and Afro-descendants have benefited from this expansion—there are, in fact, no significant differences in access to primary or secondary education—they do have considerably lower completion rates at all levels. That is, although the enrollment rate of Afro-descendant children in school is similar to that of white children, their passage through the system leads to notoriously different outcomes.

About one in five Afro-descendant children leave the education system before completing school—about twice the regional average. And fewer than two thirds complete high school in the countries included in this report, against three fourths of non-Afro-descendants.[7] At tertiary level, the gaps are even more pronounced, so despite representing a quarter of the region's population ages 25 years and above, Afro-descendants account for only 12 percent of those with a tertiary-level degree in the same age group. More worrisome, in many countries these gaps have been growing over time, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, notwithstanding sustained progress for the rest of the population. Although most affirmative action policies adopted in the region have focused on tertiary education, addressing the causes behind the high numbers of primary and secondary school dropouts is critical, according to a recent World Bank report, as incomplete secondary education has been found to be one of the main drivers behind the growing number of youths who are not in education, employment, or training, and who come overwhelmingly from poor and vulnerable households, where women, Afro-descendants, and other minorities are overrepresented (de Hoyos, Rogers, and Székely 2016).

7 These exceptional dropout rates lead to considerable gaps in educational completion. That is, about 21 percent fewer Afro-descendants will stay in the system long enough to complete primary education, 32 percent fewer to complete secondary, and 71 percent fewer to complete higher education.

Although it is too early to gauge the full impact of the pandemic on education, all the available evidence suggests that ethnoracial gaps have likely been aggravated, threatening to reverse the modest improvements of the past decades. The much lower access of Afro-descendants to digital technologies required for distance learning, their higher concentration in low-quality and underfunded education institutions, and their higher tendency to lag behind or drop out early all suggest that Afro-descendants will be among the main victims of the prolonged lockdowns due to COVID-19 over the previous two years. Addressing the factors that drive Afro-descendants' exclusion in education is therefore more critical today than ever, if the region wants to avoid reversals that will have long-lasting consequences for the opportunities and choices of one quarter of its population. Leaving Afro-descendants behind will not only perpetuate an injustice that dates back to the egregious history of displacement and subjugation started off by the transatlantic slave trade, but will also inevitably hamper the prospects of the entire region to find to a path to sustainable and inclusive recovery.

This report analyzes the potential drivers of these noticeable disparities in educational outcomes between Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants, with the goal of highlighting actionable recommendations to move toward an ethnoracially inclusive education. The first chapter of the report draws from a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, based on the latest household data available (2015–2019) from six countries.[8] It also builds on an earlier assessment of educational trends that included household and census data from 16 countries, dating back to 2005. This gives the report an analytic timespan covering about a decade and a half.

But the study goes beyond the metrics of educational gaps and trends to explore the underlying causes of exclusion. It looks into why certain outcomes persist or remain ignored, and what factors might be driving Afro-descendant children and youths to opt out of or be marginalized from the system. Indeed, when comparing households with similar socioeconomic and educational

8 Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay.

characteristics—living in similar neighborhoods, with comparable family structures, and born to parents with the same educational level and income—Afro-descendants still are about 15 percent less likely to complete secondary education in countries as diverse as Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay. Several studies have pointed at discrimination—whether structural or direct—to explain why Afro-descendant children and youths might find it harder or unappealing to stay in school, even when compared to children and youths living in similar conditions but of different race. The classroom, as we explain in this report, can easily become a hostile environment for Afro-descendant children, contributing to their withdrawal (Sanchez, Bryan, and MRG Partners 2005).

Discrimination, however, can be difficult to recognize or quantify. It can manifest itself in innumerable ways, ranging from slightly differential treatments or expectations—which can stimulate or disincentivize the performance of children and youths—to expressions of outright racism and disdain. Lack of recognition—the simple act of not referencing Afro-descendants in school curricula—can be another face of the exclusionary process. Though Latin America has a strong body of laws and international agreements protecting Afro-descendants' rights, which outlaw expressions of racism in all countries, discriminatory attitudes and outcomes persist. This is because discrimination is ingrained in informal expressions of everyday life, which naturalize ethnoracial hierarchies and reinforce their associated biases. Humor is a common and pervasive channel to express discriminatory ideas, for example, which most individuals perpetuate without even realizing their negative effects. Thus, while ethnoracial discrimination may appear imperceptible to most students and teachers, it can still have very real consequences for Afro-descendant children and their families.

The second chapter of the report explores the persistence of discriminatory representations and practices in educational settings. Specifically, it focuses on the treatment of race relations and Afro-descendance in official or officially recommended textbooks of history and language courses of the last years

of primary and early years of secondary education in 10 countries.[9] Although textbooks are only one among many pedagogical tools available to both teachers and students, they represent a good proxy for understanding how issues of race and racism are addressed in the classroom and whether the current teaching plans either reproduce or challenge discriminatory ideas. The focus on history books is intended to assess Afro-descendant representations in nation-building and citizenship narratives, a demand long held by Afro-descendant specialists as critical to break away from centuries of invisibility. For this reason, the report looks at the visual and textual representations of Afro-descendants and their contributions to the historical narrative of the country, including the representation of slavery and abolition movements, the countries' anti-racist struggles, and, in general, the inclusion or absence of Afro-descendant figures, events, and topics in the syllabi (Ferrão Candau 2013). Language books were reviewed to assess the implicit representations of ethnoracial categories in a curricular area where race relations are not central to the subject, but which may portray ideas and beliefs that reflect biases against vulnerable minorities. That is, the analysis looks into the direct or implicit definitions of "the family," professional and status roles, and the illustration of social norms, for example.

Overall, the textbooks analyzed—albeit suitable in their own subjects—fail to promote the recognition of Afro-descendant identities and, on the contrary, frequently contribute to promoting stereotypical and folklore-driven representations of them. With very few exceptions, Afro-descendants are still strongly associated with areas such as music, dance, and cultural diversity, but without meaningful recognition of their contributions to the history, economy, or social compact of their countries. Their plight in the face of racism and slavery is mostly ignored or mentioned in passing, with notable exceptions, and there is a marked tendency to cast racism as something that happened or happens elsewhere (mainly in the United States of America and South Africa),

9 Including Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In some countries, historical contents are typically included in social sciences or social studies courses.

as if race and racial inequality were not a fundamental part of the history and the current makeup of the region.

To be sure, the region has not been entirely indifferent to the difficulties of Afro-descendant children and youths. The third chapter of the report looks precisely at the education policies implemented in several countries. Some have created or strengthened existent affirmative action programs, especially for higher education, yielding positive results in enrollment and performance. Brazil, the country with the largest Afro-descendant population outside Africa, has managed to transform the ethnoracial composition of its prestigious public university system through affirmative action, enshrined into a law in 2013. Other countries have passed antidiscrimination laws in education, as well as other measures aimed at incorporating contents of Afro-descendant history, language, and culture into the national syllabus. Afro-descendant organizations have also contributed with content and lobbied for a more balanced representation of issues that are important to them in the official curricula. Many social programs have also helped Afro-descendant families to offset the direct and indirect costs of education. All these efforts are important in and of themselves, but the evidence suggests that more needs to be done.

In the final section, the report makes several recommendations that can help the region move toward racially inclusive and anti-racist school curricula. This will not only benefit Afro-descendant children and youths but will also help build more democratic and inclusive societies. A recent World Bank study found, for example, that even in a high-income country with relatively low inequality such as Uruguay, the full inclusion of women in the labor market would result in a 14 percent increase in gross domestic product (GDP) (Freire et al. 2020). Considering the population size of Afro-descendants in Latin America and their overrepresentation among the poor—they comprise about 50 percent of the region's poor—their inclusion in education and the impact this would later have in the labor market would amount to a very significant increase in the regional GDP.

Whether consciously or not, schools are spaces where racial relations are affirmed and reproduced (Lewis 2003). In the classroom, students not only learn the national perspective about racial relations, but also become exposed to the dominant attitudes about race and racism that shape their everyday lives (Godreau et al. 2008; Telles 2004). They also become aware of the implicit rules of the status quo—what is expected of them, what is not—and of their own racial identity (Omi and Winant 1994). Some authors have hence affirmed that, rather than being the great equalizer, schools are often "race-making institutions"—that is, they coproduce racial divisions that already exist in society, perpetuating racial inequalities in direct or subtle ways (Wacquant 2002).

For a region so clearly divided by race and ethnicity, it is striking that Latin American school systems have been so reluctant to acknowledge and confront structural racism. Education systems have never been neutral, however, as they were central players in the dissemination of the ideas of mestizaje (an ideology that celebrated racial mixing, which became popular in the first half of the 20th century) that still dominate the region's refusal to acknowledge and address racial disparities. Already in the early twentieth century, intellectuals of the stature of José Vasconcelos, Gilberto Freyre, José Martí, and José Carlos Mariátegui, among many others, viewed education as a tool to propel the region into the future and help in the creation of proud national identities, which in most countries meant mestizo identities (Martínez Casas et al. 2014; Palacios 2017). In this vein, Gilberto Freyre reimagined the history of racial relations in Brazil, which in his view would lead to a state of harmony that he famously labelled "racial democracy." Like Vasconcelos, Freyre envisioned education as a conduit for social progress and a platform that could materialize this imagined form of racial equality (Oliveira 2016).

These ideas were revolutionary at the time and there is little wonder they were embraced by so many, from intellectuals and artists to politicians and the common people. They generated a space of belonging for a majority of Latin Americans that had been excluded from the dominant (white supremacist) narrative for centuries. However, by emphasizing what made Latin Americans

equal, they blocked the possibility of speaking about, let alone formally addressing, ethnoracial disparities. Ideas of mestizaje and racial democracy permeated all aspects of society, not only schools. Influenced by these views, statistical institutes throughout the region stopped including ethnoracial variables in their censuses between the 1940s and the early 2000s. Visualizing race and talking about it was—and to a large degree still is—paradoxically seen as an incitement to racism, social conflict, and the introduction of foreign ideas irrelevant to the Latin American reality. Over time, these views have fostered a learning environment that is largely oblivious to racial and cultural differences (Palacios 2017).

Yet, color-blind school environments are unlikely to address the forms of structural racism and prejudice that underlie many of the educational gaps afflicting Afro-descendant children and youths. Teachers will rarely challenge negative characterizations about Afro-descendants if they feel these are harmless representations or a foreign issue (Johnson 2007). The clout of mestizaje is still salient in textbooks that either silence or simplify the history of slavery and its contemporary consequences, among many other examples (Godreau et al. 2008).

There are about 34 million Afro-descendant children and youths of schooling age in Latin America. They face unequal opportunities in education, achieve lower learning outcomes, and have a higher likelihood of leaving the education system early. If they succeed, they are still more likely to get paid less for the same types of jobs. These trends predetermine much of their life trajectories and that of their families. The effects of this cycle have profound consequences not only for them and their relatives, but also for the development prospects of the entire region.

Education is the most powerful tool available to change the terms of inclusion of Afro-descendants. Schools can catalyze vital transformations by providing spaces, resources, and skills to think critically about the past and project Latin American societies into a better, more inclusive future. If schools were instrumental in the dissemination of racial ideologies that—consciously or

not—led to the exclusion of ethnoracial minorities, they must now be transformed into the engines for their inclusion.

Box 1.1

Who Is Afro-descendant?

In this report, the term Afro-descendant refers to both black and mixed race persons of African descent. The report recognizes that there are many interpretations of this concept, as there still is no universally recognized agreement on who is and who is not Afro-descendant across and even within countries in Latin America. This is partly due to the relatively recent introduction of the term in the region, which was first adopted by regional Afro-descendant organizations in the early 2000s. It is also due to the heterogeneous conditions in which Afro-descendants live, from Afro-indigenous communities of the Atlantic coast of Central America to large segments of mainstream society in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Negro, moreno, pardo, mulato, preto, zambo, creole, palenquero, raizal, cimarrón, and Garifuna, among many others, are terms much closer to Latin Americans' understanding of race and race relations. Often, these categories have associated stigmas and biases derived from a long history of discrimination and racism, so self-identification is not without its nuances. Self-identifying as Afro-descendant also reflects perceptions of race and miscegenation that are driven by social factors such as class, culture, family, personal choice, life history, and experiences of discrimination.

The definition of who is and who is not Afro-descendant has in fact become increasingly relevant and contentious in the wake of new legal frameworks protecting Afro-descendants' rights, including the right to education. Progressive policies meant to expand the inclusion of Afro-descendants in tertiary education, for example, have spurred discussions—even within the Afro-descendant community—on who is and who is not entitled to the quotas, risking the emergence of new forms of exclusion.

Given this fluid, context-sensitive, and changing character of ethnic and racial identities, the safest strategy to study racial inequalities is to assess Afro-descendants' situations from a variety of angles, using alternative sources and methods to explain the observable patterns. This approach should begin with a nuanced treatment of the data available, and a clear understanding of who is and who is not being reported in official statistics, and why.

This is the approach adopted in this report, building on a comprehensive analysis of the history of racial categories in the Americas and an intense engagement with Afro-descendant organizations and scholars. For a detailed discussion of these and other aspects see Afro-descendants in Latin America: Toward a Framework of Inclusion (Freire et al. 2018, 31–52).

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1

AFRO-DESCENDANTS IN EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF LATIN AMERICA

Over the past few decades, Latin America has made tremendous progress in expanding the coverage of schools to all corners of the continent. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, school attendance was consistently high across the region, at over 95 percent, with virtually no difference between Afro-descendant children and others. The fact that Afro-descendants are an overwhelmingly urban population explains much of their relatively equal access to most services, including education. But the story of ethnoracial exclusion in education is not so much about access as it is about permanence. Completion rates fall dramatically for Afro-descendant children already in primary education—there is a 21 percent gap in completion rates at primary level, which grows to 32 percent and 71 percent at secondary and tertiary levels, respectively. Moreover, in many countries these gaps have been growing over time, despite relative progress for the rest of the population. Why do Afro-descendants drop out of education systems at higher rates than other students? This chapter analyses some of the drivers underlying this trend, which predetermines many of the life trajectories and opportunities of Afro-descendants in the region.

The exclusion of Afro-descendant children and youths from education is the result of a complex interaction of societal, economic, and political factors that lead to disadvantaged outcomes. Afro-descendant households are disproportionally affected by chronic poverty—regionally, they are 2.5 times more likely to remain poor over time, even in periods of generalized growth and reduction of inequality (Freire et al. 2018). Many Afro-descendant families cannot cover the direct or indirect costs of education, and are also unable to afford the forgone income of keeping young adults out of the job market. This puts pressure on their children and youths to join the labor market early. Furthermore, even if they live in cities, Afro-descendants are twice as likely to reside in informal neighborhoods or slums, putting households at a disadvantage in terms of the quality of the educational services available to them. The informal city also imposes tangible and intangible costs that make staying in school harder, such as longer commuting times, a disproportionally high exposure to violence, crime, and environmental risks, and the stigma associated with living in slums. More broadly, the regions and cities where Afro-descendants are mostly concentrated, such as the Pacific coast of Colombia or the northern cities of Brazil, are notorious for their low development indicators and their lack of resources, including lower investments in education.

But the region has not been insensitive to the predicaments of Afro-descendant children and youths. Some countries have created or strengthened existent affirmative action programs, especially for higher education, yielding positive outcomes in enrollment and performance. Others have passed antidiscrimination laws in education, and have taken other measures aimed at incorporating contents of Afro-descendant history, language, and culture into national syllabi. Cash transfers have equally helped many Afro-descendant families offset the direct and indirect costs of education. All these efforts are important but seem insufficient in the face of the available data. Education remains the single most important factor to lift Afro-descendant households out of poverty—often more so than for other Latin Americans. Yet, the region's response to the educational crisis of Afro-descendants has been modest, at best, making it clear that more needs to be done to break away from centuries of discrimination and exclusion.

Ethnoracial exclusion is at the heart of Afro-descendants' exclusion from education. Even when compared to households with similar socioeconomic characteristics, located in similar neighborhoods, and born in similar family structures, Afro-descendant children are still more susceptible to being left behind. In previous reports we have highlighted that exclusion is a complex and multilayered phenomenon, which requires analyses that look beyond the usual metrics of school attendance, standard tests, and illiteracy rates to take a more nuanced stance in explaining why certain outcomes exist and persist, and why Afro-descendant children are systematically more affected than others.

In this chapter we present a brief analysis of ethnoracial exclusion in education systems of the region (for details on the methodology used see Appendix A). We take a multicountry approach based on the latest household data available (2015–2019) from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay (SEDLAC[10]). We also build on an earlier assessment of educational trends among Afro-descendant children and youths, drawing on census data from 16 countries and harmonized household survey data from the same countries, which gives us a timespan of analysis covering a decade and a half (2005–2019) (Freire et al. 2018).

10 Socio-Economic Database for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEDLAS and World Bank).

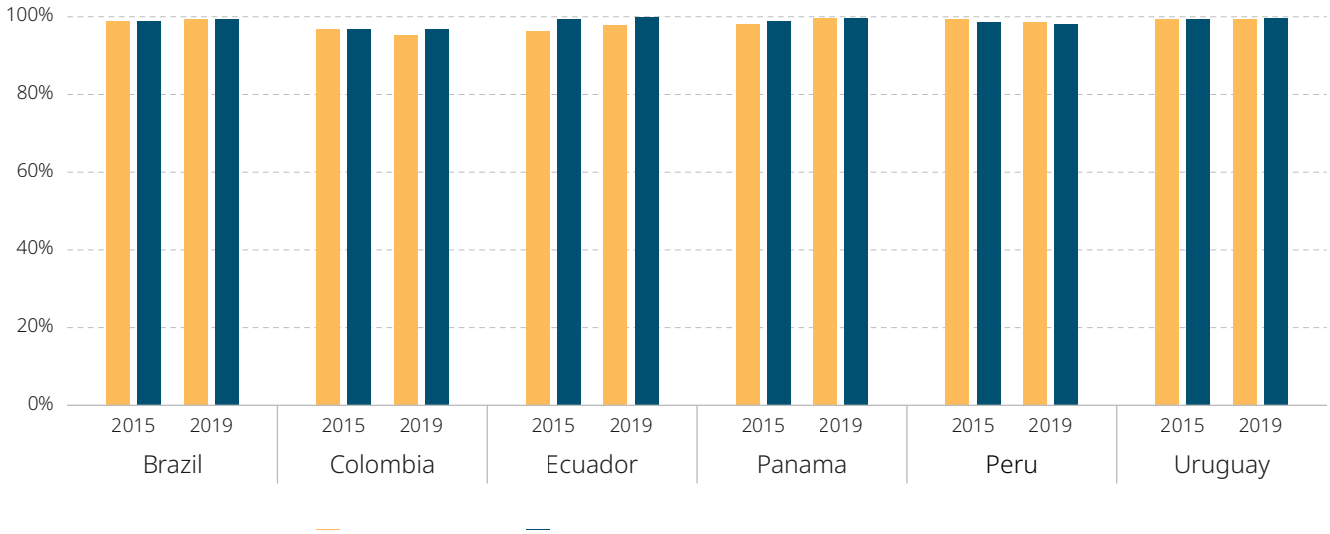
Going to School versus Staying in School

School attendance in general has been improving over the past two decades throughout the region, irrespective of race and ethnicity, while access to secondary education has more than doubled since the 1980s.[11] The number of Afro-descendants without primary and secondary school completed dropped between the last two census rounds. In fact, when looking at school-age members of households, today Afro-descendants have attendance rates on par with non-Afro-descendants, with girls having slightly better rates than boys. And although there were no meaningful changes in school attendance between 2015 and 2019 in primary education, the situation improved slightly for Afro-descendant boys in some countries, leading to a small reduction in a historical gender gap that benefits Afro-descendant girls (figure 1.1). Only in Brazil there is still a small gender gap favoring Afro-descendant boys. Regarding secondary school, attendance is also higher for female Afro-descendants across the region, peaking in Panama at 98 percent (2019), while again, in Brazil, the attendance rate of young male Afro-descendants was consistently higher over time (at 96.1 percent in 2019)—the gender gap in fact increased between 2015 and 2019, from 0.4 percentage points to 1.8 percentage points (figure 1.2).

11 Primary school attendance is defined as people ages 6 to 12 years that go to school, with less than primary completed. Secondary school attendance is defined as people ages 13 to 17 years assisting school with primary completed and secondary incomplete. This indicator corresponds to the share of Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants of school age that attend formal school.

FIGURE 1.1

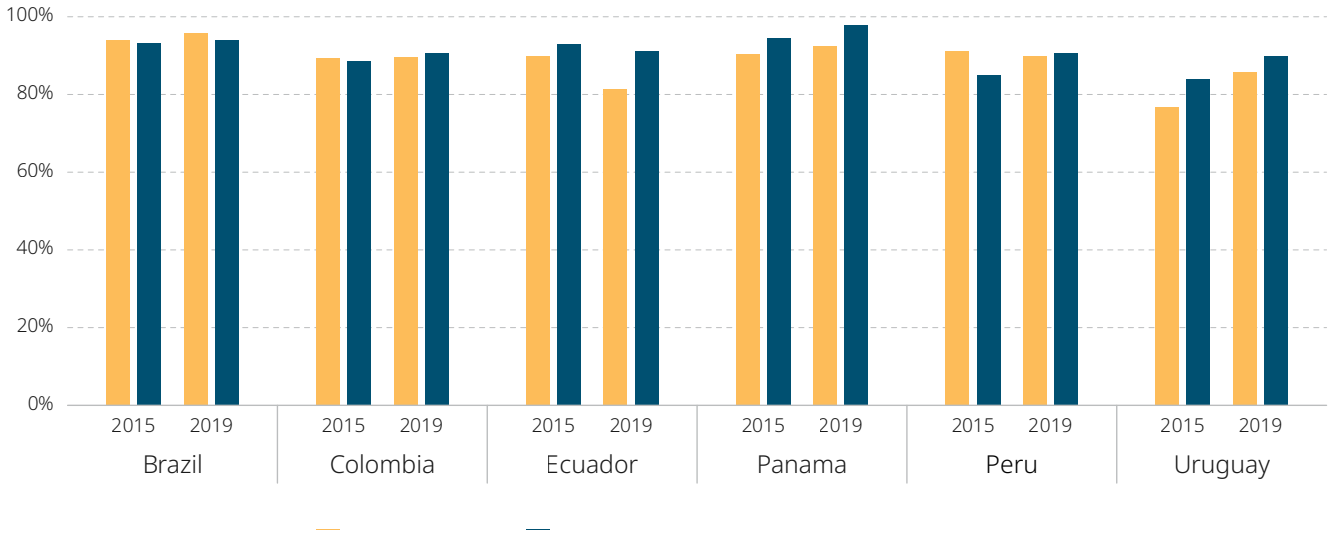
Primary School Attendance of Afro-descendants
Ages 6 to 12 Years, 2015 and 2019, by Gender (%)



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

FIGURE 1.2

Secondary School Attendance of Afro-descendants
Ages 13 to 17 Years, 2015 and 2019, by Gender (%)



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

The main barrier holding back Afro-descendant children and youths in education is therefore not access but the exceptionally high dropout rates.[12] In 2019, one in five Afro-descendants ages 15 to 25 years dropped out before completing their primary education in the countries considered for this analysis, while the number of non-Afro-descendants in the same age group dropping out of school was half as much (one in ten).

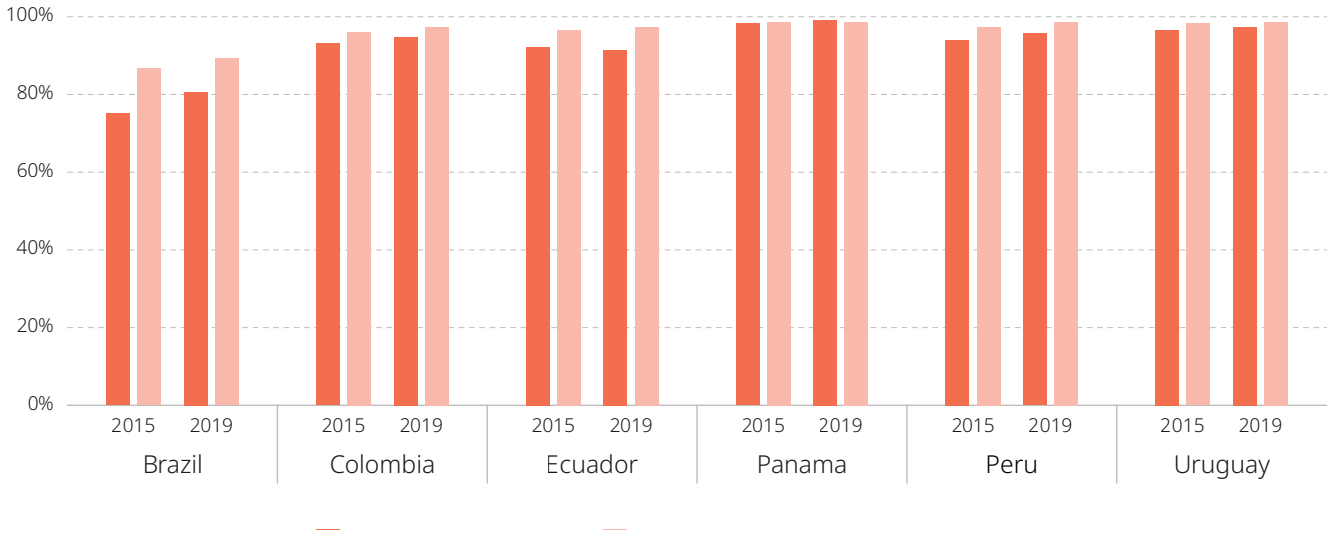
This lag affects all Afro-descendants, but boys and rural children fare worse than girls and urban children. Although girls tend to have better completion rates across the region, irrespective of race, the gender gap is more pronounced among Afro-descendants. Rural communities also have considerably lower rates of school completion, about 7 percentage points below urban Afro-descendants in primary school completion—rural Afro-Brazilians, for example, have a completion rate that is 22 percentage points lower than that of urban white Brazilians.

It is worth noting that Brazil, the country with the largest Afro-descendant population in the region, lags considerably behind the other countries in primary school completion for Afro-descendant children (figure 1.3). Moreover, the gap between Afro-Brazilians and white Brazilians is the widest among all the countries included. Brazil, therefore, drives the regional averages, though the trends remain constant everywhere.

12 School attainment includes people ages 15 to 25 years with primary completed and above; secondary up: people ages 20 to 35 years with secondary completed and above; tertiary up: people ages 25 years and above with tertiary completed. This indicator corresponds to the share of Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants that achieved primary and above, secondary and above, and tertiary.

FIGURE 1.3

Educational Attainment Primary and Above, People Ages 15 to 25 Years, 2015 and 2019 (%)



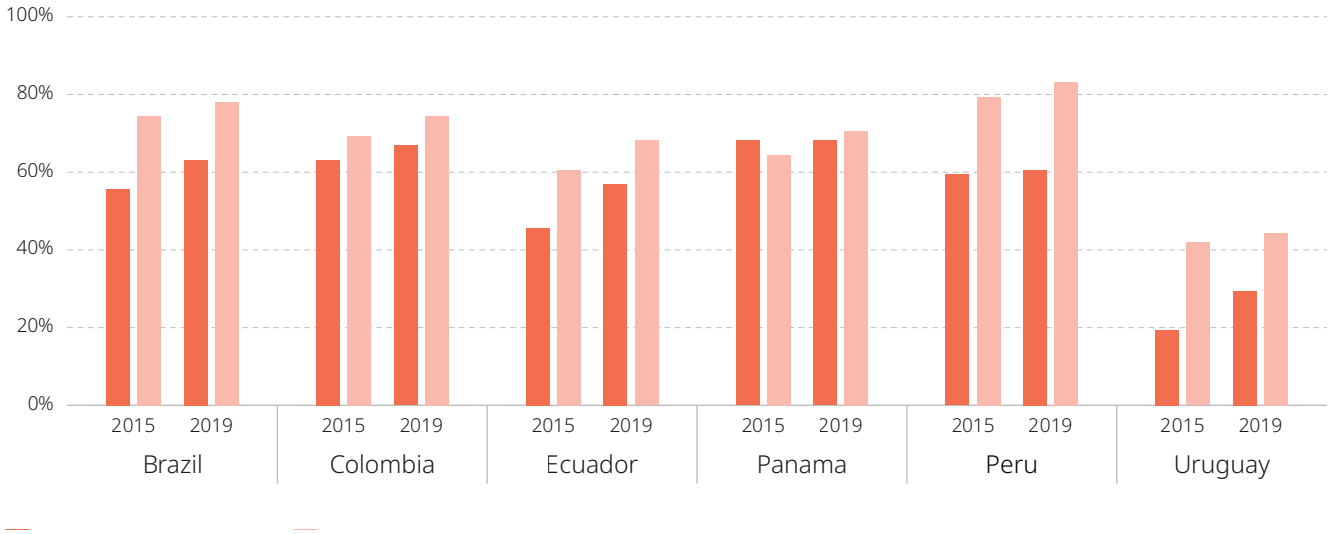
SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

However, the main challenges to retaining Afro-descendants in school emerge at the secondary level. On average, fewer than two thirds of Afro-descendants who complete primary go on to complete high school in the six countries analyzed—the same average for non-Afro-descendants is three in four. As a general trend, though, the gap in completion rates between Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants has been closing in recent years in most countries, albeit slowly. Remarkably, in Uruguay, one of the most egalitarian countries in the region, only one in three Afro-descendants completed secondary school in 2019, an improvement from 2015, when it was one in five, but still way behind the rest of the region (figure 1.4). Completion rates for white Uruguayans are also among the lowest in the region, but still closer to 45 percent.

As in primary, girls have higher completion rates in secondary education, irrespective of their race, even in Brazil, where boys had a better performance at primary level. However, it should be noted that the gender gap is also more pronounced for non-Afro-descendants. Still, young male Afro-descendants continue to have the lowest rates of completion at secondary level across all countries. Finally, high school completion rates for rural Afro-descendants are extremely low, below 50 percent.

FIGURE 1.4

Educational Attainment Secondary and Above, People Ages 20 to 35 Years, 2015 and 2019 (%)

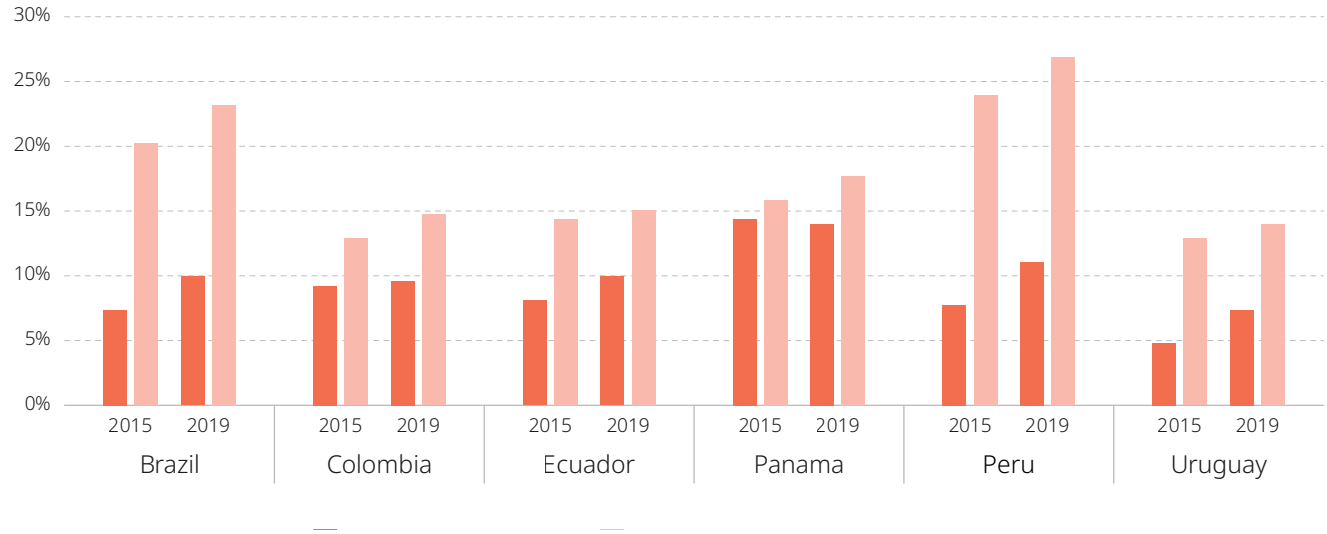


SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

The lag in educational attainment at primary and secondary levels has a cumulative effect on the participation of Afro-descendants in tertiary education. For this reason, tertiary education attainment is significantly lower and the gap between Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants is even more pronounced. Higher education attainment for Afro-descendants in Panama, the country with the highest rate among those included in this study, is barely at 14 percent, while in Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay Afro-descendants have attainment rates that are about half the rate of the rest of the population. More worrisome, in Brazil and Colombia, the most populated countries of the set analyzed, the gap between Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants has increased over time, despite the existence of affirmative action policies in both countries. Despite this discouraging picture, it is worth noting that tertiary attainment for Afro-descendants increased between 2015 and 2019 in all countries considered, so the gaps are due to an even larger improvement in the rest of the population (figure 1.5). As a result, although Afro-descendants represent a quarter of the population ages 25 years and above regionally, they account for only 12 percent of those with a tertiary-level degree, a pattern that has not changed over time, as illustrated in the six countries analyzed (figure 1.6). As with previous levels of education, female Afro-descendants have higher achievement rates than male ones, while higher education in rural areas remains the privilege of a few, with less than 3 percent completing some form of tertiary-level learning—or about one third of the proportion of non-Afro-descendants with a college education living in rural areas.

FIGURE 1.5

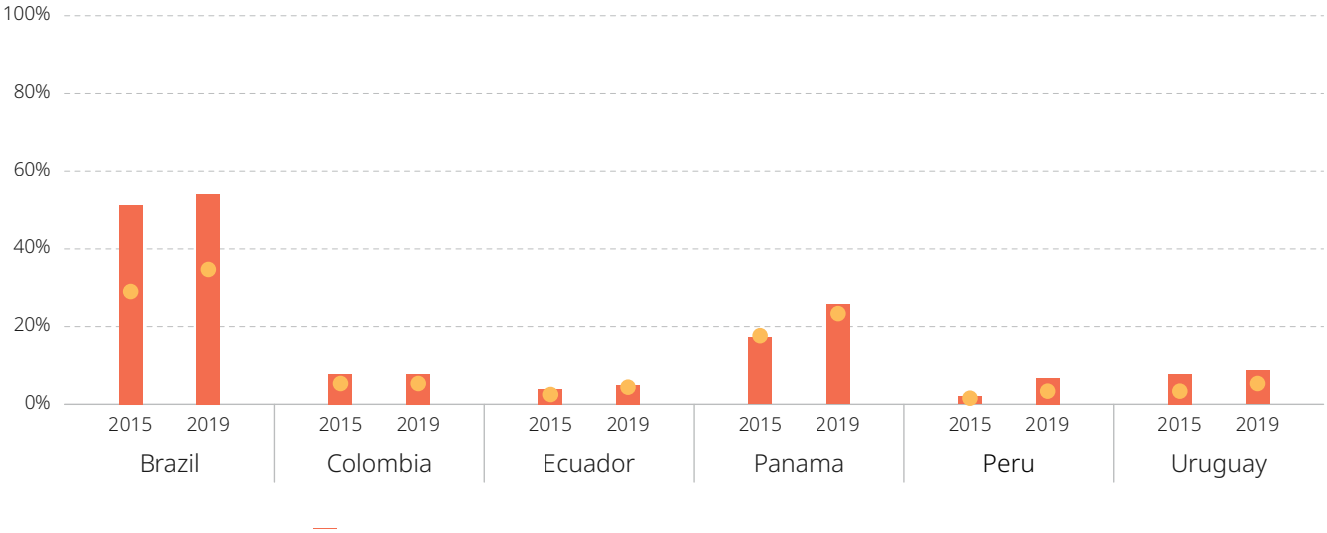
Educational Attainment Tertiary and Above, People Ages 25 Years and Above, 2015 and 2019 (%)



AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

FIGURE 1.6

Afro-descendant Share of Population Ages 25 Years and Above versus Afro-descendant Share of Population Ages 25 Years and Above with Tertiary Degree (%)

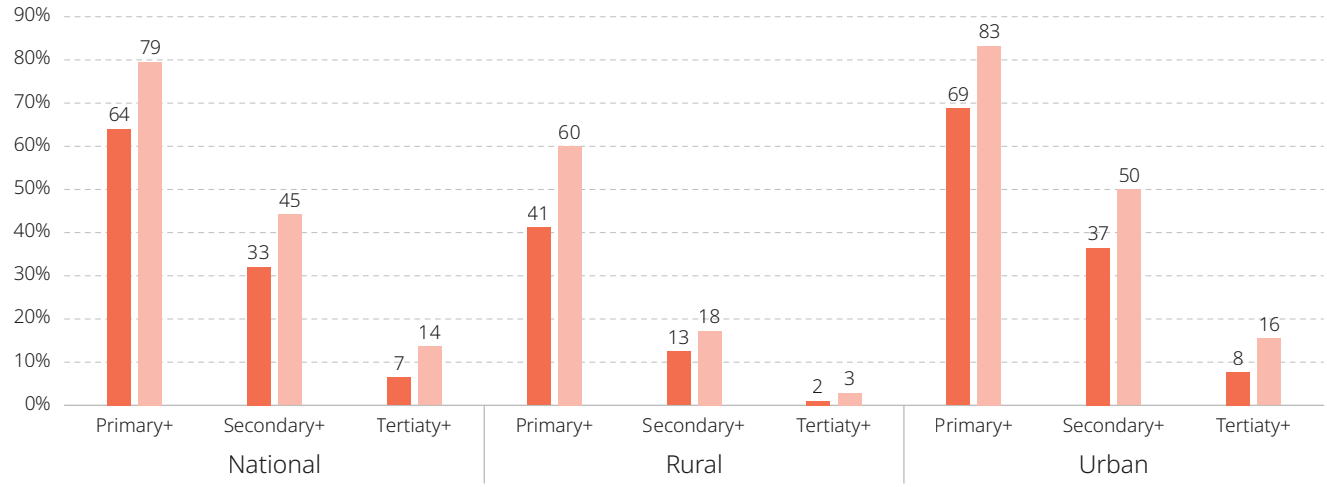


SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

Although the educational data for ethnoracial minorities are relatively new, the gaps in attainment are not. The relatively low levels of insertion in school has cumulative effects on Afro-descendant populations across the region, limiting their prospects of social mobility and career development from one generation to the next. As a result, the human capital accumulated in Afro-descendant households is considerably lower regionally than that accumulated in non-Afro-descendant households. On average, about 64 percent of members of Afro-descendant households have completed primary education, against 79 percent of their non-Afro-descendant peers. Based on the numbers described above, this gap intensifies at higher levels, reaching a 50 percent gap between both groups when considering tertiary education (7 percent versus 14 percent). Human capital is even lower in rural areas for both groups, but the gap between both groups is particularly stark in rural primary education (figure 1.7). This scenario is especially concerning as the human capital of households impacts both the probability of children attending school and their learning outcomes, as discussed further below.

FIGURE 1.7

Educational Attainment of Household Members (Afro-descendants versus Non-Afro-descendants) (%)



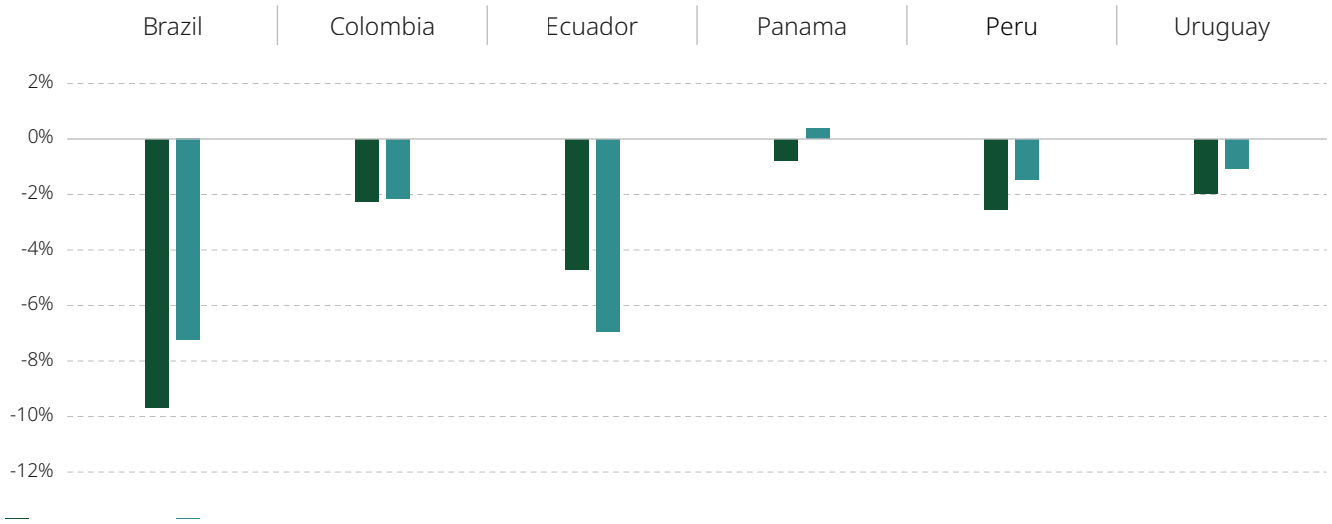
SOURCE: FREIRE ET AL. 2018.

There are many reasons why Afro-descendants drop out of school earlier than other Latin Americans. To begin, the lower socioeconomic status of most Afro-descendant households limits the resources available to support the education of children and young adults and keep them out of the labor market (ECLAC 2019, 29). Afro-descendants are also disproportionally concentrated in informal settlements or slums, where they usually have access to educational services of poorer quality. Growing up in a household with lower human capital accumulation can also have a negative impact on the academic performance of children and youths. Afro-descendant girls are disproportionally affected by early pregnancy, a situation that almost always interrupts their studies (Josephson, Francis, and Jayaram 2018). Yet, none of these reasons alone can explain why Afro-descendants have a lower probability of completing school.

That is, even when comparing households with similar socioeconomic characteristics, living in similar neighborhoods, with similar family structures, and born to parents with the same educational level, in Brazil and Ecuador children will be 7 percent less likely to complete primary education if the household head identifies as Afro-descendant (figure 1.8). The chance of completing secondary education, under the same conditions, is nearly 14 percent lower for Afro-Brazilians, and over 15 percent lower in Peru and Uruguay. Though there was a slight improvement in some countries between 2015 and 2019, the picture is mixed and, overall, negative. In Ecuador, the probability of completing primary decreased by nearly 2 percent between those years, while the probability of completing secondary decreased by almost 5 percent in Panama and nearly 2 percent in Peru (figure 1.9). All this suggests that conditions are worsening for young Afro-descendants in many countries. This situation might have been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, for reasons that are highlighted below.

FIGURE 1.8

Probability of Completing Primary Education
If a Person Belongs to an Afro-descendant Household (%)

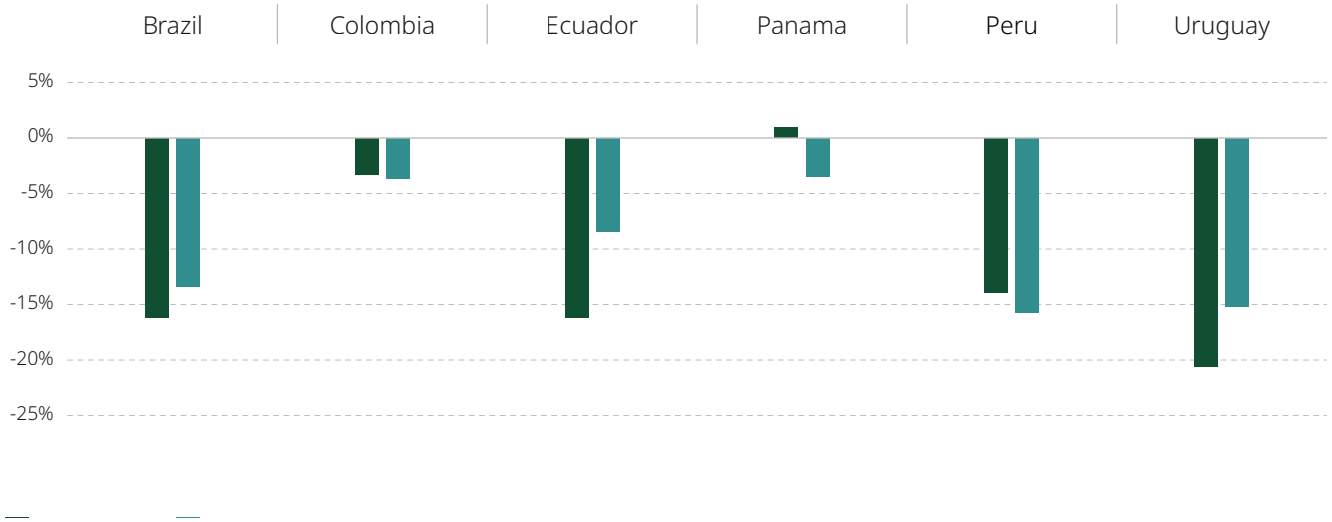


SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

NOTE: THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE FOR THIS REGRESSION IS AN INDICATOR OF THE INDIVIDUALS WHO COMPLETED AT LEAST PRIMARY EDUCATION. WE RESTRICTED THE UNIVERSE TO PEOPLE AGES 15 TO 25 YEARS. THE RESULTS WE PRESENT CORRESPOND TO THE COEFFICIENT FOR AFRO-DESCENDANT. THIS RESULT CONTROLS FOR GENDER, MARITAL STATUS, GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION (RURAL OR URBAN), AND WHETHER THE HOUSEHOLD LIVES IN A LOW POPULATION AREA. SEE APPENDIX A FOR A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF DATA SOURCES AND THE METHODOLOGY USED IN THIS CHAPTER.

FIGURE 1.9

Probability of Completing Secondary Education
If a Person Belongs to an Afro-descendant Household (%)



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

Attending School versus Learning

There are also significant differences between the type and quality of the education Afro-descendant children and youths receive compared to their white peers, which has a direct impact on their outcomes. Although most countries in Latin America ensure the universal right to education (Hernández 2012), and some of them have passed legislation specifically targeting Afro-descendants, this gap is still salient. Lack of public funding, inadequate facilities and class materials, and unsupported faculty—who are also racially stratified—are other factors that limit the academic performance of Afro-descendant children and youths (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2011).

Schools attended by Afro-descendants tend to have fewer instructors per grade, or an incomplete roster of grades, and lack high-quality teachers (UNICEF and UNESCO 2012, 105). Reviews of public spending on primary, secondary, and tertiary education, conducted by the World Bank, highlighted the need to increase the performance and quality of the education system in general, with an emphasis on issues ranging from targeted subsidies to improvements in attendance and completion rates, teacher quality, and school and institutional accountability (World Bank 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017, 2019).

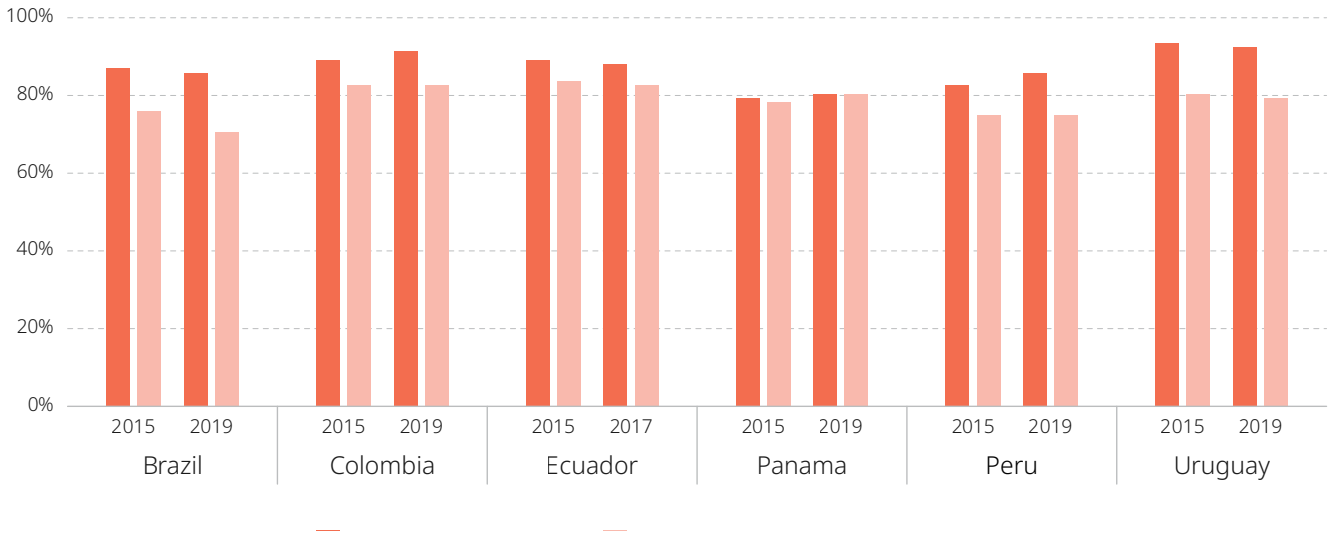
Differences in quality are exacerbated by the tendency of economically better-off households to send their children to private institutions to compensate for largely underfunded public systems (Hernández 2012, 78). In Uruguay, for instance, only one in fourteen Afro-descendant children attend private elementary schools, whereas the proportion among white children is one in five, a gap that has increased over time (Wanda Cabella 2013, 55). At secondary level, the number of Afro-Uruguayans attending private institutions is barely one in twenty, while for white Uruguayans it is about one in six. Similarly, about one in seven Afro-Brazilians attend private schools, compared

to one in three white Brazilians, and only about one in ten attend private secondary institutions, against one in four white Brazilians (figure 1.10 and figure 1.11).

While that in itself says little about the quality of education received by Afro-descendant children, it does suggest informal, perhaps indirect, forms of segregation in schooling, determined by other factors such as place of residence and the socioeconomic status of the family. Gaps in quality and equity of education in Argentina have been recently highlighted as a crucial issue by both Afro-descendant organizations and the United Nations Working Group of Experts on Afro-descendants (Corbetta 2020). In El Salvador, according to the 2013 Household Survey, 54 percent of those belonging to the richest quintile of income distribution attended private schools, while only 4 percent of those in the poorest quintile did so. Private schools attended by the wealthiest segment have better-quality standards (for example, better-trained and more effective teachers), suggesting that the gap in students' learning achievement increases with income (World Bank 2015b). In Guatemala, wealthy households can also choose between public schools and high-cost private schools, which often have better facilities and more qualified teachers and thus better learning outcomes and completion rates. Poor households often must choose between public schools and low-cost private schools, which can have identical or even worse conditions (World Bank 2016a).

FIGURE 1.10

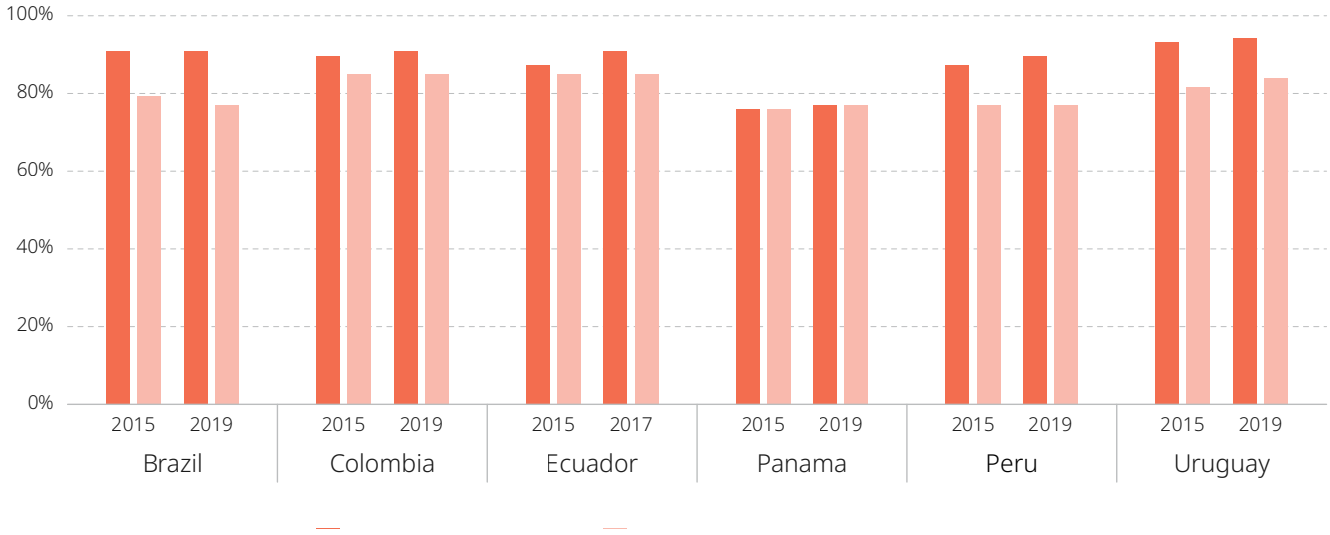
Attendance at a Public School, Primary, 2015 and 2019 (%)



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

FIGURE 1.11

Attendance at a Public School, Secondary, 2015 and 2019 (%)



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

The inclusion of Afro-descendants is also narrower in the most selective and competitive tertiary institutions in the region, which, despite being mostly public, tend to be disproportionally attended by students of white and wealthier backgrounds. Moreover, the expansion of higher education in the region over the past 15 years has been dominated by two-year technical programs, distance learning, and newer private universities of lower quality, which seem to be absorbing most of the new cohorts from poor and nonwhite households (Ferreyra et al. 2017, 78). In Brazil, for example, public spending on tertiary education still benefits overwhelmingly students from better-off households, despite improvements following racial and social quota systems that have been established over the past decade (see chapter 3). In public universities that are fully funded by the federal government and charge no tuition fees, only 20 percent of students come from the poorest 40 percent of the population, while 65 percent come from the richest 40 percent. In addition, admission to public universities is regulated through a high-stakes entrance examination. Students from better-off families often have the means to pay for private tuition and courses to prepare them for this examination, resulting in students from poorer households having much lower chances of getting admitted into public universities (World Bank 2017).

Learning outcomes can also be affected by linguistic and cultural differences, which tend to affect indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities to a much higher degree. In Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua there are Afro-descendant populations whose first language is not Spanish, yet primary education in the rural areas of those countries is still taught in Spanish, as teachers are often not even able to speak the local language (Sanchez, Bryan, and MRG Partners 2005, 12–13).

Deficient schools can also exacerbate ethnoracial gaps in the long run, shaping learning outcomes and career choices (Bruns and Luque 2015, 5). A 2005 study from Brazil found that in high-performing schools—mostly private—white and Afro-descendant students had a similar academic performance, while in low-performing schools Afro-descendant children had a much poorer performance and lower completion rates than their white peers, despite attending the same school (de Oliveira Barbosa 2005a, 2005b; Oliveira Gonçalves, Neves da Silva, and Brooke 2014). Also in Brazil, a 2005 analysis of the proficiency of fifth-grade students[13] in the state of São Paulo found that, after controlling for many demographic and socioeconomic variables, race had a negative impact on the results of students in both mathematics and Portuguese (Valladão Flores and Scorzafave 2014, 28).[14] This shows that racial discrimination in school settings is a contributing factor to lower educational achievement.

In Uruguay, the educational disadvantages faced by Afro-descendants become more apparent as they grow older. While there is almost no difference in access and completion rates between them and white children at primary level, there is a gap at secondary level in repetition rates and outcomes, as well as in attendance rates. For example, two in five Afro-descendants ages 15 to 17 years were not attending any educational institution in 2020 and, of those attending, one in three had repeated at least two school years—only one in four white children in the same age cohort were not attending school at the time, while one in six had repeated at least two school years (UNICEF and ECLAC 2020).

13 Through the Prova Brazil, a nationwide examination applied by the Ministry of Education on the last year of primary and secondary schools to assess the quality of the public education system.

14 In mathematics, a rise of 1 percentage point in an index of segregation created by the authors lowered black students' proficiency by 0.62 percentage points in relation to white students. In Portuguese language studies, the result was 0.51 points.

The learning crisis goes beyond Afro-descendant children and undermines sustainable growth and poverty reduction around the world. The World Bank has found that more than half of all the children in the world suffer from "learning poverty," as demonstrated by children of schooling age who are unable to read and understand a short, age-appropriate text by age 10.[15] But learning poverty affects ethnoracial minorities more severely. In Brazil, for example, data from 2017 show that learning poverty affects nearly 35 percent of girls and 46 percent of boys among Afro-descendants, and 28 percent of girls and nearly 39 percent of boys among non-Afro-descendants. That is, close to half of all Afro-descendant boys in the country suffer from learning poverty (table 1.1).

TABLE 1.1

Learning Poverty by Gender and Ethnicity, Brazil, 2017 (%)

Gender, Afro-descendant	Below minimum proficiency in reading	Proficient in reading	Student share
Missing [a]	61.92	38.08	8.92
Girl Afro-descendant	34.83	65.17	23.89
Girl Non-Afro-descendant	28.43	71.57	21.2
Boy Afro-descendant	45.78	54.22	23.41
Boy Non-Afro-descendant	38.64	61.36	22.59
Overall	**39.32**	**60.68**	**100**

[a] MISSING ETHNICITY/GENDER QUESTION.

SOURCE: WORLD BANK, BASED ON BRAZIL'S 2017 NATIONAL LEARNING ASSESSMENT.

15 This indicator brings together schooling and learning by adjusting the proportion of children in school below a proficiency threshold by the out-of-school population. See https://github.com/worldbank/LearningPoverty.

Learning poverty based on national learning assessments cannot be compared across countries, due to differences in the methodologies adopted and the lack of ethnoracially disaggregated data in most places. Yet, Colombia, the only other country with robust ethnoracial data, follows a similar—albeit more pronounced—pattern to that of Brazil. As the country's national assessment for primary education does not provide data disaggregated by ethnicity, a possible approximation to identify the learning poverty rate in the country can be made from the analysis of the national assessment with secondary school students (Prueba Saber 11). Based on that analysis, learning poverty rates in Colombia are significantly higher for Afro-descendant children. In 2019, 68 percent of girls and 68 percent of boys of African descent could not comprehend an age-appropriate text, compared to 43 percent of non-Afro-descendant girls and 40 percent of boys (table 1.2).

TABLE 1.2

Learning Poverty by Gender and Ethnicity, Colombia, 2019 (%)

Gender, Afro-descendant	Below minimum proficiency in reading	Proficient in reading	Student share
Missing [a]	41	59	0
Girl Afro-descendant	68	32	5
Girl Non-Afro-descendant	43	57	44
Boy Afro-descendant	68	32	5
Boy Non-Afro-descendant	40	60	47
Overall	**42**	**58**	**100**

[a] MISSING ETHNICITY/GENDER QUESTION.

SOURCE: WORLD BANK CALCULATION, BASED ON COLOMBIA'S NATIONAL LEARNING ASSESSMENT 2019/ PRUEBA SABER 11.

Digital Gap

Digital exclusion is another factor affecting the education of Afro-descendants and other minorities, which has been particularly concerning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since early 2020, quarantine and lockdown measures have led schools all over the world to shut down and move to remote learning. The use of other educational technologies has raised concerns about the long-term impact of the digital divide for certain groups. Even in high-income countries such as the United States (MacGillis 2020), where African Americans and the poor are also disproportionately affected by a digital gap, challenges with remote learning have become of critical concern during the pandemic, as they are likely to have long-term impacts on educational outcomes.[16]

The digital exclusion of children and youths is particularly striking in the region. In 2020, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the ITU noted that 53 percent of children and youths (ages 0 to 25 years) did not have access to the internet at home—a total of 130 million, including 74 million children of school age (3 to 17 years) (UNICEF and ITU 2020, 5). In addition, estimates from the Inter-American Development Bank show that 30 percent of the most vulnerable families in the region did not have access to computers in 2018, and while 56 percent used the internet, only 45.5 percent of households had broadband connection. Another study by the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) in 2020 highlighted that the digital divide in the region has been growing, and that the increase in internet penetration does not necessarily represent digital inclusion, since communication tools and social networks take up much of the internet use in poor households (CAF 2020).

Although data on digital access disaggregated by race and ethnicity are still scarce, in the countries with data available the gaps are noteworthy. Beyond the internet, the digital gap is also apparent in access to key assets, such as computers, telephones, and television sets, as shown below. Access to computers among Afro-

16 One study (Fairlie 2014) found that the home computer rate for black households was 59 percent of the rate for white people, and the home internet access rate for black households was 51 percent of the rate for white people.

descendants is low in all countries, for instance.[17] At primary level, Afro-descendant children have lower access to a computer at home compared to their non-Afro-descendant peers, except in Uruguay, where the country has implemented a highly successful one-computer-per-child program called Plan Ceibal.

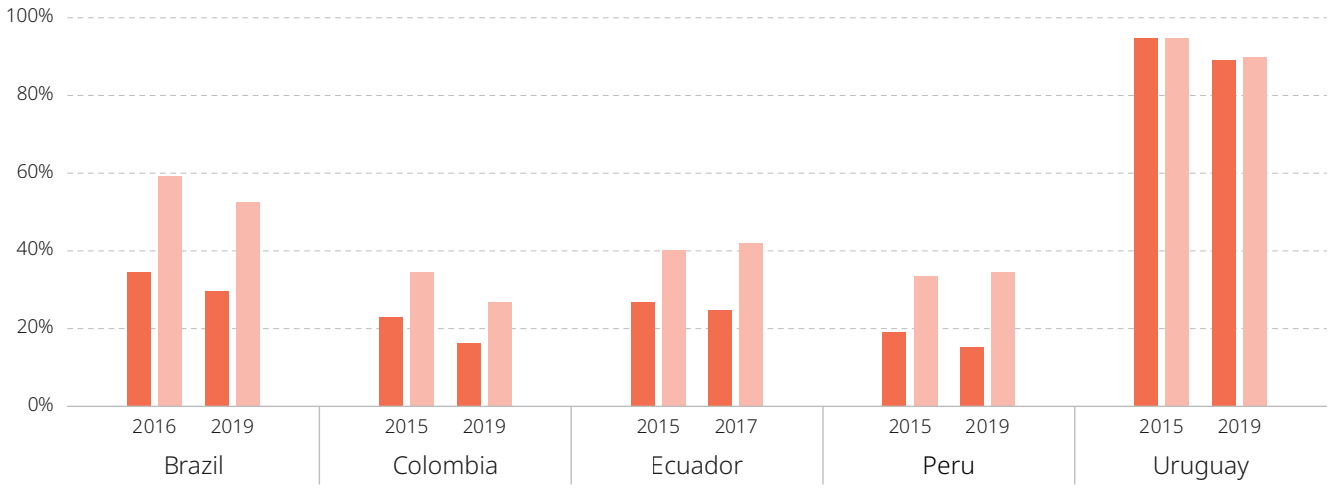
Plan Ceibal offers a laptop and internet connection to children attending public schools, reaching about 37 percent of the population. Through this program, which has been in place since 2007, approximately 48 percent of Afro-Uruguayan children have received laptops, a rate that is higher than the proportion of non-Afro-descendants (36.3 percent). Plan Ceibal has also provided computers to 64.4 percent of the poorest quintile and 50.9 percent of the second-poorest quintile (Freire et al. 2020). The program has evolved throughout the years, expanding its focus on improving access to the development of online platforms, teacher training, and other investments in new pedagogical materials for deep learning. The new tools advance student-centered methodologies, extending teaching beyond classroom hours and improving the use of technology to accelerate learning (Plan Ceibal 2017).

The success of Plan Ceibal is clearly visible in figure 1.12 and figure 1.13, as Uruguay is the only country of the set included in the analysis where children's access to computers is at 90 percent, irrespective of race. In all other countries analyzed, the general access rate is well below 50 percent for everyone, and the gap between Afro-descendant children and others is much larger. In Brazil, only about one in three Afro-descendant students have access to computers at home, while more than half of white students do. In Colombia and Peru, only about one in six Afro-descendants have computers at home, about half the proportion of the already low access that non-Afro-descendants exhibit. Moreover, it is remarkable that, for Afro-descendant students, the possession of a computer in the household has been decreasing over time. This trend can also be seen among secondary students, although in general the gap between Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants at the high school level is narrower than at primary level.

17 This indicator does not include data for Panama 2015–2019, Brazil 2015, and Ecuador 2018–2019.

FIGURE 1.12

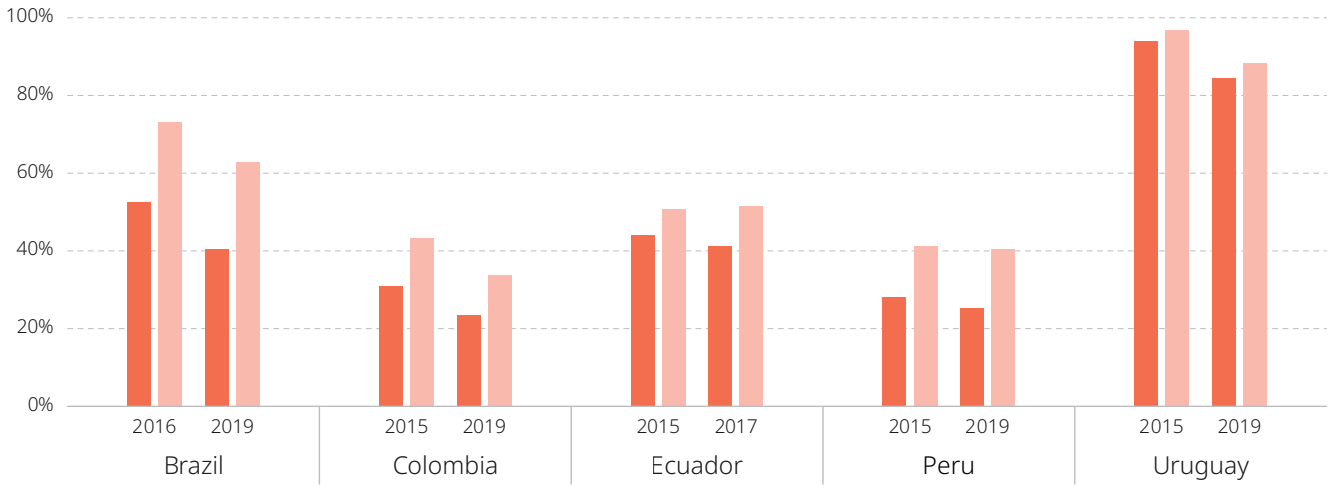
Percentage of Primary Students with Computer in the Household



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

FIGURE 1.13

Percentage of Secondary Students with Computer in the Household

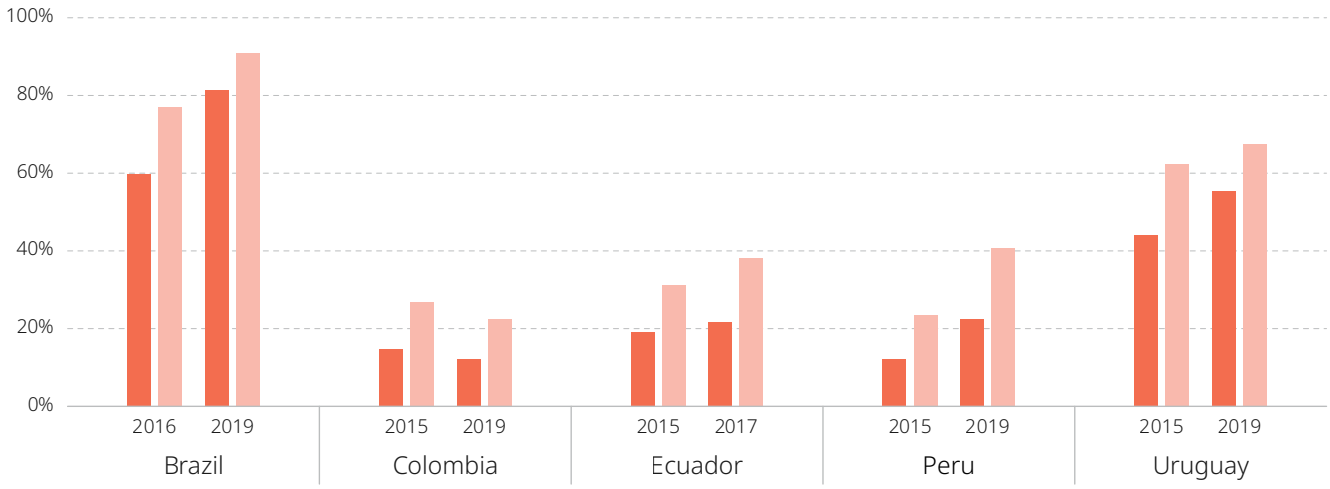


SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

However, access to internet services is relatively low across all countries analyzed, including Uruguay, which contrasts with the positive access rates to computers achieved through Plan Ceibal (figure 1.14 and figure 1.15). In fact, in all countries internet access for primary students is lower than access to a computer, except for Brazil, where the relationship is inverted. A 2020 survey found that this might be linked to the fact that cellphones are currently the only tool used to access the internet in 65 percent of Afro-descendant households and in 51 percent of non-Afro-descendant ones (Cetic 2020). This is despite the fact that, regionally, it has been estimated that the cost of a new smartphone represents about 12 percent of the average monthly income, and for other internet-capable devices about 10 percent (ITU 2020). These trends resonate with the findings of the August 2020 report of the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which noted that minorities, including Afro-descendants, are disproportionately affected by limited access to digital technologies, which reinforces preexisting inequalities (Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2020).

FIGURE 1.14

Percentage of Primary Students with Internet in the Household

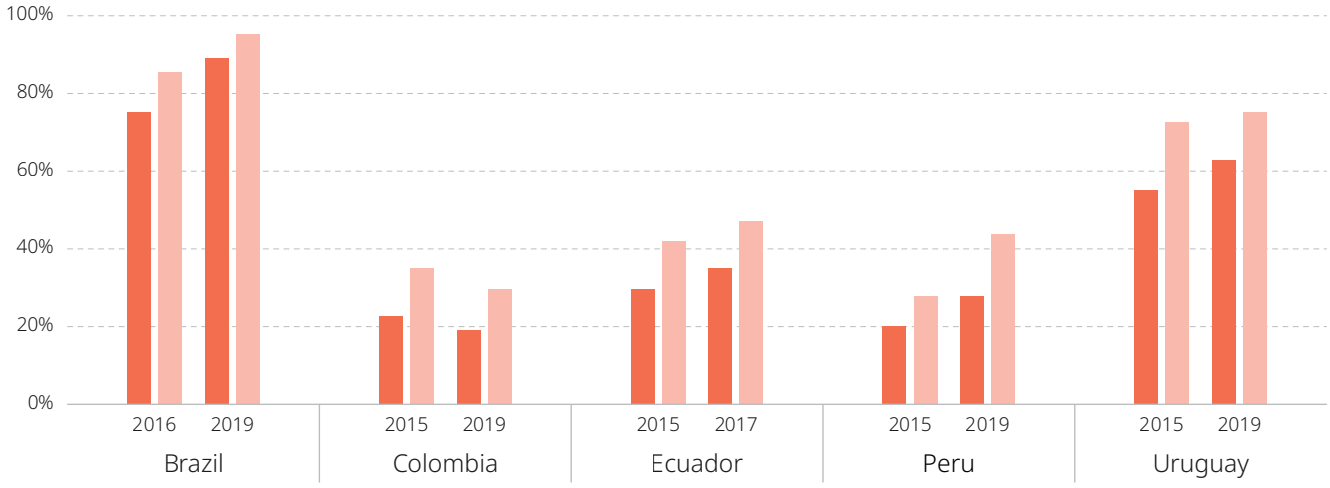


SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

NOTE: ALTHOUGH THESE NUMBERS REFER TO HOUSEHOLDS WITH PRIMARY STUDENTS AND THE SOURCE IS THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT FOR COLOMBIA THE QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY (ENCUESTA DE CALIDAD DE VIDA) SHOWS CONTRASTING PERCENTAGES, WHERE HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO THE INTERNET IN 2015 AMOUNTED TO 41.8 PERCENT AND IN 2019 56.5 PERCENT.

FIGURE 1.15

Percentage of Secondary Students with Internet in the Household



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

Finally, there are other challenges related to remote learning that add to the digital divide. In Uruguay, for example, research shows that Afro-descendant students encounter specific difficulties in studying from home for several reasons, including lack of knowledge of the language of technology applied to education (such as "interface" and "platform") aimed at students, parents, and guardians; lack of physical space at home to study; lack of availability and support from educators to address the needs of Afro-descendant students; and lack of ability to search for, analyze, and process information (University of the Republic Uruguay 2020).

In sum, in every country analyzed, more than half of the Afro-descendant students in either primary or secondary education lacked the basic resources to access virtual schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will have long-term impacts that can only be guessed from indirect indicators and inference, due to the absence of reliable and ethnoracially disaggregated data on absenteeism and quality of learning (see below).

Returns to Education

Another factor potentially contributing to Afro-descendants' higher tendency to drop out of the education system is the way they are included—or not—in the labor market.[18] Not only do Afro-descendants tend to be relegated to low-paying jobs in the informal sector at higher rates but, holding all things constant, the returns they get for their years of schooling, in terms of wages, is significantly lower than those of their peers. In many countries, the wage gap in fact increases with every year of education they accrue, which makes staying in school a seemingly irrational economic decision. Also, Afro-descendants not only get paid less for the same types of jobs, they also have lower chances of getting high-skilled jobs. They are also more dissatisfied with their jobs and wish they worked more hours, both suggesting the perception of underemployment.

The wage gaps are considerable and increase with higher levels of education in most of the countries studied (figure 1.16). In Brazil, for example, where Afro-descendants represent over half of the labor force, Afro-descendant workers ages 15 to 64 earn on average about 40 percent less than white Brazilians for the same types of jobs after completing primary education, even after controlling for other factors such as place of residence, informality, and gender. A similar gap is observed in Peru, and slightly smaller gaps in Colombia, Ecuador, and Panama. Moreover, these gaps remain constant or increase as Afro-descendants accrue higher levels of education in most countries. Afro-Brazilians with tertiary-level education still earn about 40 percent less than white Brazilians for the same types of job, for example.

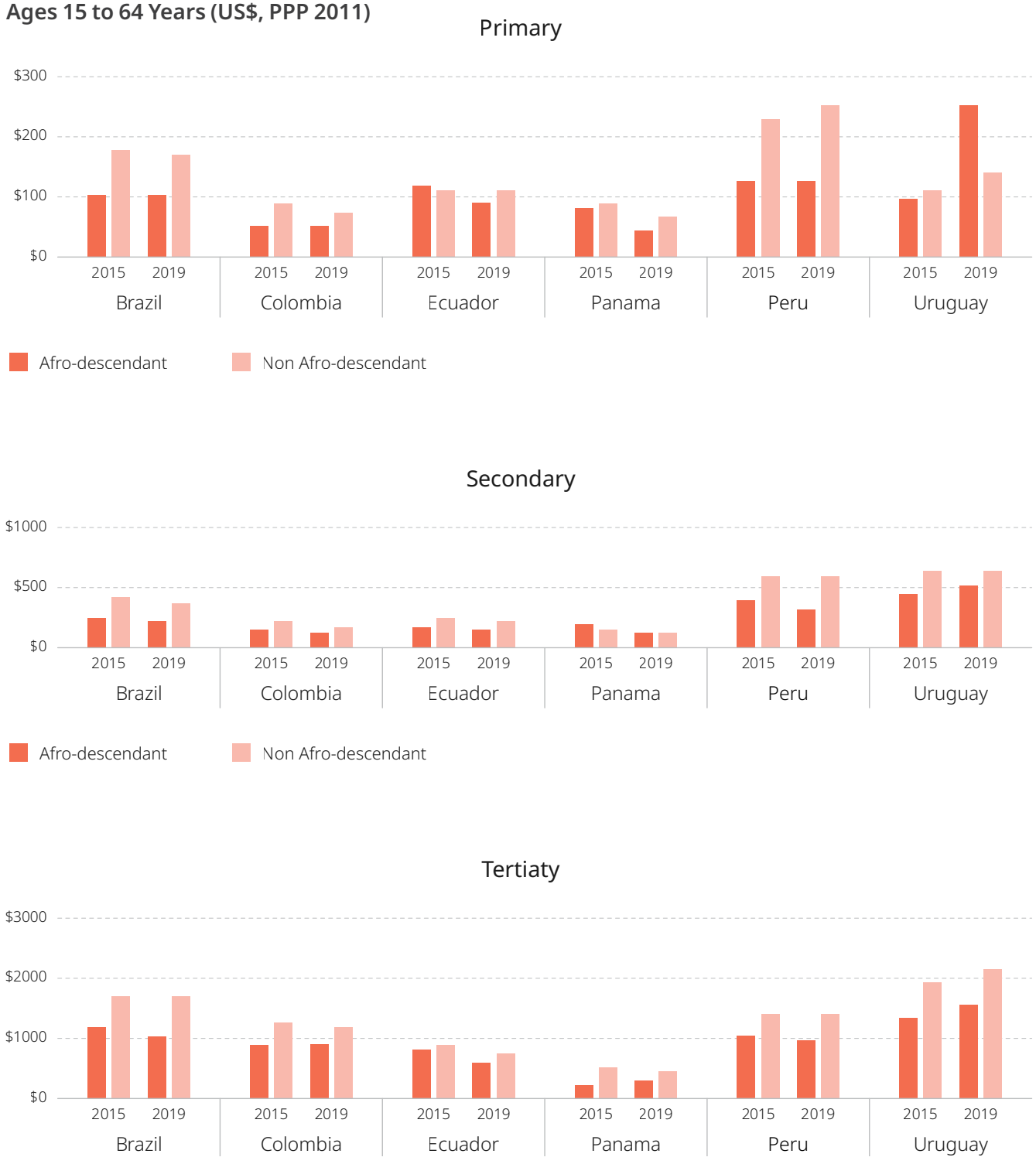
18 In this section, we use the average total labor income (purchasing power parity (PPP) 2011 adjusted) for both Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants. Appendix A provides more details about the formula applied.

Uruguay is an unusual case in which Afro-descendants make great gains in the job market after completing primary education (they earn nearly twice as much as white Uruguayans), but lose ground dramatically after completing secondary education, when they make on average 20 percent less than white Uruguayans, and even more so if they complete tertiary education, when they earn about 25 percent less than their white conationals, even after controlling for type of job, location, gender, age, and other factors. The underlying message of this trend seems to be that Afro-Uruguayans are rewarded for their preparation to join the labor market as low-skilled workers with basic education, but fail to achieve the same when preparing themselves for more sophisticated and better-paid positions in the labor market.

Regarding the gender divide, Afro-descendant women tend to receive the lowest wages on average. They earn less on average compared to both white men and women, but also less than Afro-descendant men, despite having better educational outcomes overall. The largest gaps in national averages between Afro-descendant women and white women are in Peru and Brazil, where Afro-descendant women with a tertiary degree earn about 34 percent less than other Peruvian women with the same level of education, and about 32 percent less in Brazil.

FIGURE 1.16

Returns to Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Education, Afro-descendants versus Non-Afro-descendants Ages 15 to 64 Years (US$, PPP 2011)



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

Afro-descendant leaders throughout the region complain that Afro-descendants not only have higher rates of unemployment and informality and lower wages, but they also tend to be segregated in the labor market, leading to high rates of underemployment. There is no standardized way of assessing underemployment, as this may mean different things to different people, but several proxies can give an idea of the level of segregation or glass ceilings professional Afro-descendants might be experiencing. The informality[19] of professional workers is one such proxy, as it is expected that a person with a tertiary degree would have access to jobs that include benefits, such as retirement insurance, health insurance, end-of-year bonus, and paid vacations.

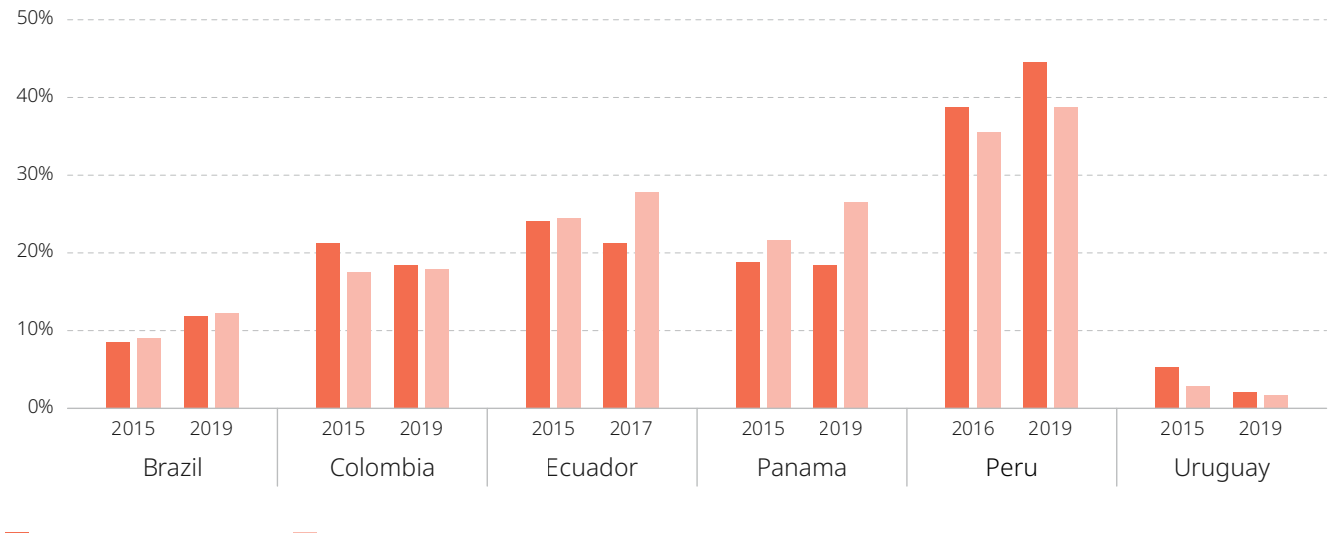
The picture in this regard is mixed. Brazil and Uruguay have the lowest rates of informality among people with tertiary education in general, but they show different trends regarding the ethnoracial divide. In Brazil, the proportion of informal Afro-descendants with a tertiary degree is similar to that of white professionals (even slightly lower), a trend that has been stable over time—even though the level of informality increased by about 3 percentage points between 2015 and 2019 for both groups. In Uruguay, the level of informality is very low for both groups, but Afro-Uruguayans with a tertiary degree have about 1.5 times the informality rate of white Uruguayans.

Peru, for its part, has one of the highest informality rates for people with a tertiary degree in the region, which worsened between 2015 and 2019. Afro-descendants are more severely affected—they have informality rates about 5 percentage points higher than non-Afro-descendants, at a staggering 44 percent. Afro-Peruvians in fact had the greatest increase in informality between 2015 and 2019 (from 39 percent to 44 percent), widening the gap with non-Afro-Peruvians by about 2 percentage points (figure 1.17). Overall, men with a tertiary degree also tend to have higher rates of informality in all countries considered, irrespective of race (figure 1.18).

19 In this case, we use the definition of informality linked to job benefits. We define informal workers as those who do not receive retirement insurance, health insurance, end-of-year bonus, and paid vacations.

FIGURE 1.17

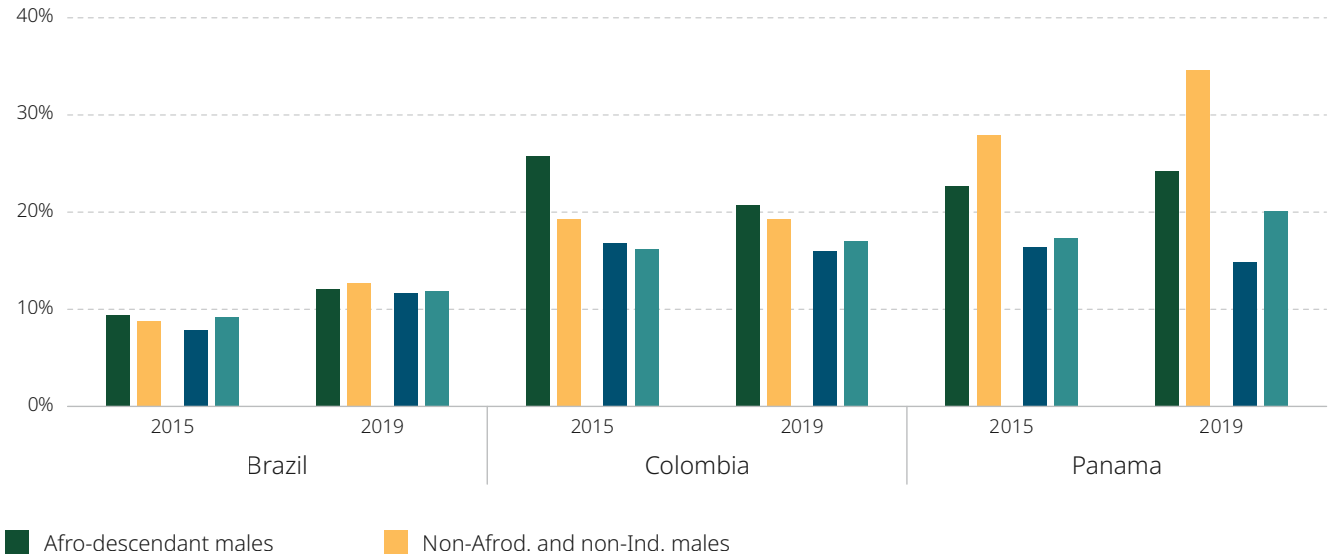
Percentage of Informal Employees with Tertiary Degree, by Race



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

FIGURE 1.18

Percentage of Informal Employees with Tertiary Degree, by Gender

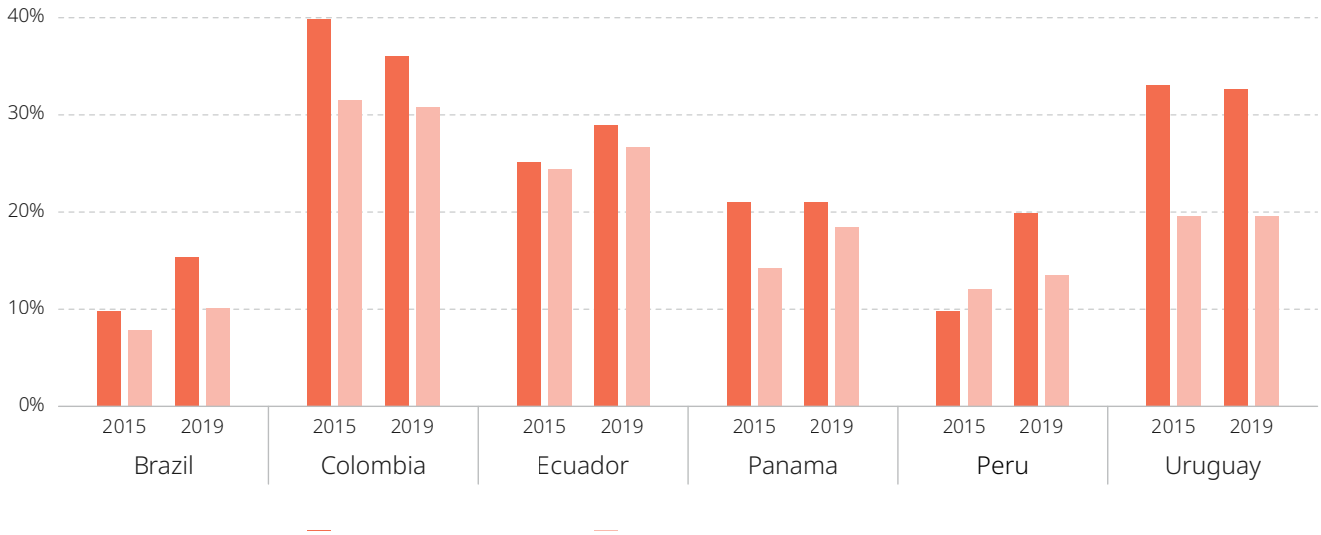


SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

Other potential ways of looking at perceptions of underemployment are the share of employees who wished they had another job, or who wished they worked more hours per week. Generally speaking, there is a higher tendency among Afro-descendants in the countries included in the analysis to wish they had a different job or had longer workloads, a gap of as much as one third in countries such as Uruguay and Brazil—in the former, about one in three Afro-Uruguayans expressed a desire for change. This trend is prevalent across all educational levels and in all countries, though the gap is generally narrower with academic attainment (figures 1.19, 1.20, and 1.21). This could have several readings—Afro-descendants could be more ambitious or have higher family pressure to improve their working conditions—but when contrasted with the numbers shown above (returns to education, salary gaps, informality, and educational gaps), dissatisfaction with their current job situation or the feeling of being underemployed are the most logical explanations.

FIGURE 1.19

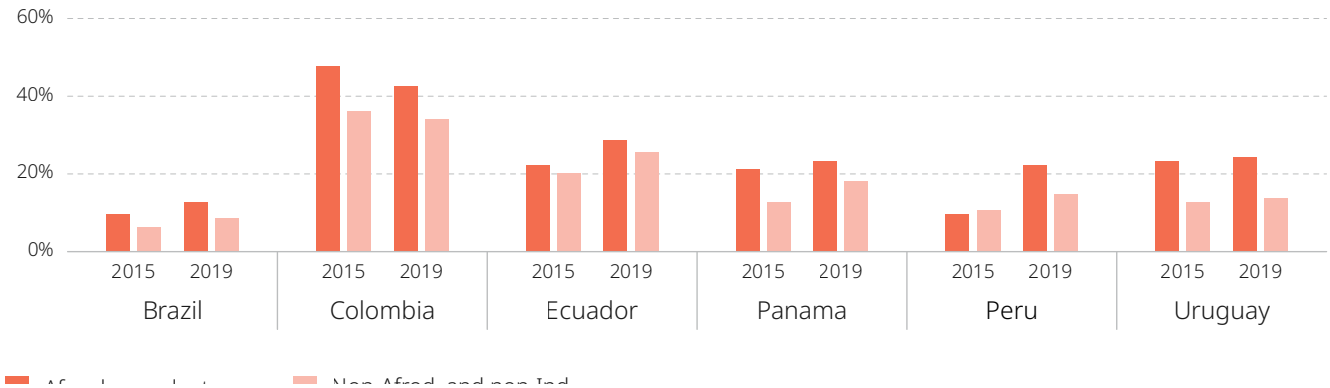
Percentage of Employees That Wish for Another Job or More Work Hours, with Complete Primary Education



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

FIGURE 1.20

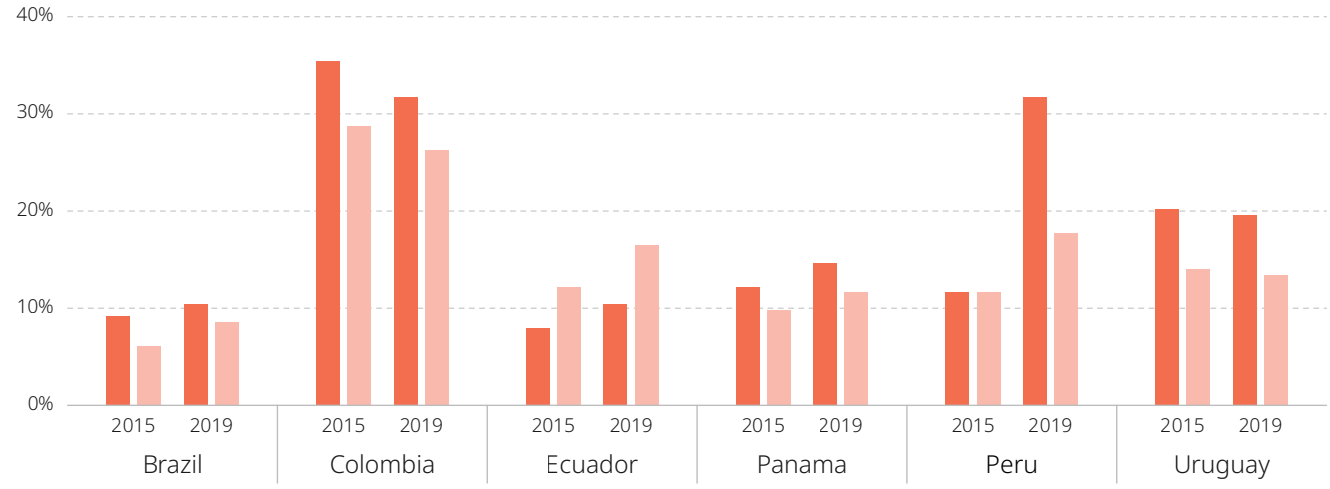
Percentage of Employees That Wish for Another Job or More Work Hours, with Complete Secondary Education



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

FIGURE 1.21

Percentage of Employees That Wish for Another Job or More Work Hours, with Complete Tertiary Education



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

In sum, even when Afro-descendants graduate from college, they have lower returns in the labor market. They also express more dissatisfaction with their current jobs, earn lower wages than their white and mestizo counterparts, and confront glass ceilings that limit their own career development. Across the

region, Afro-descendants experience higher-than-average rates of informality and underemployment, regardless of educational level. It is no surprise that Afro-descendant youths and their families are often skeptical of education in general, or view dropping out as a choice that makes sense economically.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Racial Inequalities in Education

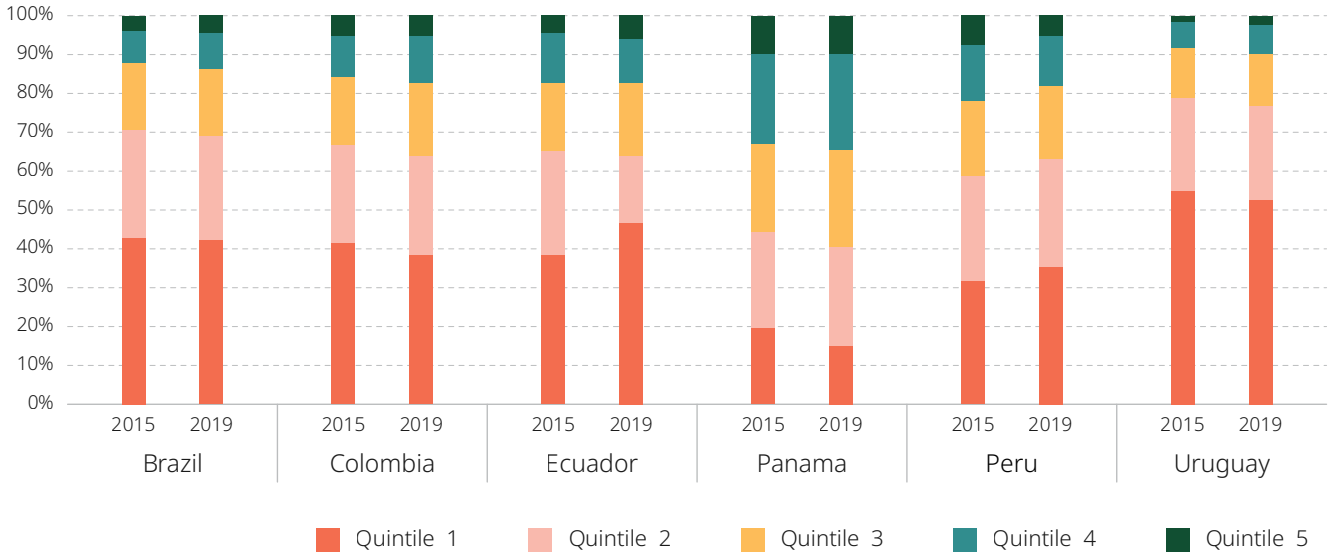
The wide range of forces that hurt Afro-descendants in school have likely been aggravated during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As of February 2021, about 120 million of the region's school-age children had already lost or were at risk of losing an entire academic year of in-person education (Di Gropello 2020). At least 15 percent of students may never go back to school. Prolonged closures have disrupted school services such as immunization, school meal programs, and psychological support, and have heightened the risk of teenage pregnancy, child marriage, and sexual exploitation and violence (Fernández Aráuz 2020).

Yet, it is difficult to estimate the true impact of COVID-19 on Afro-descendants' participation in school or on their dropout rates, as few countries have up-to-date educational data disaggregated along ethnoracial lines. Moreover, the remote nature of data collection during the pandemic might be contributing to deficiencies in the quality of insights and the detection of trends derived from tools such as household surveys. We do know, however, that the pandemic has intensified the effects of the digital gap, including its racial dimension, and diminished access to remote learning for most Afro-descendant children and youths. This unequal access to remote and online resources—which goes beyond computers and encompasses radio and television—has worsened the preexisting gaps described above (ECLAC and UNESCO 2020).

The existing disparities within countries are also huge, with children and youths from the most disadvantaged backgrounds suffering the most, notably because of lack of access to remote learning, inadequate parental support, and economic hardship. For example, while in Brazil 92 percent of students are participating in remote learning activities in the South region of the country, only 52 percent of students are doing so in the poorer North region (World Bank 2021). Even in a country such as Chile, where many schools are able to offer remote learning, online education would only be able to mitigate between 30 percent and 12 percent of learning losses associated with school closures, depending on the length of the disruption (6 or 10 months), and between 18 percent and 6 percent in public schools, where most of the disadvantaged students are enrolled (Di Gropello 2020). While many private schools—usually attended by the wealthiest students—opened as soon as conditions allowed, a substantial portion of public schools remained closed for months, which might have widened learning inequalities. Estimates show that, within a 10-month closure, the poorest quintile students, among which Afro-descendants are overrepresented, are expected to lose 11 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) points more than students in the richest quintile (World Bank 2021, 37). In fact, in Uruguay, nearly four in five Afro-descendants ages 5 to 18 years are in the two poorest quintiles of the income distribution; in Brazil it is over two in three (figure 1.22).

FIGURE 1.22

Quintile Distribution of Afro-descendant Children and Youths Ages 5 to 18 Years, 2015 and 2019



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS USING SEDLAC (CEDLAS AND THE WORLD BANK).

Moreover, in Brazil, estimates show that school closures may raise the learning poverty by 2.6 percentage points and reach 44.8 percent of the school population (Lautharte et al. 2020). Considering that learning poverty is more acute in the regions where the concentration of Afro-descendants is higher, this group faces an elevated risk of being strongly and negatively impacted by the pandemic. An analysis using the student vulnerability index[20] reached similar conclusions: the North and Northeast, which have a high concentration of Afro-descendants, are the regions where the social safety nets provided by schools to students are the most at risk (figure 1.23 and figure 1.24) (Lautharte et al. 2020).

20 Dating from 2017 and based on the availability of meals at schools; if teachers use internet or technology in the classroom; if the family supports their child studies; and the incidence of students working and past dropouts.

FIGURE 1.23

Student Vulnerability Index by Municipality, Brazil

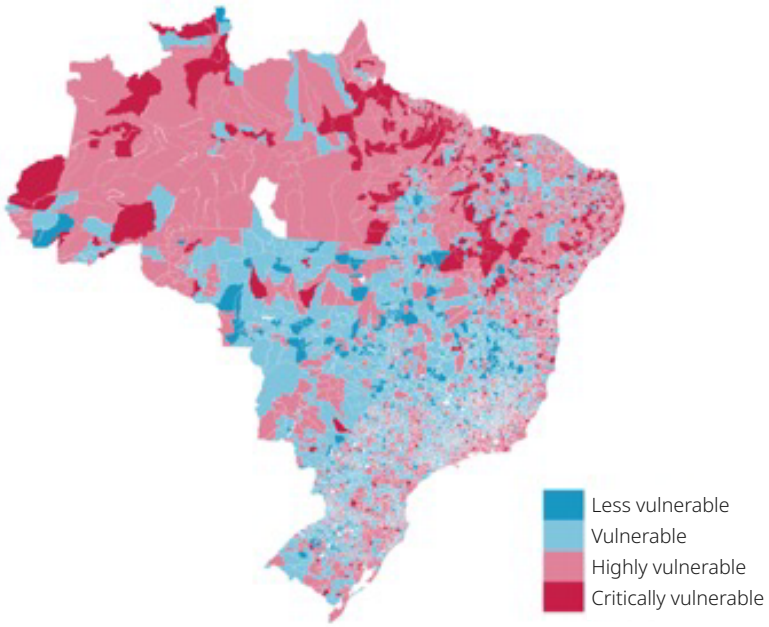
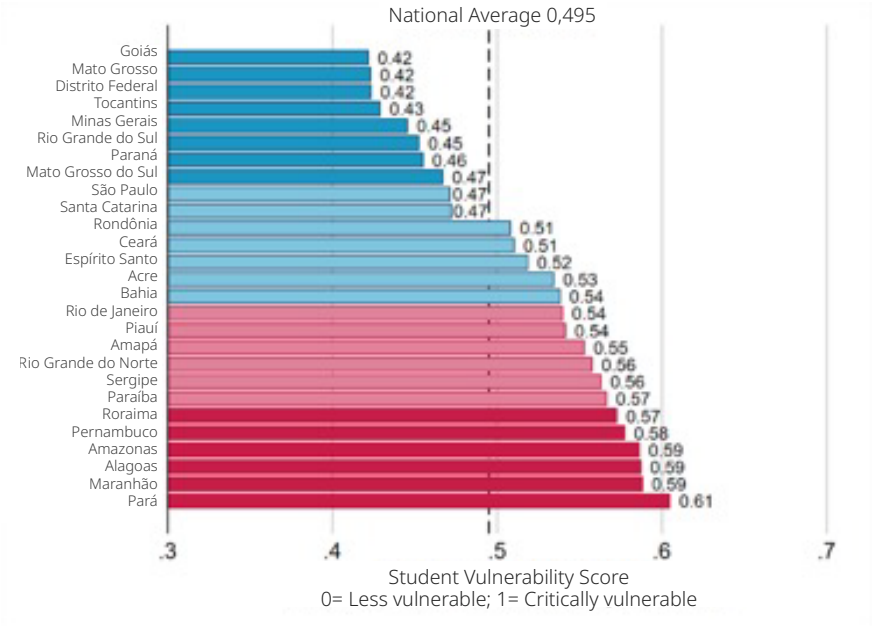


FIGURE 1.24

Student Vulnerability by State, 2017, Brazil

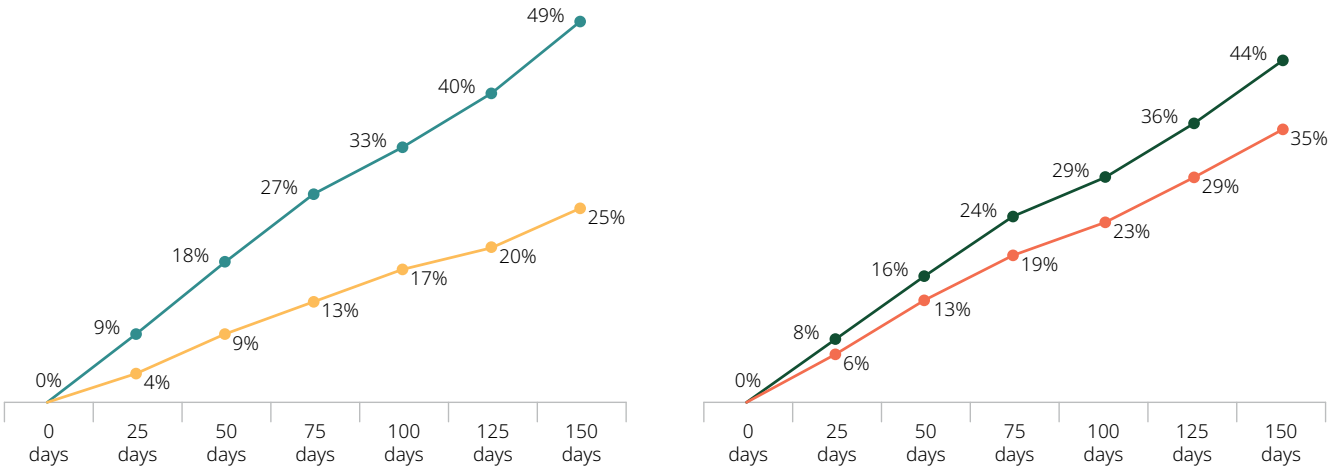


SOURCE: LAUTHARTE ET AL. 2020.

In Colombia, the learning loss of the poorest quintile students could be twice as large as that of the students from the richest quintile, even with partial school reopening (Di Gropello 2020). Between 53,000 and 76,000 students may have dropped out by December 2020. The learning losses for fifth graders, as a percentage of what they would have learned, were at 49 percent for the 20 percent poorest and 25 percent for the 20 percent richest, as of March 2021, when 150 days of school closure had taken place (figure 1.25).

FIGURE 1.25

Gaps in Learning Losses for Fifth Grade
(As % of What They Would Have Learned) in Colombia



SOURCE: WORLD BANK 2020.

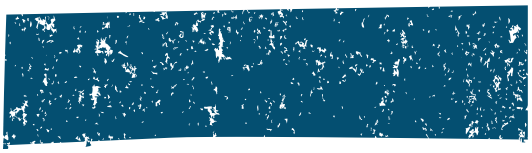
The same trends are visible across other countries. In Peru, as of March 2021, the learning outcomes of students from the poorest quintile had decreased by 7 percent, and the gap separating them from the richest quintile had grown by 6 percent (Di Gropello 2020). In Chile, simulations by the Ministry of Education showed that students from the poorest quintile could lose up to 95 percent of their annual learning if schools were closed for 10 months. The amount of learning loss was 31 percentage points higher than for the richest quintile (Di Gropello 2020). The gap in remote learning between the poorest

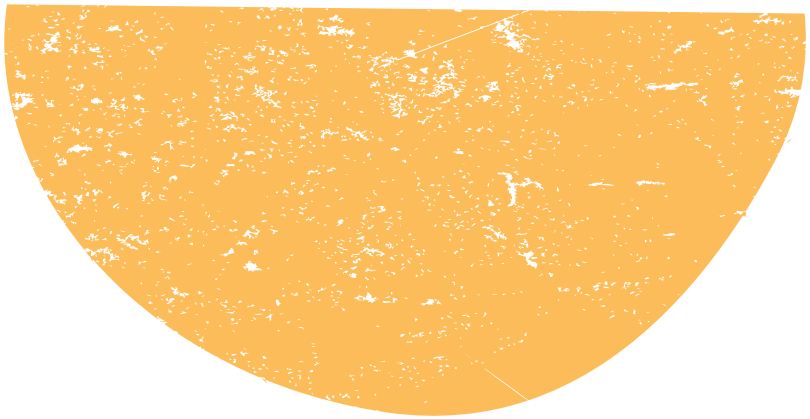
and the richest quintiles was also large, nearly 95 percentage points in some regions, and 62 percentage points at the national level (89 percent of learning attainment among students from the richest quintile, 27 percent for those from the poorest one) (Ministry of Education of Chile 2020).

The good news is that the region has put forward some responses to close the digital gap before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Uruguay's Plan Ceibal is a clear example (see above), while in Colombia, the Ministry of National Education made available to the educational community more than 80,000 resources, including educational apps and video games, during the pandemic (World Bank 2020). Other complementary measures have also been implemented, such as the increase in access to digital content, the broadcasting of educational content through national and local television channels, and the distribution of physical educational materials. In Brazil, to help households prepare for remote classes, the state of São Paulo partnered with local internet providers to reduce the cost of this service and make it more accessible to the most vulnerable families. Sésamo Workshop, the nonprofit organization behind the Sesame Street television show, which began its history in Latin America in the 1970s promoting education through an inclusive television programming strategy,[21] partnered with the Inter-American Development Bank to provide resources to help transform learning opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic (IADB 2020). This strategy targets a diverse set of beneficiaries that include Afro-Colombians and Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

21 https://www.sesameworkshop.org/where-we-work/latin-america.

In sum, the pandemic has affected school learning across all levels and countries, but excluded minorities have suffered the most. The cumulative disadvantages they already faced in the classroom prior to the emergency have been compounded by other socioeconomic obstacles, such as the digital gap or poor housing conditions, that prevent high-quality remote learning. Countries have designed and implemented programs that address the ongoing crisis, which could morph into more permanent and ambitious policies for eliminating structural barriers. The next chapters delve precisely into how countries are trying to avert these negative outcomes and create school systems that are ethnoracially inclusive.





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2

AFRO-DESCENDANTS IN TEXTBOOKS

The data presented in the previous chapter show that, after controlling for several variables, Afro-descendant students still fall behind in education systems throughout the region. They have access to lower-quality education, lag in school attendance and attainment, have poorer access to digital technologies, and, after completing their educational cycle, have much lower returns for the years invested on education in the labor market. The educational consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic—arguably the worst educational crisis in several generations—multiply out from this high inequality, deepening preexisting gaps and leading to losses that will have significant intergenerational consequences.

Several interrelated factors help partially explain Afro-descendants' exclusion from education systems. There are socioeconomic factors, of course. A previous report revealed that Afro-descendants not only were overrepresented among the poor—comprising about 50 percent of those living in extreme poverty, despite representing only one fourth of the region's population—but they were also 2.5 times more likely to be chronically poor, trapped in intergenerational cycles of exclusion (Freire et al. 2018). Consequently, many Afro-descendant households have problems making ends meet and covering school-related expenses—whether direct, such as tuition fees and school supplies, or indirect, such as transportation, food, or the forgone income of keeping working-age youths out of the labor market.[22]

But exclusion from education is multilayered, and the socioeconomic background of the household is only one push factor among many. The higher dropout rates, for example, have historically reduced the stock of Afro-descendant candidates joining the education sector (as teachers or in other related professions), leading to a chronic lack of role models within the system, which are important to entice school-age children and youths to continue with their education (Sanchez, Bryan, and MRG Partners 2005, 32).[23] Structural discrimination in the job market is another deterrent, reflected in large wage gaps in every country, which increase with educational level, as well as the elevated rates of unemployment, underemployment, and informality, and the consequent tendency to be segregated in low-paid jobs. Moreover, as the previous chapter showed, the return Afro-descendants get from their

22 In Brazil, the most recent national survey carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), which specifically focused on the education sector, found that, in 2018, 71.1 percent of the 10 million youths ages 14 to 29 years that were not attending school or had dropped out without completing basic education were Afro-descendant. Most of them said the main reason for leaving school was the need to start working. A study in Uruguay found that among the leading causes of dropout were work and economic difficulties for boys, and pregnancy or the need to tend to family matters for girls (that is, care for other family members), and all of them were more frequent among Afro-descendants than non-Afro-descendants. In Argentina, recent research has discovered that, since most Afro-descendants live in peripheral areas with less access to basic services, the transportation costs to higher education facilities are higher, alongside greater safety concerns, especially for Afro-descendant women (IBGE 2019; De Armas 2019; UNICEF and ECLAC 2020; Corbetta 2020)

23 Also, a recent qualitative study carried out in Argentina suggests that the participation of Afro-descendants among teachers and directive bodies of universities in the country is strikingly low (Corbetta 2020).

educational investment diminishes remarkably after primary education, which might make dropping out seem a rational economic decision. The pervasive underrepresentation of Afro-descendants in decision-making and leading roles at all levels, in both the public and private arenas, is another important disincentive (Freire et al. 2018).

Yet, none of the above fully explains why Afro-descendant children and youths leave the education system at much higher rates. In fact, after controlling for many of these observable variables, such as socioeconomic background of the household, educational level of the parents, or location of the household, Afro-descendants still are about 15 percent less likely to complete secondary education in countries such as Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay. Several studies have pointed at discrimination—whether overt or indirect—to explain why Afro-descendant children and youths might find it harder or unappealing to stay in education. Indeed, several studies have noted that the classroom can easily become a hostile environment for Afro-descendant children, contributing to their disillusionment and withdrawal (Sanchez, Bryan, and MRG Partners 2005).

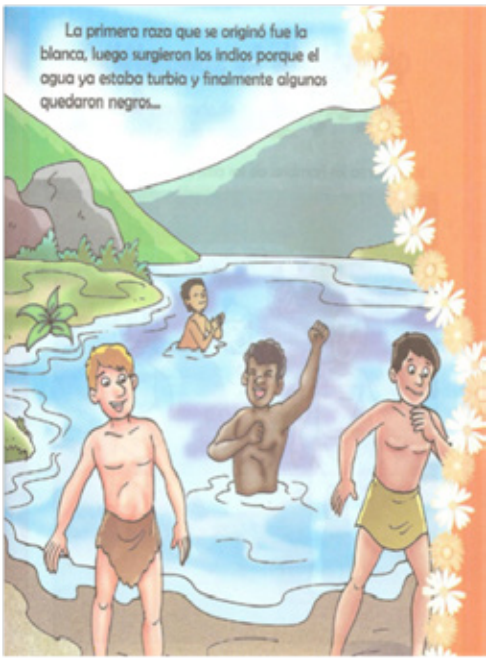
Discrimination is in itself multilayered and difficult to qualify, let alone quantify. Discriminatory acts range from slight differential treatments and expectations to expressions of outright racism and disdain, all of which can mark children and youths, contributing to early dropout or poor academic results.[24] Several studies have shown that representations of ethnoracial minorities in textbooks often fail to promote the recognition of Afro-descendant identities in their countries and, on the contrary, contribute to promoting stereotypical and folklore-driven representations of them (Freire et al. 2018).

24 Such patterns have been identified in Argentina and Uruguay (Sanchez, Bryan, and MRG Partners 2005). A 2019 analysis carried out in secondary schools of Uruguay also found that 56.5 percent of students were the object of insults and negative comments by their peers, of which 33.9 percent were related to their skin or hair color and 27.8 percent related to the racial or ethnic identity (National Administration of Public Education and Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay 2019).

Although textbooks are only one among many pedagogical tools at the disposal of both teachers and children, they represent a good proxy for understanding how issues of race and racism are addressed in the classroom and assessing whether current teaching plans either reproduce or challenge discriminatory ideas. In 2013, a textbook of compulsory reading for second-year students sparked controversy in Peru after portraying the origin of the "black race" as the result of bathing in muddy water (figure 2.1). The book was soon withdrawn from the national syllabus, but representations like this—though perhaps more subtle—are not uncommon in the region.

FIGURE 2.1

"El origen de las razas"



SOURCE: AROMAS, EDITORIAL SAN MARCOS, LIMA, 2010.

NOTE: THE TEXT IN THE PICTURE (IN SPANISH) SAYS: "THE FIRST RACE EMERGING WAS THE WHITE RACE, THEN EMERGED THE INDIANS, BECAUSE THE WATER WAS ALREADY MUDDY, AND FINALLY SOME CAME OUT BLACK..." (AUTHORS' TRANSLATION).

For these reasons, in the following pages we present a systematic analysis of the treatment of race relations and Afro-descendance in official or officially recommended textbooks of history, social sciences, and social studies (depending on the country), as well as language courses, of the last years of primary and early

years of secondary education in 10 countries. In total, we examine 40 books (see Appendix B).[25]

These books do not represent the universe of textbooks available in those countries or grades, and we are aware that ethnoracial representations may vary considerably in other materials. However, this sample provides a good overview of common trends in areas and textbooks intended for general education at key moments of the learning trajectories of children and youths.

Why history and language? The focus on history books is meant to assess Afro-descendant representations in an area that has long been pointed out, both by specialists and Afro-descendant movements, as critical to break away from centuries of invisibility and exclusion from nation-building and citizenship narratives (for example, the contributions of Afro-descendants to the construction of the nation and to the history of the country; the role of slavery and abolition; the history of racism and recognition of anti-racist struggles; and Afro-descendant historical characters) (Ferrão Candau 2013). Language books were selected to assess implicit representations of ethnoracial categories in a curricular area where race relations are not central to the subject but which may portray ideas and beliefs that reflect biases and prejudices against vulnerable minorities, such as in the implicit definitions of "the family," representations of professional and status roles, and social norms.

Finally, the analysis focused on the inclusion and exclusion of Afro-descendants in specific areas of those textbooks, to allow for systematic comparisons and to avoid other analytical biases. Namely, it looked at
(a) the figures and drawings in which Afro-descendants are represented;
(b) the contexts in which they are portrayed; (c) the roles or professions that are commonly attributed to them (for example, professionals, students, low-skilled workers, servants); (d) direct mentions about Afro-descendants in the texts or captions; and (e) how issues of racism and discrimination are addressed, if at all. The analysis also adopted an intersectional approach, which considered representation by gender and disability.

25 Including Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, and Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

It should be noted that many schoolbooks included in this assessment are valuable materials on their own merit, which present critical perspectives on many issues and are up to date in their respective disciplines. However, this review is meant to assess whether they include the specific needs and points of view of Afro-descendant children and youths in their discussions, and whether they portray a balanced representation of racial relations and recognize Afro-descendant identities and contributions to education in two critical subjects of general knowledge. This assessment builds on the knowledge and experience that, for structural discrimination and racism to be eradicated from educational settings, ethnoracial inclusion must be seen as an integral dimension of the learning process, where every subject should move away from the Eurocentric views that have normalized beliefs, prejudices, and social norms that perpetuate inequality and exclusion.

Images of Race and Racism

The treatment given to Afro-descendants in textbooks, both in their graphic representation and associated content, has been the subject of study for many decades in Latin America and beyond. A study of 252 didactic books in the Portuguese language for the fourth level of primary school published between 1975 and 2004 concluded that they reproduced and promoted racist discourses. The texts were found to take white people as the main representation of humankind, placing them as the key interlocutors of those texts, while relegating black characters to a position of an outcast group. Afro-descendants' inclusion was restricted to specific themes and social spaces, with less participation in plots and speeches, and usually portrayed in a passive or subservient manner (Baptista da Silva 2008).

In response to these old discriminatory trends in school curricula, in the 1980s the Brazilian National School Textbook Program began targeting school textbooks to change the biases of publishing houses and authors and thereby to reverse the spread of prejudiced and discriminatory messages. The issue, however, has been elusive, as racial hierarchies that exist in the school environment are manifested in myriad ways, including differential probability of receiving verbal praise or criticism, nonverbal practices demonstrating or withholding affection, or pedagogical practices that—consciously or not—reinforce racial stereotypes or the invisibility of Afro-descendants (Paixão 2009; Cabella, Nathan, and Tenenbaum 2013).

The presence or absence of Afro-descendants in textbook illustrations is a good way to assess unconscious biases in the way ethnoracial issues are treated—or ignored—in general purpose readings. It also sheds light on the roles and values directly or indirectly assigned to Afro-descendants in daily classroom topics, such as family values, history, reading comprehension, and citizenship.

The analysis of 40 textbooks from 10 countries carried out for this report shows that the region has been slowly moving away from the representations reported in the 1980s, where Afro-descendants usually appeared in stereotypically subservient roles (such as maids or construction workers) (Pinto 1987; Paixão 2009). But there still are important biases and prejudices, both in the number of appearances and the variety of roles that Afro-descendants take on, as well as in the situations they are commonly associated with. From the 5,121 images analyzed, averaging 512 per country, Afro-descendants are in fact represented in only 15 percent of them, varying from 9 percent to 23 percent of the total images in the selected textbooks, despite representing about one fourth of the Latin American population.

FIGURE 2.2

Ecuador: Image of a Protest

NOTE: THIS IMAGE OCCURRED IN A SOCIAL STUDIES BOOK FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION (SIXTH GRADE).

There is no correlation between the size and proportion of the Afro-descendant population in each country (that is, the likely proportion of children and youths exposed to these images) and their proportional representation in textbook images. For example, while in Brazil Afro-descendants represent over half of the total population (26 percent of them ages 5–18 years), only 19.5 percent of the images in textbooks represented them, either as active or passive subjects. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a country with the largest share of Afro-descendants proportional to its population in the region (55 percent of the total), Afro-descendants were represented in the textbooks in only about 24 percent of the images analyzed. In Nicaragua, at the opposite end, where Afro-descendants are only a small proportion of the population (under 1 percent), they were present in nearly 35 percent of the images.

Although it would be difficult to ascertain what is a right proportional representation, the underrepresentation of Afro-descendants in countries with large Afro-descendant populations, such as Brazil or the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, suggests that ideals of whiteness are still dominating the iconography of the main subjects discussed, whether it is "the family" or the contribution of different social groups to the narrative presented to the class.

But the quantity or presence of Afro-descendants in the imagery of schoolbooks does not necessarily reflect an act of recognition or inclusion. In Nicaragua, for example, the relative abundance of Afro-descendants in textbook images mostly portray them in stereotypical ways, closely linked to representations of folklore, dance, and music, while Creole and Garifuna peoples were presented as indigenous peoples, without acknowledging their African ancestry. Textbooks analyzed from Peru and Uruguay, for their part, present images of Afro-descendants, but they prioritize foreign figures, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, failing to properly recognize Afro-descendants from their own nationalities.

Not surprisingly, Afro-descendants are rarely seen in portraits or close-ups, or singled out as notable individuals or historical characters, with remarkable exemptions, such as Nelson Mandela. Most often, they are presented as part of a collective or in the background, typically in folklore-ridden fashion. Figure 2.4, for example, although rightly highlighting the variety of cultures and peoples living today in Ecuador, only shows white youths and women in what could be considered nontraditional costumes and makeup. Even if these representations are not harmful per se, they do reinforce the dominant prejudice that historically excluded minorities are inevitably anchored to the past and tradition, or associated with exotic components of the nation (the other inside).

Accordingly, there is a significant overrepresentation of white men in prominent situations, comprising about 65 percent of all the portraits or close-ups identified in the 40 books analyzed (figure 2.4). This is over 10 times the number of images in which Afro-descendants are singled out (6 percent) and over 20 times the number of Afro-descendant women (3.6 percent). White women, by contrast, appear in 19 percent of all portraits and close-ups, coming second to white men only.

FIGURE 2.3

Ecuador: Multiple Close-up Portraits on a Single Page

THE IMAGE IS DERIVED FROM A HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES BOOK.

FIGURE 2.4

Mexico: Image of a Group of Liberals

THE IMAGE, FROM A FIFTH-GRADE PRIMARY SCHOOL HISTORY BOOK, EXEMPLIFIES THE REPRESENTATION OF HISTORY IN COUNTRIES DOMINATED BY WHITE MALES.

Finally, there is very little diversity in terms of other vulnerable minorities, apart from indigenous peoples, in the textbooks analyzed—such as persons with disabilities or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and other gender-diverse (LGBTI+) people—

and most textbooks omit the overlapping disadvantages that the intersection of these identities might inflict on individuals or groups. People with disabilities only appear 83 times in the 40 books analyzed, but there is a great variation between countries, with the textbooks of Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela not showing any, and those from Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru combined showing only six images of persons with disabilities.

The vast majority of persons with disabilities appear in only one book from Ecuador (sixth-grade social studies), with 65 people represented in gender parity. However, combining all the books analyzed, only one out of 83 persons with disabilities represented in them is an Afro-descendant, the rest being whites or mestizos (that is, persons of mixed indigenous and white ancestry). Tables 2.1 and 2.2 summarize the results of the analysis.

TABLE 2.1

Proportion of Afro-descendants in Relation to Total Images, by Country

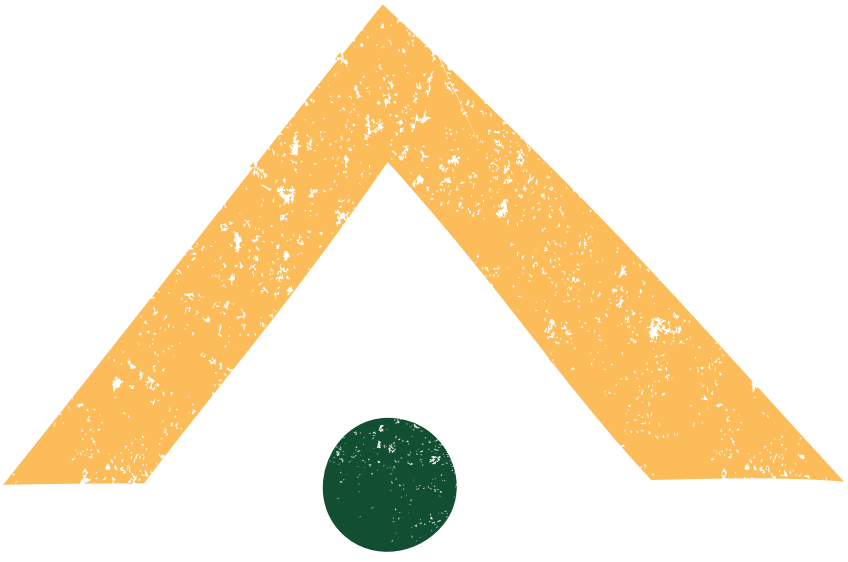
Country	% AD population (census year)	Number of images analyzed	% of images of AD people of total	% of images with AD men of total	% of images with AD women of total
Nicaragua	0.5 (2005)	578	34.6	22.3	21.3
Venezuela	53.4 (2011)	410	23.9	14.1	13.7
Brazil	50.9 (2010)	595	19.5	15.5	8.2
Colombia	6.7 (2018)	558	18.0	12.2	5.7
Ecuador	7.2 (2010)	527	15.6	10.6	7.6
Uruguay	8.1 (2011)	485	14.3	8.9	5.6
Peru	3.6 (2017)	745	10.2	7.5	5.0
Honduras	1.4 (2013)	553	9.2	5.6	5.6
Costa Rica	7.8 (2011)	148	4.8	2.7	2.0
Mexico	0.6 (2015)	522	3.4	2.0	2.0
Average	**14.8**	**512**	**14.9**	**10.1**	**7.7**

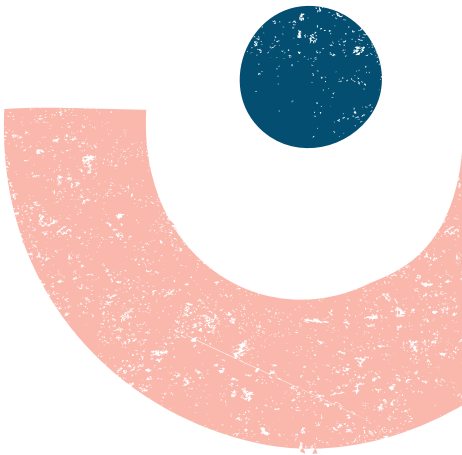
AD = AFRO-DESCENDANT.

TABLE 2.2

Proportion of Portraits or Close-ups in Analyzed Images, by Country, Ethnicity, and Gender

Country	Number of images analyzed	Number of portraits or close-ups	% portraits or close-ups of white men	% portraits or close-ups of white women	% portraits or close-ups of AD men	% portraits or close-ups of AD women
Brazil	595	101	67.0	10.9	16.8	5.0
Colombia	558	246	61.8	19.9	8.5	4.5
Costa Rica	148	53	84.9	11.3	0.0	1.9
Ecuador	527	204	44.0	21.0	10.8	4.9
Honduras	553	210	60.0	17.6	4.3	2.4
Mexico	522	223	71.7	21.5	0.0	0.9
Nicaragua	578	132	56.8	22.0	8.3	10.6
Peru	745	253	59.7	29.6	4.3	2.8
Uruguay	485	79	68.4	22.8	0.2	0.4
Venezuela	410	116	75.0	15.5	6.9	0.0
Average	**512**	**162**	**64.9**	**19.2**	**6.1**	**3.6**





The underrepresentation of Afro-descendants in the number of images and in leading situations (portraits or close-ups) is matched by an exclusionary representation in terms of the context or roles in which they appear. Afro-descendants are most often shown in occupations and activities associated with music, dance, or sports, or with rural, manual, or industrial work, which reflects a narrow and discriminatory view of the potential and actual roles Afro-descendants play or have played in Latin American societies.

There is also a notable presence of Afro-descendants in images of public demonstrations, especially in Ecuador, Honduras, and Peru, where in fact this is the primary situation in which they are cast. In eight of the ten selected countries, demonstrations are among the top four most common situations in which Afro-descendant men and women are represented (table 2.3 and table 2.4). The demonstration category refers to people who appear actively participating in different forms of collective demonstration, in public spaces, but it should be noted that in none of the cases the images reflect forms of violence or repression. Overall, these represent groups of people demonstrating for their rights or expressing their ethnic, social, or political identities, as seen in figures 2.5 and 2.6, as well as people giving speeches in public events.

TABLE 2.3

Occupation/Activity or Work/Professional Environment of Afro-descendant People in Images (Total Number # and %), by Gender and Country

		Industrial, physical or manual worker		Professional		Business-person		Merchant		Domestic worker		Sports		Music/arts		Nobility/ curia		Military	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Brazil	#	6	1	7	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	15	4	-	-	3	-
	%	4.4	0.7	5.2	2.2	-	-	0.7	-	-	-	2.2	-	11.1	3	-	-	2.2	-
Colombia	#	10	3	4	-	-	-	-	3	3	-	12	2	17	9	-	-	1	-
	%	4	1.2	1.6	-	-	-	-	1.2	1.2	-	4.7	0.8	6.7	3.5	-	-	0.4	-
Costa Rica	#	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
	%	-	-	-	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-
Ecuador	#	18	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	2	1	17	2	-	-	3	-
	%	4	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	-	-	0.7	0.5	0.2	3.8	0.5	-	-	0.7	-
Honduras	#	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	16	5	-	-	4	-
	%	-	2.3	-	-	-	-	-	0.8	-	-	1.5	-	12	3.8	-	-	0.03	-
Mexico	#	9	5	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	%	32.1	17.9	17.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.6	-
Nicaragua	#	10	10	5	12	-	-	2	3	-	1	5	1	19	29	-	-	47	3
	%	2	2	1	2.3	-	-	0.4	0.6	-	0.2	1	0.2	3.7	5.7	-	-	9.2	0.6
Peru	#	-	-	4	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
	%	-	-	2.3	1.1	-	-	-	-	0.6	0.6	3.4	1.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Uruguay	#	1	1	2	4	-	-	1	1	-	2	1	-	3	-	12	3	5	3
	%	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.9	-	-	0.2	0.2	-	0.4	0.2	-	0.7	-	2.6	0.7	1.1	0.7
Venezuela	#	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4	1	1	1	5	-
	%	-	-	-	2.2	-	-	-	0.7	-	-	-	-	2.9	0.7	0.7	0.7	3.6	-

		Politician / ruler		Demonstrator		Student		Services sector worker		Rural or mining worker		Spouse/ family		Leisure		Other		Total
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Brazil	#	17	2	6	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	2	3	6	6	26	21	394
	%	12.6	1.5	4.4	-	0.7	-	1.5	-	-	-	1	5	4.4	4.4	19.3	15.6	100
Colombia	#	17	2	6	-	4	2	-	4	27	7	-	-	10	2	59	50	254
	%	6.7	0.8	2.4	-	1.6	0.8	-	1.6	10.6	2.8	-	-	3.9	0.8	23.2	19.7	100
Costa Rica	#	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	9
	%	-	-	-	-	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44	-	100
Ecuador	#	8	-	162	155	5	5	-	-	-	1	1	2	1	-	31	29	447
	%	1.8	-	36.2	34.7	1.1	1.1	-	-	-	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.2	-	6.9	6.5	100
Honduras	#	-	-	28	25	1	3	2	2	9	-	1	2	2	5	10	12	133
	%	-	-	21.1	18.9	0.8	2.3	1.5	1.5	6.8	-	0.8	1.5	1.5	3.8	7.5	9.2	100
Mexico	#	-	-	1	1	1	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	28
	%	-	-	3.6	3.6	3.6	7.1	-	-	-	3.6	-	-	-	-	3.6	3.6	100
Nicaragua	#	4	44	24	4	40	52	-	1	15	14	3	12	22	32	47	51	512
	%	0.8	8.6	4.7	0.8	7.8	10.2	-	0.2	2.9	2.7	0.6	2.3	4.3	6.3	9.2	10	100
Peru	#	3	1	29	29	27	12	-	1	1	-	3	3	11	6	23	13	178
	%	1.7	0.6	16.3	16.3	15.8	6.7	-	0.6	0.6	-	1.7	1.7	6.2	3.4	12.9	7.3	100
Uruguay	#	12	-	9	-	1	-	2	1	21	6	-	-	4	3	204	155	457
	%	2.6	-	2	-	0.2	-	0.4	0.2	4.6	1.3	-	-	0.9	0.7	44.6	33.9	100
Venezuela	#	25	1	12	2	7	25	-	-	1	2	1	2	-	-	27	17	138
	%	18.1	0.7	8.7	1.5	5.1	18.1	-	-	0.7	1.5	0.7	1.4	-	-	19.6	12.3	100

TABLE 2.4

Percentage of Afro-descendant People by Type of Occupation/ Activity Represented in the Images, by Gender

Occupation	Men %	Women %
Industrial, physical, or manual worker	2.12	0.90
Professional	1.06	1.02
Businessperson	0.00	0.00
Merchant	0.20	0.35
Domestic worker	0.16	0.27
Sports	1.22	0.24
Music/arts	3.57	2.00
Nobility/curia	0.51	0.16
Military	2.71	0.24
Politician /ruler	10.98	3.92
Demonstrator	11.14	8.78
Student	3.49	3.96
Services sector worker	0.24	0.35
Rural or mining worker	2.90	1.22
Spouse/family	0.43	0.94
Leisure	2.20	2.12
Other or no specific activity	16.94	13.69

FIGURE 2.5

Honduras: Garífuna Demonstration

THE GARIFUNA POPULATION IS REPRESENTED IN SOCIAL STUDIES BOOKS, IN THIS CASE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL. THIS IMAGE SHOWS A DEMONSTRATION IN WHICH THE COMMUNITY EXPRESSES ITS ETHNIC IDENTITY IN A PUBLIC SPACE.

FIGURE 2.6

Ecuador: Afro-descendants Demonstrating for Nature

A SIXTH-GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES BOOK SHOWS A MARCH OF AFRO-DESCENDANT PEOPLES, WHOSE IDENTITY IS SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN THE CAPTION, DEMANDING RESPECT FOR NATURE.

In six other countries, Afro-descendants appeared in leading political roles, but in most of them these referred to foreign political leaders, such as Patrice Lumumba (figure 2.7). There are, however, Afro-descendants represented in multilateral legislatures or parliaments, and as colonial governors of the Esmeraldas region in Ecuador.

FIGURE 2.7

Ecuador: Image of Patrice Lumumba

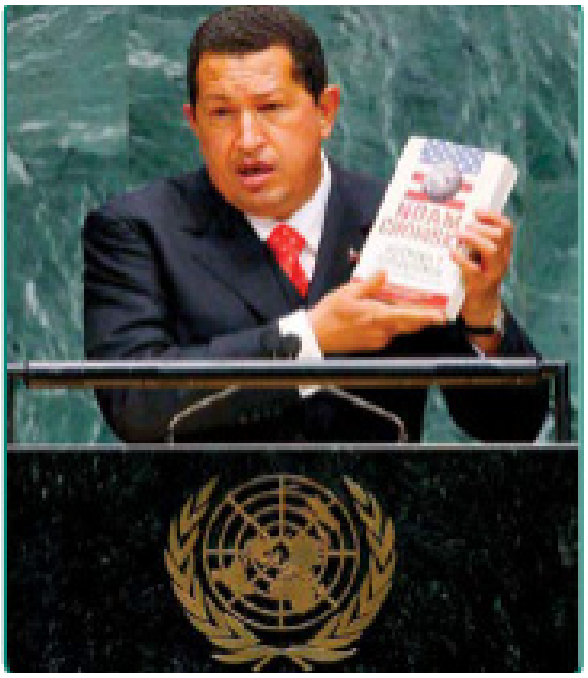
PATRICE LUMUMBA WAS LEADER OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND FIRST PRIME MINISTER. THE SIXTH-GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES BOOK SHOWS THIS IMAGE IN THE POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP CATEGORY.

The total number of images related to political figures is significantly pushed by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with 26 images (25 men and one woman), representing 18 percent of the total images found in the country's books. It should be noted that of those, 20 are images of former president Hugo Chavez (figure 2.8), who publicly cast himself as moreno and Afro-descendant in several situations.[26] Still, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's larger representation of Afro-descendants in political situations resonates with the greater involvement of the pardo or moreno majority in the political affairs of the country, particularly since the late 1950s, with the beginning of the democratic period (Wright 1990).

26 *Moreno* is a folk mixed race category commonly used in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and other Caribbean countries, which describes someone of both Afro-descendant and white ancestry. It is a descriptive category, appealing to phenotypical characteristics such as curly hair, broad nose bridge, and dark skin tones. It is wide ranging in its application, so the term moreno is often used to soften the pejorative character of other categories such as *negro*, and it is hence often influenced by social status—that is, the wealthier the Afro-descendant the more likely they self-identify and are referred to by others as *moreno* or *morena*, irrespective of his or her phenotypical characteristics.

FIGURE 2.8

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: Hugo Chávez



HUGO CHAVEZ, PRESIDENT OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA FROM 2007 TO 2013, IS DEPICTED HERE IN A SOCIAL SCIENCES BOOK FOR THE SECOND YEAR OF SECONDARY EDUCATION.

Finally, in the books analyzed Afro-descendants are no longer restricted to traditional roles, which is a remarkable improvement from the findings of an Inter-American Institute of Human Rights study of 2003, which found that Afro-descendants were mostly shown in connection to occupations or contexts restricted to slavery, dancing, the sale of handicrafts, and situations of extreme poverty (Inter-American Institute of Human Rights 2003). One exception is figure 2.9, which depicts the role of Afro-descendants in gold mining and its environmentally destructive effects.

FIGURE 2.9

Colombia: Afro-descendant Gold Mining Community

THIS IMAGE, IN A TENTH-GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES BOOK, SHOWS AFRO-DESCENDANT COMMUNITIES IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BUENAVENTURA GOLD MINING USING MERCURY IN THE DAGUA RIVER. SUCH COMMUNITIES HAVE SUFFERED DISPROPORTIONATELY FROM THE ARMED CONFLICT, WITH THE PRESENCE OF THE ARMY AND PARAMILITARY GROUPS. YET, THE BOOK DOES NOT REFER TO THEIR ETHNORACIAL BELONGING AND ASSOCIATES THEM THROUGH THE IMAGES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION.

Although few, some Afro-descendants are singled out in textbook images as outstanding individuals or leaders (see figure 2.10). As table 2.5 shows, 41 percent of prominent Afro-descendant people fall under the category of politics and leadership, which is again explained mainly by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with 50 percent of the total (20/40), followed by Brazil (8/15) and Ecuador (9/31). These three countries contribute 70 of the 97 outstanding Afro-descendant individuals in total. Meanwhile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Uruguay hardly highlight any notable national Afro-descendants.

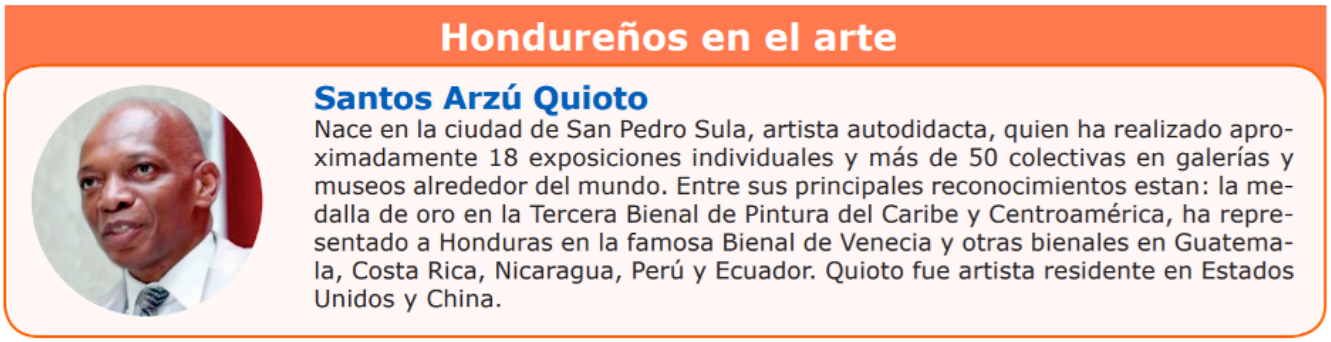
TABLE 2.5

Afro-descendants Highlighted by Activity in School Textbooks

	Politicians	Artists	Social leaders	Athletes	Military members	Businesspersons	Religious	Other	Total
Brazil	8	5	0	1	0	0	0	1	15
Colombia	1	2	1	5	0	0	0	1	10
Costa Rica	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ecuador	9	10	9	2	1	0	0	0	31
Honduras	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	6	9
Mexico	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Nicaragua	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Peru	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	4
Uruguay	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Venezuela	20	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	24
Total	**40**	**18**	**14**	**10**	**5**	**0**	**0**	**10**	**97**
	41.24%	**20.45%**	**15.91%**	**11.36%**	**5.68%**	**0.00%**	**0.00%**	**11.36%**	**100%**

FIGURE 2.10

Honduras: Highlighting Notable Personalities



THIS HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL SCIENCES BOOK DEDICATES SEVERAL PAGES TO HIGHLIGHT PERSONALITIES FROM THE COUNTRY, MOST OF THEM THROUGH CLOSE-UPS. IN THIS CASE THE SUBJECT IS AN AUTODIDACTIC ARTIST.

There are 186 images in the 40 textbooks dedicated to addressing specific Afro-descendant topics, which refer to issues ranging from civil rights revindication to cultural diversity, discrimination, slavery, and poverty (table 2.6). In Brazil, a country where structural racism is a crucial driver of exclusion, discrimination was illustrated only in four images (out of 30 images addressing Afro-descendant topics). Ecuador, on the other hand, had the largest number of images (60) addressing specific Afro-descendant issues, especially related to cultural diversity, civil rights movements, and discrimination. Figure 2.11 is an example from an Ecuador language book that shows the cultural diversity of the country, with Afro-descendants depicted as part of a variety of ethnicities that compose the Ecuadorian population and their respective languages. In Honduras, although most images referred to discrimination (8 out of 20), one of the two that focused on poverty and solidarity had a striking image of several Afro-descendant hands receiving grains from white hands, with racialized charity undertones (figure 2.12).

In sum, the imagery representing Afro-descendants in school textbooks has evolved over the past decades, but there is a need for much greater improvement. White people continue to appear as the key and leading actors in society, and Afro-descendants (when visible) are still relegated to less important roles.

TABLE 2.6

Number of Images Addressing Afro-descendant Issues, by Topic and Country

	In terms of access to rights	As part of the current diversity and cultural wealth	In terms of discrimination topics	In terms of slavery times	In terms of poverty topics	Other	Total
Brazil	20	2	4	0	4	0	30
Colombia	6	19	3	2	0	0	30
Costa Rica	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ecuador	17	18	11	7	5	2	60
Honduras	5	1	8	1	2	3	20
Mexico	2	1	0	2	0	1	6
Nicaragua	0	3	0	3	2	0	8
Peru	2	0	1	0	0	3	6
Uruguay	2	5	1	7	4	0	19
Venezuela	2	1	0	3	0	3	7
Total	**54**	**50**	**28**	**25**	**17**	**12**	**186**

FIGURE 2.11

Ecuador: Composition of Society

THIS LANGUAGE BOOK FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION DISCUSSES THE DIFFERENT ETHNICITIES THAT COMPOSE ECUADORIAN SOCIETY, AMONG THEM AFRO-DESCENDANTS.

FIGURE 2.12

Honduras: Poverty and Solidarity

THIS SOCIAL STUDIES SEVENTH-GRADE BOOK DISCUSSES SOLIDARITY, DEFINED IN THE IMAGE AS "TO FEEL THAT OTHERS' NECESSITIES ARE OUR OWN," BY SHOWING WHITE HANDS PROVIDING FOOD TO AFRO-DESCENDANTS' HANDS.

Race and Racism in Words

If the representation of race and racial issues in the imagery of textbooks of the region is heterogeneous—though in general terms narrow, misleading, or folklorizing—their inclusion in relevant discussions across the syllabi reveals a more systemic problem. The inclusion of ethnoracial issues and struggles, including racism, often reinforces biases either by reaffirming discriminatory ideas, such as the presumed absence of Afro-descendants in some countries, or by representing them as foreign and removed from the social reality of the reader. The few textbooks that do include discussions of racism and civil rights, for instance, do it in reference to the processes of the United States and South Africa, omitting references to their own racial tensions and struggles, and reinforcing by implication strongly held misconceptions, such as the myth of racial democracy or mestizaje ideologies.

There is also tension between the images associated with Afro-descendants, which give many textbooks the appearance of diversity and inclusion, and the reference to those images in the texts or the pedagogical rationale for their appearance, or lack thereof. Overall, however, ethnoracial issues are rarely touched upon, either in textual contents or even in the captions of images where they are represented, omitting key discussions such as the contribution of Afro-descendants to the history or present of the country. This perpetuates the lack of visibility and voice of ethnoracial minorities in class dynamics and the overall learning process.

Few images of Afro-descendant people actually mention their ethnoracial condition in the associated captions. In textbooks of Nicaragua and Peru, for example, the presence of images of Afro-descendants coexists—strikingly—with an almost absolute absence of reference to their ethnoracial identity. In the books from Peru included in this analysis, Afro-Peruvians and the issues relevant to them are absolutely absent in the texts, highlighting the merely decorative use of the images, which nevertheless give the impression of diversity and inclusion. Nicaraguan books also fail to make sufficient written mention of ethnoracial issues in the text but, unlike Peru, the images have some documentary usefulness, and occasionally allude to Afro-descendant nationals.

Colombian texts have a disproportion in the number of references to Afro-descendants that are shown in the images versus the written material. While the greater number of images suggests an effort to improve their representation, the difficulty in captioning them adequately, or highlighting their issues—even while talking about racism—may indicate that certain taboos persist. This also reflects the tension of a liberal ideology that identifies citizenship with homogeneity and associates naming differences with racism (Corbetta et al. 2020). A substantial selection of images in the textbooks analyzed are not accompanied by a balanced effort to include them in written discussions either, beyond the picture's captions. Such lack of reference to Afro-Colombians occurs even when the image of Afro-descendants accompanies the texts or when the syllabus is addressing specific ethnoracial issues, such as discrimination. In the relationship between images and words, the former may be used to convey abstract concepts and prejudices that the authors do not dare make explicit in the discussion, such as the association between ethnicity, poverty, and high fertility, as seen in figure 2.13.

FIGURE 2.13

Colombia: Afro-descendant and White Families

THE TENTH-YEAR SOCIAL SCIENCES BOOK SHOWS AN AFRO-DESCENDANT FAMILY AS MORE NUMEROUS AND UNPROTECTED THAN A WHITE, BLONDE MOTHER WITH HER DAUGHTER.

There is, however, a good deal of variation between the books included in this analysis, both in terms of the number of mentions and the intent of their inclusion. The textbooks of Ecuador, for instance, dedicate more space and depth to discuss specific ethnoracial issues, while textbooks from Colombia and Honduras, despite having a similar number of mentions, do not devote the same space and depth to their specific issues (that is, in this case they are associated with discussions of cultural diversity).

Honduras, for its part, includes most Afro-descendant issues in social sciences books, integrating them into discussions of nation building and identity. In Nicaragua, Peru, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on the other hand, while the number of images shows an effort to acknowledge the existence of Afro-descendants, this does not amount to an appropriate coverage of their specific issues.

The texts from Mexico are one example of how school syllabi can reaffirm common discriminatory views and exclusionary ideas that counter the greater political agenda of recognition that has been promoted by the country in the past decade.[27] Afro-descendants are mentioned in the Mexican texts analyzed for this review about 51 times, but they are never included in discussions related to issues of national identity or civil rights, and most often are associated with folklore, the past of slavery, or foreign struggles—for example, all seven mentions of Afro-descendants in a Spanish language book refer to issues related to Afro-Peruvians, specifically about the discrimination they face, once again framing racism as a foreign problem. In the history book for primary students, "Africans" are mentioned as part of the populations persecuted by Hitler. Moreover, issues of racism and discrimination against Afro-descendants are presented as a foreign problem, something that happens elsewhere, mostly the United States, without reference to Mexico's

27 Mexico recognized Afro-Mexicans officially in its Constitution in 2019, including them in special protection regulations on a par with indigenous peoples. The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) has been gathering data on Afro-Mexicans since 2015, including in the last census of 2020, which was a landmark for Afro-Mexican recognition.

troubled history with its own Afro-descendant population.[28] Notably, although one Mexican textbook includes a discussion of racism in Latin America, it does so only in reference to racism in Peru.

On par with Mexico, Costa Rican books make no explicit mention of the Afro-descendant population, despite important government efforts to achieve visibility and recognition over the past years (see table 2.7).

In Brazil, the ninth-grade language book brings in different articles, data, and graphs over several pages to discuss violence, focusing on some of its historical and sociological drivers, and emphasizes the disadvantages of the poor. The analytical exercises that follow focus, among other things, on the profile of homicide victims in Brazil—youths. Even though the same report from which the graphs are drawn (Atlas da Violência, 2018) has an entire chapter dedicated to violence against Afro-descendants (negros), highlighting that the homicide rate of Afro-Brazilians is 2.5 times higher than that of non-Afro-descendants, the textbook does not discuss the high level of violence against them, missing an opportunity to address one of the main expressions of structural racism in Brazil. The book later addresses, however, racial discrimination.

28 For years, Afro-descendant organizations and international human rights organizations have denounced that Afro-Mexicans, especially young Afro-Mexicans, are often victims of police harassment and arrest, under the pretense that they cannot be Mexican nationals. Even when in possession of electoral IDs of the Instituto Federal Electoral, the most commonly used form of identification in Mexico, young Afro-Mexicans have been deported or threatened to be deported to foreign countries (Freire et al. 2018).

TABLE 2.7

Number of Mentions in the Body of the Text of Terms Referring to Afro-descendants (Includes the Variants in Each Country), Where Available

Country	Number of images analyzed	Images with Afro-descendants (% of total)	Number of mentions of Afro-descendance
Brazil	595	19.5	129
Colombia	558	0.18	87
Costa Rica	148	0.048	5
Ecuador	527	0.156	218
Honduras	553	0.092	74
Mexico	522	0.034	51
Nicaragua	578	0.346	10
Peru	745	0.102	11
Uruguay	485	0.143	83
Venezuela	410	0.239	28

Finally, the way the books that were analyzed treat racism is uneven, and in many cases shallow or absent. Slavery and miscegenation are mentioned in many texts, but none of the 40 books analyzed discusses—let alone contests—deeply rooted exclusionary concepts such as racial democracy, whitening (*blanqueamiento*), or *mestizaje*.[29] On the contrary, many texts reinforced some of these pervasive prejudices while, theoretically, celebrating diversity. For example, a fourth-grade communications book from Peru portrays a stereotypically white family, happily gathered around the living

29 *Blanqueamiento*—the set of policies, discourses, and practices built on the idea that white and European elements were superior to African or indigenous ones—was widely adopted during the second half of the nineteenth century. Influenced by contemporary theories of eugenics and biological supremacy, *blanqueamiento* regarded black and mixed race populations as "inferior races" and, therefore, as impediments to development and progress *a la europea* (Freire et al. 2018, 40).

room, under the heading "Let's respect everyone to live a happy life," hinting at the importance of celebrating diversity. Yet, the only diverse element in the room is three portraits on the wall, representing a particularly stereotypical African woman, who holds a clay vase over her head in one of the pictures. Despite the title, diversity here is problematically represented by a passive subject—distant, decorative, stereotypical, and safely away from an idealized white family that represents only an elite minority (figure 2.14).

FIGURE 2.14

Peru: White Family, African Portraits

THE GRAPHIC, FROM UNIT 5 OF A FOURTH-GRADE COMMUNICATION BOOK, AIMS TO COVER ISSUES OF RESPECT AND DIVERSITY. THE TITLE SUGGESTS THAT HAPPINESS IS A CONSEQUENCE OF RESPECT. THE SUBJECTS OF HAPPINESS AND RESPECT ARE MEMBERS OF A STEREOTYPICAL WHITE FAMILY, WHILE THE ONLY SUBJECT OF DIVERSITY IS A STEREOTYPICAL AFRICAN WOMAN ON THREE WALL PORTRAITS. IN ONE, SHE HOLDS A CLAY VASE OVER HER HEAD.

Similarly, a Honduran book refers to the subject of racism only to justify the choice of a story involving a controversy about racism. The primary school language textbook presents as a reading exercise an excerpt from the Costa Rican novel *Cocorí*, by Joaquín Gutierrez Mangel (a non-Afro-descendant author), about an Afro-descendant boy from a coastal fishing community (figure 2.15). In the story, a blonde girl shows affection for an Afro-descendant boy and they exchange presents, but at first she mistakes him for a monkey, and then thinks that his skin is covered in soot.

FIGURE 2.15

Honduras: Excerpt from the Costa Rican Novel *Cocorí*

THE PRIMARY-LEVEL SPANISH BOOK CONTAINS A STORY THAT WAS INVOLVED IN A CONTROVERSY ABOUT RACISM.

The novel had already been the center of controversy in Gutierrez Mangel's home country, Costa Rica, where Afro-descendant organizations had denounced it as racist. The controversy led to the book being withdrawn from the Costa Rican school syllabus, years before it was included in the curriculum of Honduras. The Honduran book acknowledges this controversy but justifies the selection of the story because, in the authors' view, the story does not contain "elements that are universally considered" racist, and because "it exalts black people." More concerning, the Honduran book characterizes the controversy in Costa Rica as an "unfair campaign" against the celebrated author.

In the books from Costa Rica, racism is not discussed at all. And though in Uruguay the history books talk about racial discrimination and propose a reflection among students, the text only provides international references, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Nelson Mandela. This is surprising, as the two countries were home to some of the oldest Afro-descendant political organizations, and both are recognized internationally for their forward-looking and inclusive policies, including affirmative action programs in Uruguay under Law 19.122 (see more in the next chapter). Also, both have vibrant Afro-descendant populations that are still struggling to achieve recognition and fair representation in decision-making spaces and other key spaces of development.

Brazil is a positive outlier. Racism is discussed critically in several places, and there are a few sections in the four books that used very contemporary cases to address the issue. A language book for primary students in ninth grade has an entire chapter focused on prejudice and discrimination. The chapter's section on racism centers on a discussion of racial discrimination in soccer. It also includes group exercises that encourage students to discuss racism more broadly, and a box with UNICEF guidelines on how to "contribute to a childhood without racism." At the end of the section, the book also recommends the reading of the Statute of Racial Equality (Law 12.288/2010). A language book for students in the third year of secondary school has critical and open discussions about structural and institutional racism in different parts, and in some of them includes exercises that request students to debate the topic directly. For example, it includes an interview from a newspaper with an Afro-descendant journalist bringing a critical discussion about how racism manifests itself on television, both due to the lack of representation and the stereotypical representation of Afro-Brazilians. Later, the book invites students to debate the creation of the holiday Black Consciousness Day, in 2014. While the textbook explains that there are people who believe that this type of law and action encourages racism, it provides a clear editorial defense of its existence, and includes an exercise in which students are supposed to debate many other more subtle forms of racism. Finally, this book also presents concepts such as eugenics—in a box called "Racism disguised as science"—and mentions outdated racial theories and their presence in the work of prominent Brazilian fiction writers of the time, and how even one well-known Afro-descendant author himself was praised for his work but discriminated against in social circles. The book also incorporates literature from African authors, from countries such as Angola, Cabo Verde, and Mozambique. One of its short stories, by Mozambican writer Luis Bernardo Honwana—"The Hands of the Blacks" (As mãos dos pretos)—presents an open criticism of racism.

In Nicaraguan and Colombian books, racism is lightly addressed in discussions about the wider subject of discrimination. In the case of Colombia, for example, racism is addressed in two books, in one of them as one form of discrimination, along with others such as homophobia and xenophobia. Racism is defined in the sixth-grade language book as hatred: "Racism is the hatred toward different ethnic groups. Racist people think that the others are inferior, dangerous and a threat to their way of living. For this reason, they deny them the category of human beings."[30] While this is a positive step, the book limits the definition of racism to its extreme form, avoiding a discussion of how structural racism is much more pervasive and can have much more subtle manifestations.

In the Nicaraguan books included in the analysis, the only mention of Afro-descendants in relation to racism was in connection with the government plan for Reconciliation and National Unity. The mention refers to the efforts to reduce discrimination against different social groups, including women, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendants.

In the case of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on the other hand, three subsections are dedicated to racism in a high school social sciences book. It contains an explicit rejection of racism, mentions researchers on the subject, and calls for a commitment by students to get involved in the debate. It also highlights the greater difficulty Afro-descendants face as members of poorer segments of society, and the additional struggles faced by Afro-descendant women. The book also includes a good definition of Afro-Venezuelans, in connection with their continual struggle for recognition (figure 2.16).

30 Free translation. Colombia Lenguaje 6. Libro del Estudiante, page 202.

FIGURE 2.16

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: Afro-Venezuelan Communities

THE BOOK HIGHLIGHTS THE CONTINUAL STRUGGLE OF AFRO-VENEZUELANS FOR SELF-RECOGNITION.

The social sciences book for the second year of secondary education contains the following definition of Afro-descendants: "... the descendants of Africans who survived the slave trade and slavery, and are part of the African diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean. A person who recognizes their African descent through their perception and assessment of historical, generational, territorial, cultural and/or phenotypic components" (Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación de Venezuela 2014, 195).

Similarly, the books analyzed from Ecuador address racism in a broader way, in several successive sections. They include an analysis of European fascism, a definition of the main concepts (such as racism and discrimination), and a description of the struggle for civil rights in the United States and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. The books also note that democracy should overcome racism and problematize the subject as a contemporary phenomenon. Racism is also used to explain the difficulties faced by Afro-descendants and indigenous communities in the country, identifying it as a driver of poverty and exploitation.

In sum, the representation of race and racism in school syllabi, as expressed in the illustrations or the subject areas of these sample readings, is highly heterogeneous but overall limited, with a few notable exceptions. Many of these texts are far from promoting the positive understanding of race and racism in their own countries. In general, few textbooks contribute to stimulating critical thinking on the issues of exclusion and racial discrimination, or promote a nuanced understanding of Latin American societies as diverse but highly unequal. Most textbooks analyzed, on the contrary, reproduce hegemonic values and ideals of European, white, or mestizo cultures, representing the indigenous or Afro-descendant component of their countries, if at all, as subservient or decorative reminders of their intrinsic diversity.

These views are evident both in the small proportion of images that portray these groups and in the general qualities associated with them in their reading materials. The mentions of Afro-descendant-specific issues, including racism and civil rights, remain largely absent from many textbooks, some of which do acknowledge critically racism and discrimination in other regions, but fail to acknowledge it at home. Racism is still widely perceived as something that happens elsewhere. Even evocating ethnoracial differences within Latin American countries is still seen as problematic and a likely invitation to racism.

The comparison with past studies shows that there has been progress, though, as typical representations of Afro-descendants as servants or low-skilled workers, although still present, are less and less common. But their inclusion is still minimal and stereotypical, strongly associated with areas such as music, dance, and cultural diversity, without recognition of their contributions to the sciences, the political system, or the economy or development of the country. Interestingly, an overrepresentation of Afro-descendants in "demonstrations" or as civil right protesters in the images of the books analyzed may reflect the unconscious awareness among textbook editors that the timid advances of the Afro-descendant agenda over the past decade have only been possible owing to their tenacity and tireless activism.

As a general conclusion, despite sporadic progress, there is a clear need to address the explicit and implicit discrimination present in school textbooks,[31] which continues to alienate Afro-descendant children and youths from the classroom, contributing to higher dropout rates and lower performance. There is an evident lack of clear guidance, reflected in the many—often conflicting—interpretations and failed attempts to address issues of diversity and inclusion. Racially inclusive and anti-racist school curricula have a great potential to transform minds and behaviors, which will not only benefit Afro-descendant children and youths, but will also help shape more democratic and inclusive societies.

FIGURE 2.17

Brazil: Students Sitting Admission Test

LANGUAGE BOOK, THIRD YEAR OF SECONDARY EDUCATION: THESE STUDENTS ARE TAKING THE ADMISSION TEST IN 2009 TO UNIVERSIDADE PAULISTA (UNESP). THE VAST MAJORITY OF THEM ARE NON-AFRO-DESCENDANTS.

31 As recently as 2008, textbooks in Colombia were found to lack substantive discussions on race and ethnic differences, accurate descriptions of the geographic distribution of Afro-Colombians, and explanations of Afro-Colombian contributions to the country beyond the fields of music, sport, and dance. The textbooks described Afro-Colombians almost exclusively in relation to slavery. In Ecuador, an analysis of social sciences textbooks of 2016–2017, in basic education, found that textbooks engage in forms of stereotyping and make Afro-descendants invisible, given the lack of content related to Afro-descendant populations, their knowledge, and the absence of discussions and analysis of the structural inequalities that they suffer. The study focused on basic education establishments of the Simón Plata Torres Del Cantón Esmeraldas parish, for the school period 2016–2017 (Inter-American Institute of Human Rights 2003; Soler Castillo 2008; Restrepo and Rojas 2012; Valencia Micolta 2017).

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3

POLICY RESPONSES

The region has tried several policies over the past three decades to improve the inclusion of Afro-descendants in education systems. Mostly driven by Afro-descendant movements and civil society organizations, some countries have passed relevant legislation, including antidiscrimination and affirmative action laws. Brazil and Colombia have designed courses and taken steps to integrate content about Afro-descendant culture and history in their syllabi. Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama have outlined ethno-education policies aimed at Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples. Affirmative action programs, mostly employing admission quotas and financial aid, are in place in various countries with varying degrees of success. The progress reported in the previous chapter on the representation of blackness and ethnoracial relations in textbooks, albeit modest, was propelled by this wave of interventions.

Despite the growing awareness of the disadvantages faced by Afro-descendants, the implementation of these policies has faced many obstacles. To begin with, policies of ethnoracial inclusion are unevenly distributed across the region and are far from systematic, and they frequently reflect ad hoc responses to demands by civil society organizations or subnational governments that, regardless of their local benefits, are rarely scaled up to address structural forms of discrimination and exclusion ingrained in education systems. Additionally, efforts that target ethnoracial exclusion in education are often undermined by insufficient funding, entrenched beliefs that teaching about race is unnecessary or will stir racial tensions, and the lack of methodic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that would allow assessing the merits and shortcomings of the different policies piloted. Hence, while today the regional legal frameworks unquestionably favor ethnoracial inclusion in schools, there has been little progress in practice, which partly explains the overall timid progress shown in previous chapters—and indeed the deterioration in many areas.

The policies piloted throughout the region are, however, a good sign of progress toward building inclusive education systems, and shed light on some available alternatives, the challenges faced to implement them, and the outcomes and replicable good practices. In this chapter we therefore offer a nonexhaustive overview of some of these policies and programs, while being cognizant of the larger gamut of alternatives. We focus on four sets of initiatives that are prominent in the regional practice: (a) efforts aimed at integrating African and Afro-descendant culture and history in educational syllabi; (b) the development of programs aimed at capacitating teachers and school leaders in ethnoracial inclusion; (c) policies directed at freeing school environments from racism; and (d) policies intended to broaden access to tertiary education for Afro-descendants through affirmative action.

The following analysis is heavily influenced by the experience of Brazil and Colombia, as both countries have highly mobilized Afro-descendant populations that have thrust ethnoracial issues onto the policy agenda. These countries thus have a relatively long history of ethnoracial inclusion

policies in education systems, though often holding contrasting views of and experiencing different results regarding Afro-descendant inclusion. Brazil, on the one hand, with the largest Afro-descendant population outside Africa, is known for its solid normative framework, which underpins ethnoracial pedagogies in primary[32] and secondary education,[33] as well as for its ambitious affirmative action program in public universities. Colombia, for its part, is a regional leader in "ethno-education," an approach aimed at rural black communities that privileges the teaching of black culture, traditional knowledge, and local history, akin to the intercultural education model advocated by indigenous peoples throughout the region.[34] Such contrasting approaches provide key lessons on a wide scope of initiatives. The first is inspired by the civil rights movement and United States affirmative action policies, while the second draws from a set of policies reflected in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), which emphasizes the right to culturally relevant pedagogies and autonomy.[35] The chapter is also informed by the experience of other countries, such as Uruguay, which has pushed to disseminate Afro-Uruguayan history and culture in schools and created a quota program

32 The technical term in Portuguese is *educação das relações etnicorraciais.*

33 This chapter looks exclusively at the implementation of the so-called "ethnoracial approach"—as it is commonly referred to in Brazil in the context of regular education. For this reason, the Educação Escolar Quilombola, or the educational format aimed exclusively at Afro-Brazilian rural communities, is not explored in depth here despite its relevance in many Brazilian states. For more information on the nature and scope of this modality, see the Programa Brasil Quilombola.

34 Institutionally, Colombia also has a strong set of regulatory bodies, including (a) the National Commission for Work and Agreement on Educational Policy for Indigenous Peoples (Comisión Nacional de Trabajo y Concertación de la Educación para los Pueblos Indígenas, CONTCEPI); (b) the National Pedagogical Commission for the Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizales, and Palenqueras populations (Negra, Afrocolombiana, Raizal y Palenquera, NARP); (c) the Dialogue Table for the gypsy population; and (d) the Intersectoral Commission for Early Childhood, through the Diversity and Differential Approach Table. The institutional mechanisms foresee the cultural adaptation of ethnic groups through (a) the ethno-educational model (as a community-based and intercultural approach); and (b) the implementation of the Indigenous Education System (Sistema Educativo Indígena Propio, SEIP).

35 The reasons for Colombia's particular approach are historically contingent, as Afro-descendant inclusion in education builds on the discussions that led to the 1991 Constitution and later to Law 70 of 1993, Law 115 of 1994, Decree No. 804 (1995), and Decree No. 2249 (1995), all of which were framed within the arguments of ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). In light of this legal framework, Afro-Colombians have tended to articulate their demands through a narrative of cultural difference, autonomy, and land rights, even if most of them live in urban contexts and hold other policy priorities (such as antidiscrimination measures).

for higher education in 2013 (Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay 2015). Other countries—for example, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Honduras—have taken smaller, albeit meaningful, steps, but the region has been less systematic in rolling out ethnoracial inclusion policies for education, leaving few data of sufficient breadth and depth to build a comparative analysis.

Integrating African and Afro-descendant Culture and History in Curricula

Expanding the visibility of Afro-descendant content in teaching and learning materials has been one of the most salient actions carried out thus far in the region. Brazil has been a pioneer on this front. Several legal instruments in the country require that all educational institutions (from schools and regional coordination offices to state and municipal secretariats of education and the Ministry of Education) provide learning material about ethnoracial relations.[36] Law 10.639/2003 was especially significant in this regard, as it helped catalyze a new understanding of the connection between African and Afro-Brazilian history, society, and culture.[37] Though this law was later supplanted, it is still

36 Currently, there are five normative and institutional instruments that support the teaching of content related to Afro-descendants: the Law of Directives and Basis for National Education; the National Education Plan; the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture; the national implementation plan for the guidelines; and the Statute of Racial Equality, which places ethnoracial education as a key component within a broader, policy-oriented national plan. The Law of Directives and Basis for National Education is the main legal instrument that orients the provision of public and private education and reflects the principles of education as a basic social right, as established in the Constitution. Some articles of the law were modified by Law 10.639/2003, which mandated the incorporation of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in primary and secondary school curricula.

37 This law was created in response to long-lasting demands from black social movements and civil society organizations. It also reflected the strategic mobilization of global discourses on race that gained traction after the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, celebrated in Durban, South Africa, in 2001 (Pereira and da Silva 2012).

mentioned as the main reference in debates about the inclusion of Afro-Brazilians in school curricula.[38]

In addition to legislative reforms, nationwide plans and guidelines have also propelled changes in school curricula.[39] Such guidelines set the parameters for teaching about ethnoracial relations (and the responsibilities of federal and local entities, institutions, pedagogical coordinators, principals, teachers, and other relevant actors), but also support research and production of teaching and learning materials that reaffirm the value of Afro-Brazilian culture and diversity. The guidelines also introduce a range of indicators for monitoring progress over time.

A major positive outcome of this legal and institutional framework is the steep expansion of Afro-Brazilian content in classrooms. In fact, a study on the impact of Law 10.639/2003 on the Brazilian High School National Examination[40]—the official university entrance examination—found that, after 2003, there was a larger number of questions related to Afro-Brazilian history and culture across different subjects (de Araújo Moreira 2015). The law also inspired a wide variety of innovative programs in schools across the country (box 3.1).

38 It was superseded by Law 11.645/2008, which added indigenous history and culture as mandatory content in basic education (Gomes and de Jesus 2013).

39 The National Education Plan (Plano Nacional de Educação, PNE), Law 13.005/2014, establishes ethnoracial education as a long-term strategy (2014–2024) and introduces several guidelines pertaining to the inclusion of African, Afro-Brazilian, and indigenous people's history and culture in school curricula. Likewise, the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (Diretrizes Nacionais para a Educação das Relações Etnicorraciais e para o Ensino da História e Cultura Afro-Brasileira e Africana) and the national implementation plan for the guidelines (Implementation Plan of the National Directives for the Education of Ethnic and Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture; Plano de Implementação das Diretrizes Nacionais para a Educação das Relações Etnicorraciais e para o Ensino de História e Cultura Afro-Brasileira e Africana) also define the operational actions, objectives, and regulations concerning ethnoracial education in the country.

40 Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio.

Box 3.1

School-Level Innovations on Ethnoracial Education in Brazil

Brazilian schools have become leaders in experimenting with innovative methods to teach about black cultural heritage, ethnoracial relations, and racism. The work carried out at EMEF Brigadeiro Faria Lima, in São Paulo, has stood out as a valuable example of how to generate a frank conversation about racism. The school has designed activities that challenge the myth of racial democracy in the school community and tools that encourage critical self-evaluation, while disseminating ideas for improving ethnoracial education (including qualitative indicators). As a result, the entire community, led by an engaged school management, is constantly invited to think critically about how racism is present in the school community and how it can be eradicated.

Another encouraging example is the Deputado Joaquim Figueiredo Correia school, in Iracema City, where the pedagogical team has created Sentir na Pele (Feel in Your Skin), an initiative that promotes the study of Afro-Brazilian history.[41] Each year, a special theme is chosen from a competition among the different classrooms, giving students the opportunity to immerse themselves in a topic related to an African country or Afro-Brazilian tradition. The school has also developed a guide for teachers on ethnoracial education.

In the city of Ananindeua, the Ethnomathematics: Millennial Games of Africa project provides middle school students with activities for enriching their knowledge about Africa, while strengthening their logical reasoning skills in mathematics, geography, and philosophy.[42] This initiative has raised awareness about Africa and Afro-Brazilian sociocultural roots but, above all, it has instilled a greater sense of respect for and appreciation of the contributions of African cultural traditions in multiple areas of human knowledge.

Finally, Afro-Brazilian Traditions at School: Backs Turned against the Wind in the Rhythm of Lundu is a project developed in the Federal District, aimed at revitalizing Afro-Brazilian cultural traditions through research and the experience of students in developing a documentary, for which they are also trained in visual arts.[43] The organizers have carried out musical workshops and dance study groups to explore the history of Lundu, a traditional Afro-Brazilian dance. Through field visits to a traditional community in Urucuia, in Minas Gerais state, where the dance is practiced, the project aims to turn students into multiplier agents of Afro-Brazilian traditions and values.

41 https://observatoriodeeducacao.institutounibanco.org.br/banco-de-solucoes/video/eem-deputado-joaquim-figueiredo-correia-ce-equidade.

42 https://ceert.org.br/premio-educar/pratica/52.

43 https://ceert.org.br/premio-educar/pratica/29.

Colombia has equally pushed for the inclusion of Afro-descendant content in teaching and learning materials, especially within the framework of ethno-education. According to Colombian law, ethno-education refers to a pedagogical approach that is aligned with local communities' "environment, productive process, and social and cultural process, with due respect for their traditions and beliefs."[44] The legal framework that underpins ethno-education, among many things, led to the creation of the Cátedra de Estudios Afrocolombianos (CEA), a set of guidelines that mandates public and private institutions at primary and secondary levels to teach content of Afro-Colombian history and culture. The CEA was launched in 1998 with the goal of adapting the national education system to the needs of Afro-descendants and disseminating the history of black communities to all Colombians. It also emerged as a tool for raising awareness on past and present forms of discrimination.

According to the Colombian Ministry of National Education, by 2020 nearly 204,000 students and 3,323 teachers, from 1,216 schools, had participated in workshops to help educational institutions comply with CEA requirements (Corbetta et al. 2020). Inspired by the guidelines, schools have also spearheaded highly original projects that range from awareness-raising activities (using multiple methods and media forms) intended for the broader school community to more transversal activities that encourage critical reflection on diversity and the contribution of Afro-descendants to the nation-building process (box 3.2).

44 Authors' translation. The original from Article 55 of General Education Law 115 of 1994 defines ethno-education as that which is "ligada al ambiente, al proceso productivo, al proceso social y cultural con el debido respeto a sus creencias y tradiciones."

Box 3.2

School-Level Innovations on Ethnoracial Education in Colombia

Several Colombian schools have designed tools and strategies to creatively implement ethno-education. In Bogota, a few initiatives were selected by the Secretariat of Education as being highly consistent with CEA guidelines. Such projects reflected the active participation of multiple actors from the school community and an outstanding use of teaching materials, communication technologies, and local experiences.

The project Diversidad Afroétnica a lo Bien (Afro-ethnic Diversity for the Good) was commended for generating spaces of reflection around the historical and cultural contributions of the various ancestral roots of Afro-Colombian communities. It comprised cultural diversity campaigns through videos on Afro-Colombian experiences, the experience of a day of mancala, an African strategy game that develops mathematical thinking, the celebration of National Afro-Colombian Day, and the development of teaching materials to learn English. Similarly, the project Respeto, Siento, Vivo, y Respiro el Aire Multicultural de Las Américas (I Respect, Feel, Live, and Breathe in the Multicultural Air of the Americas) was praised for its use of storytelling, storyboarding, and movie screenings to underline the sociocultural and historical contributions of Afro-descendants to Colombia.

The project Transversal Cátedra de Afrocolombianidad (Cross-Cutting Project Chair on Afro-Colombian Issues) was celebrated for its awareness-raising initiatives, emphasizing the importance of diversity through workshops and the celebration of National Afro-Colombian Day. The project adopted an interdisciplinary approach to the CEA, cutting across different areas of knowledge (arts, social sciences, ethics, and technology). In arts, for example, it organized events based on dance, music, and literature, while integrating critical reflections of Afro-descendant identities. In ethics, students were encouraged to think about why people discriminate in the first place and the meaning and value of diversity more broadly.

Finally, the project Descubriendo Huellas y Memorias Afrocolombianas (Finding Afro-Colombian Footprints and Memories) was selected for tackling racism within school settings. It involved workshops and teacher training activities, as well as open conversations about Afro-Colombian identity. The project became a benchmark for other actions aimed at improving social interactions within the school community and other efforts aligned with the CEA. It has also fostered a permanent space in the school for reflecting about past and contemporary issues that pertain to Afro-descendants in Colombia.

While Brazil and Colombia have been regional pioneers in broadening the visibility of Afro-descendants in school curricula, other countries have launched parallel efforts (though there are fewer data about their impact). In Uruguay, for example, the government has created a working group whose goal is to valorize the contributions of people of African descent to the nation's history and cultural practices.[45] In 2013, the landmark Law 19.122 claimed that it was "of general interest that educational and teacher training programs incorporate the legacy of Afro-descendant communities in history, their participation and contributions in shaping the nation, in its various cultural expressions (art, philosophy, religion, knowledge, customs, traditions and values) as well as their past of slavery, trafficking and stigmatization, promoting the respective national investigation" (Article 8).[46] As part of the Afro-descendant Work Plan 2015–2020 of the Ministry of Social Development and the National Directorate for Sociocultural Promotion, there have been some modifications to school curricula and teaching materials. In Ecuador, the Law on Collective Rights of the Black and Afro-Ecuadorian Population (2006) also mandates that primary and secondary education plans and programs must include black or Afro-Ecuadorian cultures as a transversal topic. Finally, through the Fundamental Law of Education (Ley Fundamental de Educación; Decree No. 262-2011), Honduras has worked toward adding content to the school curricula that reflects the linguistic, cultural, and historical features of each region, including those with a sizeable black population. Yet, given the absence of robust data, we know very little about the scope, concrete outcomes, and weaknesses of these interventions.

While the public sector has been instrumental in foregrounding Afro-descendant content in school curricula, civil society organizations have also led bottom-up initiatives, yielding important examples. One such example is Nuestro Flow, a Colombian organization dedicated to the promotion of equity, inclusion, and diversity through the development of pedagogical content.[47] A recent product is Candelaria Borja Aventura (figure 3.1), featuring a 9-year-

45 Through Ministerial Resolution 979 (2011).
46 Authors' translation.
47 https://www.nuestro-flow.com/

old Afro-descendant hero from Nuquí, located in Chocó (a predominantly Afro-descendant region). The fictional character encourages the reader to reflect and question—in a language accessible to children—the stereotypes and everyday forms of discrimination that are normalized in Colombian society. Through characters such as Candelaria, Nuestro Flow aims to spark an open conversation about the problems faced by Afro-descendant communities, highlighting the value of diversity and the importance of empathy, equity, and solidarity.

FIGURE 3.1

Candelaria Borja Aventura

CAPTIONS (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): (I) "CANDELARIA, YOU HAVE SUCH CURLY HAIR!"; "AND WHAT A WIDE NOSE!"; "AND WHAT A DARK SKIN!"—"THIS IS TO BETTER REPRESENT MY AFRICAN HERITAGE!"; (II) "AM I THE ONLY ONE NOTICING THAT NO ONE HAS THEIR SKIN TONE WITH THE 'SKIN COLOR' THAT COMES IN THE BOX OF COLORED PENCILS?"; (III) "PEOPLE OF COLOR."

In Brazil, civil society organizations have often compensated for the absence of systematic or sustained efforts from the various levels of government to put legislation into practice. Such organizations have tackled a range of issues, from developing teaching materials and training workshops that explicitly fight racism to providing academic support to Afro-descendant students. A notable case is the Educating for Racial and Gender Equality Project (Projeto Educar para a Igualdade Racial),[48] which tries to break the silence surrounding

48 The project aims to "identify, disseminate, recognize and support pedagogical and school management practices, linked to ethnoracial [issues], with the aim of ensuring quality education for all, and, more specifically, combating racism and valorizing ethnoracial diversity" (authors' translation). It is led by the Center for the Study of Labor Relations and Inequalities (Centro de Estudos das Relações de Trabalho e Desigualdades, CEERT) and is recognized by the Brazilian Ministry of Education as one of the main initiatives for promoting ethnoracial equality in the country (https://ceert.org.br/premio-educar).

racist acts suffered by students and teachers (Calado 2013). This project has also compiled a database of nearly 3,000 best practices carried out by schools in Brazil, serving as a valuable resource for teachers to enhance their methodologies and assess their results.

Despite commendable experiences such as the above, most activities aimed at promoting ethnoracial inclusion remain largely ad hoc, character driven, and sporadic (mostly linked to special celebrations), which make them unevenly distributed and limited in their impact, without any guarantee of continuity. In Colombia, for example, most initiatives are led by highly committed individuals or groups of individuals, rather than tied to systemic, nationwide actions. This results in children from highly mobilized regions or communities receiving important tools to develop their critical thinking about race and racism—typically regions with high concentration of Afro-Colombians—while children in other areas are left out of these conversations.

Likewise, in Brazil, a 2013 survey applied to a sample of managers from state and municipal secretariats of education found that one of the most common activities was the annual celebration of Black Awareness Day (Dia da Consciência Negra),[49] on November 20. While the celebration is part of Law 10.639/2003 and inspires meaningful discussions about racism, such event-like approaches have a small impact in the long run, as repetition is one of the key components of effective learning and behavioral change. Such celebrations can also be used for whitewashing, without really addressing the thorny issues that underpin racial discrimination.

Policies and programs such as those described above have also lacked mechanisms of accountability and enforcement, which leaves much of the antidiscrimination legislation of the region without teeth. In Brazil, most states and their capital cities have made legal reforms to adhere to the national guidelines, yet changes in school curricula are scant or inconsistent (Gomes

49 The secretariats of education are responsible for creating a local team that oversees the implementation of ethnoracial education, including providing continued education for teachers and other educational professionals. They also assist with incorporating content on diversity and ethnoracial relations in the curricula.

and de Jesus 2013). This has led to discrepancies between what is established in national plans and how municipal governments implement these measures in their jurisdictions. Often, school-level yearly plans—designed by local school management committees—fail to demonstrate how the different classes will engage with Afro-Brazilian history and culture during the school year (Meinerz and Costa 2016).

The absence of conditionalities, goals, sanctions, or incentives to adhere to the laws or national guidelines clearly leave them to the goodwill and commitment of the person in charge of their implementation, something that recurs throughout the region. In Colombia, the CEA has been criticized for taking a soft stance on enforcement, leaving it up to the "autonomy and needs" of each school to oversee its implementation (something that can pave the way for deliberate noncompliance).

A third common roadblock to scaling up good practices is the scarcity of impact evaluations. Even though many schools actively teach ethnoracial content, there are very few data as to whether these efforts are altering the perceptions of students, teachers, and school staff of race and racism. Often, the restricted number of evaluations is connected to lack of financial resources and institutional support (Gomes and de Jesus 2013).

A final issue that plays against the inclusion of African and Afro-descendant culture and history in school curricula is that, in some countries, these activities tend to be too compartmentalized—thematically and geographically. In Colombia, some departments have developed very rich and innovative resources, but their coverage is restricted to a specific region (as a consequence of which they are rarely scaled up). Other learning materials are very successful in stimulating pride and connecting students with their black heritage but are less relevant in addressing forms of prejudice and discrimination that exist in Colombian society.

In sum, the region has made great strides in expanding the visibility of Afro-descendants in school curricula, inspiring a wave of highly creative activities at the school level. Yet, issues associated with geographic coverage, accountability mechanisms, and public funding weaken their potential. Additionally, the negligible number of evaluations makes it especially hard to know whether racially inclusive curricula are positively changing (or not) the mindsets of students, teachers, and staff when it comes to Afro-descendants, ethnoracial relations, and racism.

Training Teachers and School Leaders on Ethnoracial Inclusion

School managers and teachers play an essential role in implementing anti-racist educational policies across all levels. Hence, some countries have focused on training and empowering teachers and school leaders as a conduit for making schools ethnoracially inclusive.

In Colombia, local governments have developed specific tools for teachers on ethno-education and racial discrimination. The Caja de Herramientas (Toolbox), for example, produced by the Secretariat of Education of Bogota, is a collection of materials in physical and digital formats with specific guidelines and activities that teachers can undertake in accordance with the CEA.[50] The toolbox encourages teachers to construct a new relationship with their students based on diversity, equity, and an intercultural approach. It is also

50 The different volumes support, across all educational levels, an interdisciplinary approach to teaching about the cultural, social, and historical contributions of Afro-descendants in Colombia. It is part of a broader project to advance the institutionalization of the CEA and other measures to combat racial discrimination against Afro-Colombians in schools of Bogota.

meant to serve as a benchmark for producing other teaching resources that advance the recognition of Afro-descendants in schools (figure 3.2).

FIGURE 3.2

Cover of Bogotá Caja de Herramientas: Cátedra de Estudios Afrocolombianos

A similar initiative is the Proyecto Medellín, Ciudad del aprendizaje—Educación Inclusiva: Línea Etnoeducación, Ruta Vos (Medellín Learning City Project—Inclusive Education: Ethno-education Line, Route You). Launched in 2018 to offer teacher training opportunities aligned with the CEA, the project aids schools in implementing ethno-education in Antioquia—a department not commonly associated with blackness in Colombia (Palacios Callejas 2017). It involves a series of activities and roundtables that touch upon administrative and conceptual aspects of the CEA. By imparting skills and instilling a sense of collaboration, teachers can replicate this experience in the future in their workplaces or in other school communities.

Other countries also target teachers as key agents for making classrooms ethnoracially inclusive. In Uruguay, for example, the government launched in 2016 the Educational Guide for Education and Afro-descendants, which assists teachers in preventing and addressing situations of racial

discrimination in the classroom (Corbetta et al. 2020).[51] Among other things, the guide includes pedagogical modules for teachers to learn about racism as a system of domination into which people are socialized, and to become acquainted with the historical deprivation that Afro-descendant communities have experienced (Brena and Brown 2016). Similarly, in Brazil, teacher training programs are backed by state and municipal education systems as a way to comply with the national guidelines and compensate for the deficient preparation that instructors receive in college about race and racism.[52] Nicaragua, through its General Law of Education (Ley General de Educación, Law No. 582, 2006), launched the Regional Autonomous Education System (Sistema Educativo Autonómico Regional), responsible—among other things—for supporting capacity-building initiatives for Afro-descendant teachers at all levels.

Despite these positive steps, training and empowering teachers on ethnoracial pedagogies still faces substantial obstacles. One widespread issue is that school leaders are frequently unsupportive of these measures. In Brazil, school principals tend to give little priority to ethnoracial education in general and, in some instances, dissuade teachers from embracing a pedagogical approach sensitive to race (Filice 2010). In Colombia, a study conducted in Cartagena found that school leaders had limited knowledge of or interest in the CEA or ethno-education in general. This trend may be reinforced by the absence of accountability and enforcement mechanisms—mentioned earlier—as Afro-descendant issues are mainly optional. Without supportive management, it is challenging for teachers to implement ethnoracial education.

A second common barrier is that teachers are for the most part unprepared for and unaware of how best to approach ethnoracial inclusion in the

51 This is part of the Afro-descendant Work Plan 2015–2020 of the Ministry of Social Development and the National Directorate for Sociocultural Promotion.

52 In part, this is because most university programs continue to hold a Eurocentric perspective (that grants little attention to nonwhite histories, sociocultural practices, and forms of knowledge) and have a narrow representation of nonwhite faculty in their departments, despite the progress made in the past two decades due to affirmative action policies (Observatory of Education 2020).

classroom. This often means that the time allocated to this content is minimal. In Colombia, a study conducted in the city of Palmira, Valle del Cauca, revealed that teachers were not sufficiently aware of the CEA, especially those who taught other subjects besides social sciences (Fajardo Daza 2017). They also reported very few or no available teaching materials, training opportunities, and institutional backing from the Ministry of National Education and the Municipal Secretariat of Education toward ethno-education. Teachers thus felt ill equipped to implement the CEA and proactively meet the needs of indigenous and Afro-descendant children in the classroom.

The perceived lack of preparation among teachers is reinforced by the limited geographic coverage of some training programs. A survey of a teacher training in São Paulo found that, out of all participants, only 18 percent had attended some continued professionalization activity on ethnoracial education. This narrow exposure lessens their chances of incorporating ethnoracial content in the classroom (Observatory of Education 2020). In fact, the survey found that nearly half of school principals (46 percent) and more than half of all teachers (51 percent) were completely unaware of the national guidelines on the topic. Most participants in the study reported that ethnoracial themes were covered superficially (61 percent) or not covered at all (29 percent). Similarly, in Ecuador, Presidential Decree 60, 2009, established the Plurinational Plan to Eliminate Racial Discrimination and Ethnic and Cultural Exclusion, which set the ambitious goal of creating a career on Afro-descendant studies at the college level—a path that would benefit teachers. Yet, by 2016 the plan had still not come to fruition (Antón 2020).[53]

A third barrier involves the attitudes and beliefs held by school leaders and teachers, which are often contrary to the principles of ethnoracial inclusion. In Brazil, for example, some teachers firmly believe in the myth of racial democracy and thus evaluate ethnoracial education as unnecessary. A survey

53 A common weakness of other programs in Latin America and the Caribbean is their lack of funding and adequate logistic support. In Colombia, community ethno-education projects are meant to be designed within each community, and the law indicates that federal funding and local resources should be provided. In practice, however, communities do not receive sufficient technical assistance or financial support (Corbetta et al. 2020).

among teachers in São Paulo found that nearly a third still agreed with the statement "blacks are the most responsible for the racism that exists in society," while denying the existence of racial discrimination altogether. A third of respondents also approved of the statement: "In Brazil there is no prejudice of color and race, but of class, so it is not fair to give advantages to blacks, such as quotas in universities or public jobs" (Macedo 2017). These views are often compounded by religious intolerance (especially with regard to the teaching of Afro-Brazilian ancestral religions) (Machado and Oliveira 2018).

Finally, some teachers firmly think that, instead of imparting information about race and racism, it is best to spend time on other subject matters that are allegedly more beneficial for students' academic future. In Cartagena, for example, most activities related to ethnoracial education were developed at the primary level, largely because secondary-level teachers were reluctant to change their planning to comply with the CEA (Rojas 2008). Further, since higher education institutions still observe nationwide standards for accepting new students, secondary-level teachers do not feel encouraged to design programs that, while emphasizing Afro-Colombian heritage, could potentially decrease the time spent on other topics and thereby hurt students' chances of being admitted into college (Restrepo and Rojas 2012).

Training and empowering teachers is essential to make ethnoracial education a reality. But without proper financial and logistic support, attention to biased mindsets and attitudes, and help from school leaders, teachers will continue to be unaware of, unprepared for, or indifferent toward ethnoracial education. As such, they will lack the noncognitive skills for engaging students that belong to ethnic minorities and creating a safe environment where conversations about race and racism can happen in a fruitful manner.

Making School Environments Free of Racial Discrimination

Another cluster of interventions comprises actions aimed at eradicating racial discrimination from schools. In most cases, this has been done through legal reforms. Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Peru, for example, have adopted antidiscrimination laws with a focus on education. Yet, despite these legal changes, which have value in and of themselves, the region has carried out fewer activities that directly address racism in schools or that strive to make learning spaces explicitly anti-racist, including putting in place complaint mechanisms to report and redress acts of racial discrimination.

One exception is the Secretariat of Education of Bogota, which developed a protocol to prevent, address, and monitor expressions of racism and discrimination in schools.[54] This protocol, which is available to any victim of discrimination, is part of a nationwide strategy to improve classroom environments and promote values such as mutual respect, dialogue, and the recognition of difference. By punishing racist expressions, and instituting no-tolerance policies, schools can foster an atmosphere where students from all backgrounds feel respected. They can also prevent the subtle, seemingly harmless, and often invisible ways through which prejudices are manifested and reproduced. However, these kinds of grievance redress mechanisms and zero tolerance policies toward discrimination are rare in school environments of the region.

54 https://www.educacionbogota.edu.co/portal_institucional/gestio-educativa/atencion-y-seguimiento.

Another obstacle to making schools anti-racist spaces is the negligible data on students' and teachers' perceptions. Despite the many programs in Brazil, there are few impact evaluations that trace the degree to which the racial discourse and interracial relations in schools have changed. One counterexample is the publication of indicators of race relations at school as part of the Quality Indicators in Education series of the nongovernmental organization Ação Educativa (Educative Action).[55] Designed as a participatory self-assessment for schools, the indicators cover seven dimensions: relationship and attitudes; curriculum and pedagogical practice; educational resources and materials; monitoring, permanence, and success; the performance of education professionals; democratic management; and challenges beyond school. A similar exercise took place in Uruguay, in 2009, initiated by the National Administration of Public Education and the Ministry of Social Development, which carried out a broad survey analysis to identify discriminatory practices (National Administration of Public Education and Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay 2019). Yet, for the most part, these types of assessments are unusual, leaving a sizable blind spot as to whether schools are helping to eradicate racism.

55 http://www.indicadoreseducacao.org.br/indique-relacoes-raciais/

Improving Access to Tertiary Education through Affirmative Action

A final set of policies worth highlighting involve affirmative action programs for tertiary education. Although these programs have existed in Latin America since the early 2000s, countries such as Brazil and Uruguay have launched the most ambitious and systematic measures, delivering valuable lessons for the rest of the region.[56]

Brazil has the longest and most comprehensive programs in this field. The adoption of affirmative action programs in the country started in 2000, when the State University of Rio de Janeiro introduced a 40 percent quota for Afro-descendants and mixed race students (preto and pardo), which was gradually adjusted.[57] In 2002, Law 10.558 created the University Diversity Program, sponsored by the Ministry of Education, which funded entities that were working toward "promoting access to higher education to people who belong to socially disadvantaged groups, particularly Afro-descendants and members of Brazilian indigenous communities" (Hernández 2012, 152–3). In 2005, the federal government launched the University for All Program (Programa Universidade para Todos, ProUni), which gives scholarships and tuition grants to Afro-descendants from low-income families who attend

56 As André Cicalo argues: "The concept of affirmative action relies on a revised version of the universalistic principle of equality by envisaging that the state should recognize the difference and redress the vulnerability of socially identifiable groups through special corrective measures that are nonspecifically class based" (Cicalo 2012, 3).

57 The state legislature later reformed the quota to 20 percent for "self-declared blacks (negros), 20 percent for public school students, and 5 percent for other disabled students and indigenous Brazilians in total" (Hernández 2012, 153–4).

private universities.[58] Other programs also offer low-interest loans for tuition expenses.

In 2012, Federal Law 12.711 instituted a nationwide quota targeted at students who had attended public high schools, low-income students from public schools, and low-income indigenous, mixed race, and black students. According to this law, 50 percent of the vacancies in each major federal education institution at tertiary level should be reserved for individuals who had studied the three years of their high school in public institutions. Among these, half are reserved for students with a family gross per capita income of 1.5 minimum wages or less, and a small share of reserved spots are destined for black, mixed race, and indigenous students, based on the percentage of the population belonging to these ethnic groups in each state (calculated from the latest census) (Mello 2020, 11). By 2015, 80 percent of universities had adopted a quota, while two had implemented a points system (which provides additional points in the admission examination for underrepresented applicants) (Júnior, Toste, and Campos 2015, 189). The law instituted in 2012 provided for its revision after a decade. To ensure its maintenance from 2022 onward, the Zumbi dos Palmares University—inaugurated in 2003 and the first in Latin America focused on the inclusion of Afro-descendants in higher education—promoted the Cotas Sim campaign.[59]

The positive impacts of affirmative action programs are undeniable. In Brazil, they have been found to raise academic expectations among high school students who could potentially qualify for admission benefits, including a growing demand for free and accessible vestibular preparatory courses.[60]

58 ProUni provides funds for "students from the public high school system and scholarship recipients from the private system whose per capita family income does not exceed the amount equivalent to three minimum salaries, with places reserved for the handicapped, black, brown, and indigenous candidates, distributed according to the proportion of each population in each state according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) census" (Júnior, Toste, and Campos 2015, 187).

59 https://cotassim.com.br/.

60 Public universities enroll students through admission examinations (vestibulares). While vestibulares are meant to be meritocratic, students who attended private secondary schools are more likely to earn higher scores and get admitted. Private secondary schools are better funded and usually offer special courses for college admission examinations (Júnior, Toste, and Campos 2015, 180).

One example is UNEafro, a civil society organization that provides community preparatory courses for university entrance examinations to mostly young black people and adults from public schools.[61] Since its foundation in 2009, it has benefited more than 15,000 students (Belchior 2019). Affirmative action has also catalyzed other policies that foster the inclusion of Afro-descendants and other minorities in tertiary-level institutions. Lastly, it has led to a substantial expansion of financial aid, the reduction of tuition and application fees, the growth of public and technical postsecondary systems, the rise of college mentoring application programs, and the provision of semicustomized information to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Mello 2020, 2).

Since their rollout, Brazilian public universities have also started to reflect more accurately the racial composition of the country. In 2002, only 2 percent of the students ages 18 to 26 who enrolled in a public university self-identified as black (negro), and 18 percent identified as mixed race (pardos) (at that time, the overall Afro-descendant population ages 18 to 26 was 49 percent). By 2015, the number of enrolled black students had increased to 6.3 percent, while the number of pardos rose to 41 percent (Afro-descendants represented about 57 percent of the population ages 18 to 26 that year). By 2020, enrollments in elite public higher education institutions of nonwhite and low-income, public school students swelled by 7 and 2.4 percentage points, respectively. Moreover, the quotas have helped break historical silos of career segregation. Between 1991 and 2020, Afro-descendants and low-income or public school students amplified their presence in more prestigious careers, such as law, engineering, and medicine.[62] This was not just the mechanical effects of the law, but also a response to broader behavioral changes among eligible youths, enhancing the number and pool of applicants as well as their overall dedication and grades in secondary school (Mello 2020, 3–4, 20).

61 https://uneafrobrasil.org/.

62 For example, at the Federal University of Ceará, their representation in the law career track went from 1 percent to 27 percent; at the electric engineering course at the Federal University of Santa Catarina it rose from 0 percent to 14 percent; and at the Medical School in Rondônia Federal University it went from 0 percent to 38 percent (Senkevics 2021).

Contrary to the criticism that affirmative action neglects academic excellence and individual merit, students that have been admitted through these programs have had a similar or even superior performance compared to their peers. A study conducted by the State University of Campinas found that in 48 of the 55 undergraduate courses, quota students had higher scores—on average—than nonquota students. The University of Brasilia, which reserves a 20 percent quota for Afro-descendants, found no difference between quota and nonquota students concerning academic performance. An assessment in the medical school of the State University of Rio Janeiro also concluded that there was no difference whatsoever in academic performance across the student body (Júnior, Toste, and Campos 2015, 180).

Other countries have attempted to emulate the successful Brazilian experience. In Uruguay, Law 19.122 of 2013 recognized the historical patterns of discrimination and structural racism that had affected Afro-Uruguayans and created a 15-year affirmative action program for employment and education (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2015). Law 19.122 established a quota of 8 percent for Afro-descendants in public sector jobs to be filled each year, a quota of no less than 8 percent in various trainings and capacity-building programs led by the National Institute of Employment and Professional Training, and a quota of 8 percent for scholarships and student support (Presidency of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay 2019, 8). It also created a Subcommission of Education and Afro-descendance, responsible for disseminating information about available scholarships to Afro-Uruguayan prospective applicants and for monitoring progress of scholarship recipients.

Colombia has enacted similar measures, though they have been less comprehensive than in other places (Paschel 2016, 118; Rodríguez Garavito, Alfonso Sierra, and Cavelier Adarve 2009, 66).[63] Although grassroots organizations have pushed for affirmative action policies for years, and the Constitutional Court has ordered the government to institute them, advances on this front have been timid (Rosero-Labbé, León Díaz, and Rodríguez Morales 2009). Currently, there is a special scholarship for Afro-Colombian students with outstanding academic records and financial needs. Some cities, such as Bogota and Medellín, have also arranged affirmative action plans for tertiary education.[64] In 2010, 15 out of 19 public universities had a special program or quotas for Afro-descendants and other minority groups, such as indigenous communities, displaced populations, or those reintegrated by the peace processes, according to the Directorate of Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, and Palenquero Communities of the Ministry of the Interior and Justice.

Given the success of affirmative action programs in Brazil, other countries, for example Argentina, have started to consider similar plans, largely as a response to demands from Afro-Argentine youth organizations. The World Bank-financed project Improving Inclusion in Education, which aims to reduce dropout rates in basic and higher education among the most vulnerable, carried out consultations with Afro-Argentine youths to understand their needs and special challenges. As a result of these consultations, affirmative

63 The publication of the document *Affirmative Action Policy for the Black or Afro-Colombian Population* (CONPES 2004) demonstrated the government's commitment to formulating policies on education, access to housing and public services, employment, income, and health care to address the gaps in access to services among Afro-Colombians.

64 The city of Bogota approved the Comprehensive Plan of Affirmative Actions for the Recognition of Cultural Diversity and the Guarantee of the Rights of Afro-descendants (Plan integral de Acciones Afirmativas para el Reconocimiento de la Diversidad Cultural y la Garantía de los Derechos de los Afrodescendientes) in 2006, and the Policy of Afroethno-education of the Secretary of Education of the District of Bogota (Política deAfroetnoeducación de la Secretaria de Educación del Distrito de Bogotá) in 2009. These policies seek to improve the living conditions of Afro-descendants, ensure their rights, strengthen the teaching of Afro-Colombian history, and increase political participation (Rosero-Labbé, León Díaz, and Rodríguez Morales 2009, 803). The city of Medellín also introduced the Affirmative Action Plan for the Afro-Colombian Communities of the Municipality of Medellín (Plan de Acciones Afirmativas para las Comunidades Afrocolombianas del Municipio de Medellín), which was preceded by earlier efforts. The plan aims at improving the inclusion of Afro-descendants with an emphasis on culture and communication, social and economic development, territory and the environment, human rights, and ethno-education (Rosero Labbé and León Díaz 2009).

action policies were added to the project, although the implementation has faced several challenges, mostly owing to biases that support universalistic approaches to educational inclusion. The goal of this project is to raise the number of Afro-descendant students who access PROGRESAR scholarships, which give financial support to students from the poorest socioeconomic households to finish basic education and access higher education. In 2021, the program planned to also include refugees and migrants, among whom there are several African and Afro-descendant students.

Affirmative action programs face numerous challenges in the region. A first urgent issue is the need for impact evaluations that can help counteract public criticism or misinformation about their pros and cons. Despite the abundant evidence touting their benefits, affirmative action policies continue to face public backlash. In the United States,[65] some academics, though openly supportive of these measures, claim that in practice they have benefited recent black immigrants and their children at the expense of African Americans who are descendants of slaves (Rimer and Arenson 2004). In Brazil, over 100 academics signed a manifesto in 2006 opposing race-based affirmative action at the college level, denouncing it as unconstitutional and an invitation to conflict and intolerance (Hernández 2012).

Another drawback is the disconnect between educational attainment at the college level and adequate insertion in the labor market, which is still skewed against Afro-descendant young professionals, especially in competitive professions, as discussed in the first section of this report. In Uruguay, for example, affirmative action policies have had mixed results, with labor quotas performing much worse than educational ones. In terms of scholarships, for example, in three of the main scholarships offered by the state the quota was

65 In the United States, "affirmative action" corresponds to a set of laws, policies, guidelines, and government-mandated and government-sanctioned administrative practices intended to correct and end the effects of discrimination against individuals, notably because of their gender or race, and to increase their numbers within certain occupations and professions and at universities and colleges. They do not include racial quotas, but usually take the form of practices, campaigns, targeted recruitments, and mentoring and support programs to enhance the presence of African Americans and other minorities that experience discrimination in higher education institutions (Feinberg 2005).

overwhelmingly met: Afro-descendants received 21 percent of the Economic Support Scholarship (Beca de Apoyo Económico, BAE), 18 percent of the Education Commitment Scholarship (Becas Compromiso Educativo, CE), and 40 percent of the Carlos Quijano Scholarship (Becas Carlos Quijano, CQ) in 2018 (the target was 7 percent).[66]

Yet, the year before, only 2.06 percent of jobs filled in the public sector were awarded to Afro-descendants (up from 1.06 percent in 2014)—missing the 7 percent target. Previous studies by the World Bank have also revealed the tremendous gaps in the returns Afro-Uruguayans are getting for their investment in education, including lower wages for the same types of jobs despite holding the same qualifications and experience; glass ceilings to career development; higher unemployment and underemployment rates; and job segregation (in low-skilled or low-paying jobs) (Freire et al. 2020). These negative prospects in the job market obviously discourage Afro-descendant youths from pursuing college degrees in the first place, or even completing secondary education.

Another common difficulty is that some affirmative action policies remain ad hoc and localized. In Colombia, for example, three major public universities in the country have special quota programs for black, Afro-Colombian, palenquero and raizal candidates, but use disparate criteria. The Universidad del Valle, for example, used to grant a quota of 4 percent for Afro-Colombians, based on the 1993 census, in which Afro-Colombians represented 1.52 percent of the national population; then, after the 2005 census, in which their representation had risen to 10 percent of the population, the quota was raised to 8 percent in 2018—4 percent for candidates endorsed by grassroots organizations, and the other 4 percent for candidates endorsed by community councils. This contrasts with the National University of Colombia

66 The BAE takes the form of grants that support education of all people who identify themselves as Afro-descendant, ages 12–29, who complete the "basic cycle" (first, second and third years of high school; in rural schools, seventh, eighth, and ninth years). The CE provides scholarships for all individuals who identify themselves as Afro-descendant, ages 15 years and over, who attend high school. The CQ comprises grants for all graduate students who identify themselves as Afro-descendant, in both national and international institutions.

and the University of Antioquia, which grant quotas of only 2 percent for Afro-descendant students. In addition to contrasting criteria, affirmative action programs in Colombia are less wide ranging geographically than in Brazil or Uruguay and lack an effective oversight mechanism (Rodríguez Garavito, Alfonso Sierra, and Cavelier Adarve 2009, 66).[67]

A final but highly consequential barrier is the absence of public support both for retaining black students once in college and for making sure these programs remain financially sustainable. Although the goal of affirmative action is to broaden the admission of Afro-descendant students into higher education,[68] there are fewer actions to support their permanence until completion. In Colombia, for example, Afro-descendants who get admitted into college often come from public schools, which tend to be academically weaker than private ones, so without adequate assistance they are more likely to drop out than their white peers coming from more privileged backgrounds. Hence, without proper academic backing, students could perform below their potential and not benefit from higher education (Hernández 2013).

In Brazil, political changes and the expansion of distance learning have led to a plateau in the number of beneficiaries in affirmative action programs. This signals a stagnation, or even a setback, in the democratization of higher education of the country. Indeed, in 1995, 20 percent of the poorest population represented only 1 percent of the university population. By 2015, this number had gone up to 6 percent, yet by 2019 the proportion of lower-income students in universities had dropped to 5 percent. This trend coincides with a substantial decline in financial aid to students in the private sector (Senkevics 2021).

67 Contingent on showing proof that the applicant belongs to a "black community."
68 Mato, 141.

In sum, affirmative action policies have delivered good results and retain a great deal of potential. Quotas can expand access to higher education, pave the way for decent employment, and counter conscious or unconscious biases surrounding ethnoracial minorities. But if poorly designed or inadequately implemented, they can fail to level the playing field, especially if the conditions hurting Afro-descendant children in primary and secondary education are not addressed. Countries must thus adopt comprehensive and progressive approaches to affirmative action, tackling the obstacles that keep Afro-descendants away from education, which start with early education and continue through tertiary level. Otherwise, tertiary-level quotas do little for the more vulnerable segments of the Afro-descendant population, who might have difficulty completing even primary education. Quotas therefore need to be ingrained into more integral approaches that ensure that the most vulnerable households are being supported through the education system from beginning to end. It also entails making sure that Afro-descendant graduates are moving effectively to decent and well-paying jobs. Quotas are not, per se, a tool for social mobility, but can be an important step for moving in that direction.

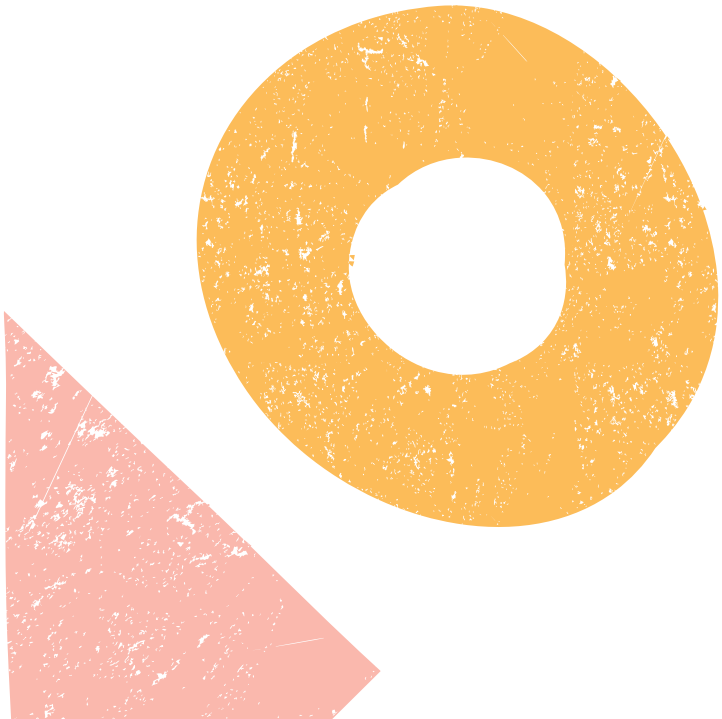
Conclusion

The experience of the region with policies for ethnoracial inclusion in education is not abundant. On the contrary, it is relatively recent and modest in scope, geographic distribution, and funding. Experiences are expanding, though, and together they clearly signal the region's intent to create learning environments that are ethnoracially inclusive. Today there are positive examples to draw from, ranging from antidiscrimination laws and affirmative actions to school-level innovations and textbook adjustments.

The current matrix of policies has had heterogeneous results, although in many instances we simply do not have enough data to assess their actual impact. The modest results of most of these policies can be at least partially attributed to their unsystematic and character-driven nature. The absence of conditionalities, accountability mechanism, incentives, clear goals, or sanctions for noncompliance makes ethnoracial guidelines somewhat inconsequential for schools and staff that are typically underpaid, undertrained, and overworked.

Active participation and ongoing institutional support are also essential for enacting successful policies. Yet, the empirical data reveal that school leaders are often unsupportive of or openly against ethnoracial inclusion efforts, discouraging teachers from embracing pedagogical approaches that are sensitive to race. Relatedly, school leaders or teachers can frequently have attitudes and beliefs about race and racism that conflict with the very goals of ethnoracial education. If teachers view ethnoracial education as unnecessary or insignificant, these programs are less likely to meet their desired results. The ongoing controversy about critical race theory in the United States vividly shows that debunking erroneous or misinformed conceptions about teaching goals and content is critical for ethnoracial education to succeed, everywhere.

Finally, many of the policies aimed at improving Afro-descendants' participation in education are disinclined to making schools explicitly anti-racist environments. Latin American school systems were instrumental in building strong national discourses that promoted mestizaje and racial democracy as core values of our societies. These ideas permeated all social strata and, although liberating in their own right (they conferred on the average Latin American a space of belonging in the nation that had been denied for centuries), they also silenced other realities, making invisible the experience of indigenous, Afro-descendant, and other minorities that were and are excluded from the majority society on the basis of their different identities and histories. In this context, discourses of racism and anti-racism challenge the idea of a "Latin America mestiza" (or the "white Southern Cone"). Education systems can be equally instrumental in deconstructing these homogenizing views and providing voice and agency to ethnoracial minorities in the construction of more just and inclusive societies. For this to happen, racism, both structural or direct, must be recognized and confronted, and that cannot happen without honest conversations about the current and historical processes that led to some groups being systematically overrepresented among the excluded.



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4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ETHNORACIALLY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The previous chapters have revealed how, despite significant improvements in the past decades, Afro-descendants are still not receiving the knowledge, skills, and economic gains that go along with a high-quality education. Across the region, Afro-descendants continue to exhibit lower rates of school attainment, are more likely to be in learning spaces that are unwelcoming, and fall behind at all levels of education, having remarkably higher dropout rates between primary and secondary, and lower enrollment rates in tertiary education—mostly within short careers in less prestigious universities. After graduating, they also receive lower returns for their years spent on education in the labor market—regardless of the educational level—signaling barriers inside and outside the school system that are mutually reinforcing. Although there are few disaggregated data to assess the quality of the education that Afro-descendants receive, the available information highlights many areas that have deficient quality (from school infrastructure to teacher training). All these gaps are expected to have increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, deepening preexisting inequalities in human capital accumulation and reversing the few gains made over the past decades.

The report has also underscored that these gaps are not tied to a single cause but are driven and reinforced by mutually aggravating factors. To begin with, Afro-descendants experience acute socioeconomic disadvantages. Their overrepresentation among the poor limits their ability to afford the cost of school and in some cases forces families to disenroll their younger members at an early age for them to participate in income-generating activities. The exclusion from school is also connected to deeper forms of structural discrimination, which are manifest in Afro-descendants' underrepresentation in well-paying and formal jobs, as well as in their negligible presence in leadership roles, in both the public and private sectors. If a degree promises little or nothing in return—economically, socially, or politically—it is not surprising that many Afro-descendant youths see few incentives in completing higher levels of education.

Another important finding is that schools in the region are not doing enough to break this vicious cycle. In many countries, learning environments fail to address the needs of ethnoracial minorities. Discriminatory practices permeate school systems in numerous ways, from staff that minimize or are indifferent to acts of racism to teachers that (consciously or not) treat differently or have lower expectations of nonwhite students. Furthermore, this lack of ethnoracial sensibility is also apparent in the way curricula and textbooks address these topics. Notwithstanding modest progress, learning materials continue to promote stereotypical views of the contributions of Afro-descendants to their country's history, institutions, and economic development. For the most part, instructional materials used today shy away from promoting critical conversations about racism, which are a stepping-stone for building an inclusive and anti-racist society. This is all compounded by the limited availability of training opportunities for instructors and staff on ethnoracial issues, as well as the negligible number of Afro-descendant teachers in most countries.

The good news is that the region has been accumulating experience on many fronts, delivering key lessons and insights on how to move forward. Several countries, including Brazil, Colombia, and Uruguay, have launched or strengthened their affirmative action programs for higher education, yielding positive outcomes in enrollment, diversity, and academic performance. Others have passed antidiscrimination laws centered on education, as well as measures aimed at incorporating themes on black history and anti-racism into national curricula. Local governments, civil society organizations, and school communities have also been protagonists in spearheading many of the region's most cutting edge programs on ethnoracial inclusion. The achievements and setbacks of these interventions serve as the groundwork for building a new path for the sustained inclusion of Afro-descendants in educational settings.

In this final chapter we outline a set of principles that can help the region achieve this goal. This is not an exhaustive list of recommendations, but rather a broad set of guidelines that identify areas that demand urgent attention or signal potential actions for tackling structural drivers of discrimination in education. Such recommendations are meant to catalyze actions across many levels, from legal and institutional reforms to changes within school communities.

The first set of recommendations are aimed at improving outcomes in primary and secondary education. We focus on these levels not only because Afro-descendants tend to fall behind or drop out overwhelmingly at these levels, but also because many of the region's ethnoracial inclusion policies have historically targeted higher education, neglecting the serious problems that prevent Afro-descendants from making it into college and vocational studies in the first place. The second set of recommendations are geared toward improving and expanding ongoing affirmative action programs and higher education in general, as well as addressing barriers in the job market that directly affect Afro-descendant college graduates.

These recommendations have benefited greatly from a series of informal consultations and interviews carried out with Afro-descendant representatives, activists, and experts from Latin America and the United States. As such, they seek to amplify their voices and perspectives on the changes that are needed for closing the gaps that affect ethnoracial minorities in the region. In this spirit, the report does not aspire to have a final word on ethnoracial inclusion policies in education, but aims to push the conversations forward and identify issues that need to be thoroughly investigated in future studies.

Eliminating Ethnoracial Barriers in Primary and Secondary Schools

Address the Socioeconomic Disparities That Hit Afro-descendants

A first critical step is for the region to recognize that Afro-descendants' exclusion from education has a material underpinning. As seen in chapter 1, Afro-descendants have worse living conditions than their white and mestizo counterparts, are more likely to live in precarious and poorly serviced areas, earn lower salaries, and have informal jobs. These and many other socioeconomic factors erode their ability to attend and stay in school.

Afro-descendants are also much more likely to live in informal neighborhoods, which predetermines the types of public schools they can attend—usually schools that are underfunded and have poor facilities, limited learning tools and digital technologies, and unsupported faculty. Substandard schools have been found to aggravate ethnoracial gaps in learning outcomes (Freire et al. 2018, 93). A study in Brazil found that when Afro-descendants went to

high-quality schools the performance of white and Afro-descendants was nearly the same, but in low-quality institutions the racial learning gaps swelled dramatically (a pattern that has also been documented in the United States). Economic disadvantages also impose obstacles to covering school-related expenses, including tuition, transportation, and supplies. In the long run, this hurts students' academic performance.

Such dynamics call for countries to invest more in school infrastructure, especially in institutions that are heavily attended by Afro-descendant children and young adults. It also demands implementing targeted approaches in already existing financial programs aimed at eradicating the economic obstacles that keep children and youths from disadvantaged backgrounds from thriving academically, including through cash transfers, subsidies, and other forms of aid. The region could create or expand grants for schools educating mostly Afro-descendant children, introduce financial incentives for schools to meet secondary school completion targets, provide scholarships for private school attendance among Afro-descendant children, and launch or scale up ongoing efforts that identify and bring back to school former students who have dropped out for economic reasons (the PROGRESAR program in Argentina provides one such model).[69]

Digital inclusion is another area where socioeconomic disparities are especially salient. Digital gaps can prevent Afro-descendant students from enjoying the same quality of instruction as their white and mestizo peers. This has been particularly relevant over the past two years as the COVID-19 pandemic has made remote education the norm and laid bare the digital inequalities across the region. Hence, it is urgent to expand access to the

69 In Argentina, the World Bank-financed project Improving Inclusion in Education, which aims to reduce dropout rates in basic and higher education among the most vulnerable, carried out consultations with Afro-Argentine youths to understand their needs and special challenges. As a result of these consultations, affirmative action policies have been included in the project to increase the number of Afro-Argentine students who access PROGRESAR scholarships, including through the provision of financial support to students from the poorest households to complete basic education and to access and complete higher education. In 2021 the program also included support to refugees, among which are some Afro-descendant students. In addition, tutors and other local agents of Acompañar, a school dropout prevention program, are being trained to improve support to Afro-Argentine youths to continue with their education.

internet, computers, television, and other technological devices among Afro-descendant households. For all the tragedy it has left behind, the pandemic also represents a unique opportunity for long overdue investments in technology and digital access. The benefits deriving from these investments could extend into other areas. For example, while remote learning cannot replace face-to-face instruction, distance education has increasingly become a desirable option for many Afro-descendant high school graduates or adults that never completed their degrees. But the expansion and sustainability of this option depends on democratizing the resources and technologies for navigating the online world—including how to conduct research and use multimodal platforms effectively. To bridge this gap, countries could invest more in forms of targeted trainings aimed at Afro-descendant children and youths—and their families and communities—on the use of online tools and platforms.

A 2018 World Bank study on Afro-descendants in Latin America highlighted that education was the single most important factor in explaining declines in the probability of being poor for Afro-descendants in the region (Freire et al. 2018). Yet, realizing the economic potential of education will not happen merely by tackling issues pertaining to the school environment or the education system. Countries must also remove the socioeconomic barriers that keep students from underprivileged backgrounds from thriving academically in the first place.

Eliminate Racial Discrimination in the Classroom

Another crucial step to advance the inclusion of Afro-descendants in education is to openly acknowledge and address the existence of structural racism. Despite the policies implemented thus far, education systems in the region remain disinclined to make schools anti-racist spaces. As we describe in the previous chapter, Latin American schools were instrumental in disseminating ideologies of mestizaje and the myth of racial democracy

as collective values. While this instilled a sense of national belonging among younger generations, it also made schools into spaces that erased or granted minimal visibility to the experience of indigenous people, Afro-descendants, or persons from other diverse backgrounds. The cultural and political distinctiveness of these groups was seen as antithetical to mestizo identities and notions of racial harmony. Hence, improving Afro-descendants' inclusion in education cannot happen without debunking these discourses, which implicitly preclude the possibility of talking openly about racism. Rather than stirring tensions, recognizing racial inequalities can transform schools into crucial agents for building more inclusive societies.

Eliminating racial discrimination in schools is also necessary to improve Afro-descendant learning outcomes. As described in this report, schools that are hostile toward ethnoracial minorities can contribute to early dropout in primary and secondary education. Discrimination can also accentuate learning gaps and hurt the academic performance of Afro-descendant students. For students, experiencing discrimination can lead to lower self-esteem and aspirations, as well as diminished knowledge acquisition. When held by staff, teachers, or parents, these attitudes can decrease the academic expectations of nonwhite students. When instructors lower the bar, students can unknowingly diminish the quality of their schoolwork as well as their dedication. And while these prejudices often manifest themselves in bullying and explicit acts of violence, they can also circulate in more subtle, indirect forms, such as through everyday interactions, humor, or body language.

Changes to the school culture can yield positive impacts when it comes to racial discrimination. Such actions can heighten the well-being and sense of belonging of Afro-descendant students and advance their academic success. They can also address the biased mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors of members of the school community. A first concrete step for the region could be to create or expand complaint mechanisms for reporting and redressing acts of racial discrimination. These mechanisms could be further strengthened by no-tolerance school policies, which can deliver explicit assurances that all students will be respected and that expressions of racism are not tolerated.

Furthermore, schools can make modifications to their culture by hosting and encouraging open and honest conversations about racism or racial relations in the community. Such dialogue could make schools more responsive to the views and needs of ethnoracial minorities. As outlined in chapter 3, the region has already pioneered an array of initiatives on this front, some of which have the potential of being scaled up to other municipalities or regions or even to the national level. Other promising developments have emerged recently. Following the killing of George Floyd by a police officer in the United States in May 2020, some schools in the region began to take action. In São Paulo, parents from a few private schools started pressuring school management to expand the representation of Afro-descendants among the school management, teachers, and staff. They also made calls to review the school curricula and establish an anti-racism agenda in collaboration with civil society and Afro-descendant movements in the country. Similarly, in Argentina, for the first time ever, during the academic year 2020–2021, the University of Buenos Aires began offering a course on anti-racism and black studies taught in cooperation with Afro-descendant leaders. The readings for this course were almost exclusively from nonwhite authors, an example of decolonial pedagogies at work in the classroom.[70]

Rather than being a marginal task, addressing discrimination is essential if schools are to become true engines of critical reflection and social change. If learning spaces are indifferent to or tolerant of acts of discrimination, it is implausible that students coming from ethnoracial or other diverse backgrounds will see them as safe spaces where they can thrive academically and socially. Furthermore, schools must frame these efforts as a matter of historical reparation, inclusive development, and social justice (and not as part of a political agenda). Without this,

70 *The course was proposed by the Philosophy Department with the title "Rights of black communities in Argentina from an Afro perspective." The course was designed as a bimonthly four-month-long elective for law students, but open to students from other divisions. According to the professors who developed the course, the main goal is to "blacken the university," raising awareness of the presence of Afro-Argentines and the effects of systemic racism in general (Alvado 2021).*

measures that advance ethnoracial inclusion in schools risk being seen by the public as irrelevant or can be easily distorted or politicized.[71] Debunking mistaken or misinformed conceptions about ethnoracial teaching goals and content is essential for their success, everywhere.

Support Teacher Training and Professional Development

Several studies cited in this report have shown that teachers are, for the most part, unprepared to advance ethnoracial inclusion in the classroom. In many countries, teachers acknowledge that they lack the skills for interacting with students from ethnic minorities or leading conversations about race and racism. This is reinforced by school leaders that tend to be either unsupportive of or opposed to pedagogies that are sensitive to racial issues. If teachers view ethnoracial education as irrelevant or inappropriate, efforts to tackle Afro-descendants' exclusion in schools are more likely to fail.

Teachers and school leaders, however, can be crucial agents of change. A 2015 World Bank report showed that teachers can meaningfully enhance the academic performance of students, but that potential is

71 *For example, in Brazil, the rollout of quota systems in the early 2000s was met with hostility. Many opponents claimed these policies would magnify—rather than solve—existent racial divisions. In 2006, over 110 academics signed a manifesto to reject race-based affirmative action in Brazilian universities, claiming it was not only unconstitutional (a wrong claim) but also an invitation to conflict and intolerance (Hernández 2012, 154). A more recent example is the ongoing controversy in the United States concerning the teaching in public schools of "critical race theory." This comprises a set of ideas proposed in the 1970s by black legal scholars Derrick Bell and Kimberlé Crenshaw, who argued that racism (as a form of structural disadvantage) was present in many domains of American society, including its laws and institutions. Critical race theory also maintains that racism enables the status quo and that dismantling these structures cannot happen through a quick, easy fix. For opponents, bringing racial topics into the classroom leads to unnecessary distress and feelings of guilt among white students—since it underlines, for example, that their family's success is partly the result of structural racial hierarchies rather than individual merit. Some states in the United States have thus banned teachers from imparting any content alluding to structural racism. This rapid politicization threatens to roll back pedagogical approaches that help students think critically about, rather than ignore, the realities of racial inequality (see Wallace-Wells 2021; Jackson 2021).*

not being fully realized in the region (Bruns and Luque 2015). Being exposed to a high-quality teacher increases a student's odds of enrolling in college and earning higher incomes later in life (Bruns and Luque 2015). Indeed, the learning gaps of Afro-descendants can be partly attributed to unprepared instructors. Evidence shows that teachers working in poorer regions tend to be less trained, worse compensated, and less supported by their institutions. This rings especially true for schools attended by Afro-descendants, which are known to have fewer instructors per grade or an incomplete roster of grades (Freire et al. 2018).

Rather than blaming teachers, this trend points to a larger problem: the absence or limited availability of programs for preparing instructors on ethnoracial issues. In Latin America, the amount of formal education required of teachers has risen since the 1980s. In fact, these professionals undergo more years of formal education in the region than in other parts of the world. Yet, most of the current programs have limited oversight, and there is no compulsory accreditation process (or national standards on diversity and inclusion) (Bruns and Luque 2015). Thus, as we explained in the previous chapter, during their pre-service years teachers rarely acquire any skills and experience on how to approach ethnoracial issues in the classroom.

The region must expand the pre-service and in-service training opportunities for teachers and school staff. This means equipping them with the knowledge and skills to engage students on race and racism issues, creating a safe environment that welcomes and valorizes students from diverse backgrounds, and enforcing a zero tolerance policy toward racist expressions. This can take the form of racial awareness workshops or other capacity-building exercises described in chapter 3, thereby sensitizing future teachers on racist practices that may be embedded in their own pedagogies and classrooms.

Such efforts must also make instructors more sensitive to identifying subtle, indirect manifestations of racial bias in the classroom, including forms of unequal praise and lower expectations toward nonwhite students. This can help dispel biased attitudes and beliefs held by teachers and leaders (such as the notion that racism does not exist or should not be talked about in school). Without high-quality training on Afro-descendant and ethnoracial issues, it is unlikely that teachers will have the tools to become agents of change.

An equally crucial task is to coach teachers to better stimulate and motivate Afro-descendant students, making sure they meet their full learning potential. Going to school and learning are not the same thing (World Bank 2018), and Latin American countries have generally failed to realize the promise of education, especially for poor and vulnerable children. One underlying cause is that instructors in in the region typically struggle to keep students engaged in class (Bruns and Luque 2015), a trend that is likely more pronounced in schools that serve ethnic minorities. For this reason, professional development efforts must go beyond conversations about content (of Afro-descendant history and culture) and focus on strategies that can widen the participation of all students in class, especially those coming from underprivileged backgrounds. Teachers must recognize the importance of keeping students engaged, especially those that are at higher risk of falling behind or dropping out, and must be equipped with the proper tools for that purpose. Countries must not only enhance pre-service and in-service opportunities, but must also strive to make them geographically accessible to all teachers.

A parallel action for advancing ethnoracial equity is to ensure a fair representation of Afro-descendant teachers in the school system. This can have a number of positive consequences. It can allow teachers to use pedagogically their personal experience—and their added insights—to facilitate conversations about race and racism and to mentor students undergoing similar challenges. And it can help promote positive role models and convey the kinds of professional lives that underprivileged students can aspire to. Countries can achieve this by establishing standards of diversity in hiring practices or launching programs that incentivize the recruitment of Afro-descendant teachers.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that Latin American teachers are for the most part underpaid, undertrained, and overstretched. To have effective teachers, the region must also invest in salaries, working conditions (especially in rural and remote areas and slums), and incentives for attracting top candidates into the profession (World Bank 2018, 136). The region could also develop subsidies for teachers who are in schools attended mostly by Afro-descendants. If teachers are motivated, but without proper financial resources and logistic support from their leaders, they will continue to be indifferent or unprepared to advance the aims of ethnoracial inclusion in education.

Design Racially Inclusive Textbooks

As we discussed in chapter 2, the region is still far from eliminating racially biased content from textbooks used in primary and secondary education. Textbooks that are racially insensitive can alienate Afro-descendant children and youths, leading to higher dropout rates and poor academic performance. Countries must thus eradicate all expressions of racism from textbooks and design learning materials that are better aligned with the goals of ethnoracial inclusion.

In many countries, the main challenge is not so much the availability of textbooks, but their content. Some textbooks fail to cover most relevant topics, make the right historical or sociological connections, or highlight contemporary issues related to racial inequality. Colombia, for example, has broadened the production of relevant textbooks nationwide, but they tend to be too community driven and mostly centered around culture, art, and heritage (grounded in the discourse of "recovery" (rescate) of traditions and local knowledge). As a result, they rarely address candidly the impacts of racism or discrimination at a regional or national scale. To overcome this barrier, textbooks must discuss race as a cross-cutting theme, making it relevant for different disciplines and themes beyond the domain of culture. This would allow students to think of race and ethnicity not as something circumscribed or restricted to personal identity, but as a structural reality that permeates many aspects of life (from health and employment to economic development and politics).

Another common drawback is that current textbooks often talk about Afro-descendants in international terms—referring to events, movements, or public figures from the United States or South Africa. This move implicitly frames race and racism as a foreign issue or a problem that pertains to other latitudes, ignoring historical figures and events that are locally relevant. While African history and culture are important topics in and of themselves, countries need to underscore the teaching of race and racism within their own respective histories, societal dynamics, and racial ideologies.

When revising textbooks, countries must also eliminate all stereotypical representations of Afro-descendants. In some cases, textbooks mention relevant events tied to black history but depict Afro-descendants as passive actors. One example is the abolition of slavery in the Americas, which is frequently taught in ways that minimize the agency of enslaved or maroon communities in dismantling this system. Textbooks should thus strike a balance between stories of oppression and victimization and those of resilience and agency.

This means shifting the gaze to episodes and processes that are silenced by official history, including slavery (its violence and long-lasting consequences), the actions and voices of Afro-descendants in colonial Latin America and emancipation wars, their perspectives and involvement during nation-building projects, the ideas of black intellectuals and political leaders that shaped the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and contemporary developments (from black social movements and the changing racial politics in the hemisphere to issues of structural racism and police brutality against Afro-descendant youths). While this shift can take many different forms, box 4.1 provides a nonexhaustive list of recommendations that can begin turning the tide in the right direction.

Box 4.1

Making Textbooks Ethnoracially Inclusive

Based on our discussion of chapter 2, we suggest eight ideas to make primary and secondary textbooks more consistent with the goals of ethnoracial inclusion:

1 **Adopt a decolonial perspective that moves away from the dominant, folk-driven treatment of racial themes.** Highlight Afro-descendant personalities, struggles, organizations, and ideas that are silenced by official history. Publish life stories of Afro-descendant figures that participated in key events of national history or portray them participating in meaningful areas of national life in the present. This can help avoid pigeonholing Afro-descendants into stereotypical situations (based on superficial or subtly discriminatory preconceptions about their cultural or phenotypic characteristics, such as a predisposition to sports and music).

2 **Make diversity a cross-cutting aspect of the pedagogical iconography.** Select images that have a documentary or pedagogical purpose (for example, encouraging students' reflection on a given theme) rather than a decorative one. Textbooks and class exercises should draw from examples and illustrations that reflect the rich diversity of Latin American societies. Representations of the family, the working class, the nation-state, and the like, are still very much biased toward stereotypical representations of an aspirational white or mestizo society. It is difficult for students of ethnoracial and minority backgrounds to develop a sense of belonging, and be perceived as equal by their peers, if they rarely see themselves as active subjects of class discussions, or if they are only referenced in connection to stereotypical subjects (such as culture and sports).

3 **Complement definitions of racism as "hatred" or as acts of individual transgression with those that frame it as a structural phenomenon that is normalized in everyday life.** Illustrate how racism regularly manifests itself in verbal expressions or interactions that seem harmless or commonsensical, such as humor. Make explicit the relationship between socioeconomic inequality and racial or ethnic difference.

4 **Approach ideas such as mestizo or racial democracy through a critical lens.** This means teaching about the colonial racial hierarchy, its evolution ever since, and the imprint it has left on contemporary Latin American societies. Reflect on mestizaje and similar notions that still make it difficult to recognize diversity and the inequalities tied to ethnic and racial differences. Critically scrutinize debunked assumptions underlying racial democracy—for example, the baseless misconception that Latin American societies had milder forms of slavery.

5 **Be mindful of the use of language or concepts.** Avoid the use of incorrect terminology such as "the white race." Textbooks should also reflect current ethnoracial categories, especially those recommended by Afro-descendant organizations in each country.

6 **Develop a more nuanced discussion of the meaning of race.** While there are no biological grounds for the definition of human races, textbooks should acknowledge that races are sociocultural categories deeply rooted in the development of contemporary capitalism, with very real consequences in everyday life, as they still organize many aspects of social interaction and contribute to stratification of the distribution of wealth, human capital, and symbolic recognition. Race and racism therefore need to be explored and understood, not as a foreign or historical subject, but as a fundamental part of the Latin American state-building process.

7 **Devote enough space to topics related to Afro-descendants.** Educational syllabi should not take population size as a good measure for determining how much content is included in textbooks to discuss issues of race and racism, especially in places with a small proportion of Afro-descendants. Since the goal is to recognize social differences that have been made invisible over centuries, which are tied to socioeconomic outcomes in complex and interrelated ways, the treatment of race and racism should be sufficient to allow Afro-descendants' histories and issues to be gauged by students in equally complex and critical ways.

8 **History is important, but textbooks need to focus also on the present.** Most textbooks shy away from engaging with current events and issues that matter to Afro-descendants (such as discrimination in the labor market, exposure to crime and violence, and dispossession from their traditional rural lands). Speaking of Afro-descendants solely in historical terms can lead to the wrong conclusion that racial inequality belongs to the past or bears little relevance to the present.

To achieve the changes listed above, countries should devise specific strategies to systematically review and advise on textbooks and curricula on a national scale. There is international and regional experience to draw from. In Brazil, for instance, the National School Textbook Program has helped over the past two decades to adjust the behavior of publishing houses and authors of school textbooks, showing that change and monitoring the way Afro-descendants are represented in school textbooks can lead to positive outcomes. But regardless of the specific institutional arrangement, experience shows that Afro-descendants must be actively involved from the onset and have decision-making power. If done rightly, the spaces created to discuss ethnoracial content can catalyze a range of interventions, such as creating multiracial panels that review books and formulate editorial guidelines or initiatives that recruit Afro-descendant authors and experts in black history to contribute to drafting or reviewing the textbooks themselves. Such efforts could also help decenter dominant white or mestizo narratives and bring in other perspectives. Civil society organizations—which have developed excellent tools and innovative school programs—could also become partners in this process. For revision initiatives to succeed, countries must ensure they have the adequate financial and institutional backing to be sustainable.

In sum, the development of racially inclusive textbooks and school curricula can transform mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors. It can make younger generations more sensitive to and critical of racial inequality. Revising textbooks can bring about direct benefits not only to Afro-descendant children and youths, but also to entire school communities. It can make school communities more aware of how racial inequality works and what can be done to counter it, contributing to the formation of more just and inclusive societies.

Improve Data and Analytics

A final step to broaden ethnoracial inclusion in schools is to have a solid understanding of the divergent needs and characteristics of Afro-descendants in each country. Afro-descendants make up a widely heterogeneous population, with important cultural and socioeconomic differences both among and within countries. In recent decades, the region has made considerable progress in disaggregating data along ethnoracial lines. This has made visible the impacts of structural discrimination, including the gaps in access to services, opportunities, and spaces. In the 2010s, almost all countries in the region had included ethnoracial variables in their census,[72] and today there is a growing amount of research on racial inequality and ethnoracial policies in education. Such positive strides have also expanded our awareness of overlapping disadvantages (that is, how race intersects with class, gender, ethnicity, and location). This has strengthened the case for policies that are sensitive to these nuanced realities.

Nonetheless, reversing centuries of invisibility requires more than adding variables to censuses and other statistical records. Statistical inclusion must tackle the biases that are still imbricated in data collection practices (for example, how questions and racial categories are written and collected by enumerators). It also demands a careful analysis and recalibration of the data that are currently being collected. In the field of education, for example, this entails refining how ethnoracial variables are compiled across education management information systems. Measuring enrollment or attainment of Afro-descendant students is not enough. Data instruments must also be more comprehensive in scope, incorporating ethnoracial variables when gathering information on school materials, academic progress, teacher training resources, or school quality.

Similarly, we know very little about how much Afro-descendants are actually learning in school, as assessments rarely capture pertinent data. The global

72 Notable exceptions were Chile, Dominican Republic, and Guatemala.

literature has underscored that selection examinations disproportionately disadvantage those from poor and ethnic minority backgrounds. Yet, currently we know little about how these dynamics play out in the region. One solution is to add ethnoracial variables to international standard tests, such as PISA (the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment), or to their national counterparts (such as admission examinations of universities). Such variables could also be integrated into internal evaluations at the school level, including teacher assessments or reports on dropout or substandard performance. Improvements in the communication between schools, communities, and parents might also contribute to preventing dropout and poor academic outcomes.

There is another blind spot in program evaluations. Despite the wide array of initiatives on ethnoracial inclusion, there is a relatively small number of evaluations to assess their actual impact. We do not know, for example, whether some of these efforts are having a positive impact on racial discourses or interracial relations in the broader school community. For the most part, these types of exercises are unusual, offering little clarity as to whether current initiatives are meeting their intended goals. Evaluating the current matrix of programs can help countries determine, with greater precision and evidence, which tools are making meaningful changes, and which are not. This can provide more clarity as countries work to scale up some of these efforts.

While statistical data provide an entry point for obtaining a general picture of ethnoracial equity in education, countries must also invest in funding targeted studies that delve more deeply into the substandard experience of Afro-descendants at school. This can involve research that traces the dynamics and consequences of other overlapping disadvantages (linked to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or geographic location). Similarly, beyond collecting quantitative data on advancement, grade attainment, and learning indicators, countries must also support research that focuses on perceptions, mindsets, and attitudes across the school community, and the impact they exert on academic performance. Generating a more comprehensive and nuanced description of ethnoracial dynamics in schools and education systems is an essential step for addressing structural racism in societies at large.

Eliminating Ethnoracial Barriers in Tertiary Education and Beyond

Support and Expand Affirmative Action in Higher Education

While the first set of policies are meant to address a historical lack of attention to ethnoracial inclusion in primary and secondary schools, countries cannot lose sight of the obstacles that still exist in tertiary education and in the labor market as part of a broader, holistic approach to ethnoracial inclusion.

One critical area is affirmative action policies, which have delivered good results and have tremendous potential for making universities more diverse and equitable in the future.[73] In Latin American countries, affirmative action has mostly taken the form of quotas. Where they were implemented, college admission protocols have expanded the presence of Afro-descendants in universities and higher education institutions. Simultaneously, they have resulted in other positive externalities, such as an increased awareness of the importance of diversity and the rise of a black professional class that serves as role models to younger generations. The benefits of affirmative action, both in Latin America and elsewhere, are unquestionable.

73 Affirmative action has never been properly defined, though it has often been linked to policies developed in the United States of America, mostly aimed at ensuring equal employment and educational opportunities. Affirmative action was supposed to correct structural injustices in the status quo that negatively impacted the opportunities of excluded groups. Over the years, several United States judicial rulings have defined the scope of affirmative action, narrowing its interpretation to a specific set of policies that allowed using race as a positive criterion for assessing school or job applications. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, affirmative action was embraced by the American civil rights movement and played a pivotal role in bringing issues of discrimination to the forefront of the policy dialogue.

For countries with quota systems, an urgent task is to overcome the issues that are keeping Afro-descendants from finishing high school (and then filling the available slots). Without addressing the disparities that harm Afro-descendants in primary and secondary education, quotas and affirmative action programs will have a very low ceiling or fail to help the poorest or more vulnerable households. As described in chapter 3, for quotas to succeed there must be a critical mass of eligible beneficiaries. Hence, countries must do more to make sure that the most vulnerable households are being supported, especially when their younger members are at greater risk of dropping out. Similarly, they must coach and find other ways of supporting potential candidates that have not been exposed to a robust primary and secondary education. One potential avenue is to replicate various initiatives being developed throughout the region where public and private universities mentor high school students (attending disadvantaged schools) from an early age and help them develop the skills (in mathematics and writing) for succeeding in college.[74]

Quotas can also fail to promote social mobility and equal access if conceived in isolation, especially when they do not address other important layers of exclusion that affect vulnerable minorities, such as poverty, societal prejudices, and spatial segregation. To boost completion rates in secondary education, countries must offer financial aid to Afro-descendant students, either by subsidizing the costs of tuition and school supplies or by distributing conditional cash transfers that offset the financial burden of going to school. Some promising practices are already under way. In Colombia, for example, the World Bank-financed Access and Quality in Higher Education Project (PACES) has a component of financial assistance and student loans targeted at vulnerable students, including Afro-Colombians. In Nicaragua, the Alliance for Education Quality Project, also financed by the World Bank, targets some

74 For example, the Higher Education Quality Improvement Program (MECESUP) in Chile supported students in programs financed by the World Bank that promoted research excellence in areas with a high concentration of indigenous students through various university-specific initiatives. Acompañar, in Argentina, supports disadvantaged students benefited by the program of state scholarships (PROGRESAR) to catch up and stay in the education system throughout secondary and higher education.

of the poorest rural regions of the country (including Afro-descendant communities) and works to improve teacher training and school infrastructure to elevate the number of high school graduates. Brazil, a country with a long and robust affirmative action program, owes much of its success to parallel policies. For example, the country has increased the level of financial aid, reduced tuition fees, broadened the public and technical postsecondary systems, supported mentored application programs, tailored the delivery of relevant information to high school students from underprivileged backgrounds, and cut down college application costs (Mello 2020). These actions can help bring down the barriers that keep minority students from benefiting from affirmative action.

A recurrent limitation of quotas and affirmative action policies, however, is that they lack enforcement mechanisms or penalties for noncompliance. In many instances the quotas are not filled, simply because there are minimal incentives for institutions to meet the desired target. Mechanisms for processing complaints or receiving feedback regarding affirmative action policies are also necessary, especially in local or regional institutions. In the United States, while the most publicized controversies around affirmative action often center around elite institutions, public or private regional institutions that are less known often do very little to diversify the student population. Such forms of oversight must have the resources, enforcement capacity, and geographic outreach to be effective.

Affirmative action programs also require broad public support, and countries must be aware and act proactively to diffuse their controversial nature. In Brazil, admission quotas were met with legal challenges and public protests. In Uruguay, the approval of affirmative action for the trans population, probably the most aggressively excluded minority in the region, triggered a referendum initiated by senators who claimed that the law was granting special privileges to some groups over others.[75] In the United States, opponents of affirmative

75 The popular consultation was organized on August 4, 2019, in which support for the repeal of the law needed to get at least 25 percent of the electoral roll. Yet, fewer than 10 percent of eligible voters supported the measure, which was claimed as a victory of the Uruguayan LGBTI+ community (Freire et al. 2020).

action contend that universities, in their attempt to revert centuries of discrimination, are now discriminating against qualified candidates from other races and ethnicities—reigniting debates about meritocracy and diversity (Lemann 2021). But even among supporters the quotas can be contentious. In the United States, many evaluate these measures as insufficient—as actions that hardly recompense the historical debt owed to black people in their country, or as tactics that mostly help universities to whitewash themselves as promoters of diversity (Lemann 2021). As with any policy, quotas will almost always trigger negative reactions by some groups. But countries can put forth campaigns for garnering public support, framing these efforts in terms of justice, equity, and democratization, all of which strengthen the social compact and ultimately contribute to sustainable growth and shared prosperity.[76]

As quotas extend into the future, countries must also be cautious about ending programs abruptly to comply with a given timeline. One important lesson from the United States is that stopping affirmative action measures too soon can have damaging effects and wipe out the gains in racial diversity. At the University of California Berkeley, after the state of California passed an anti-affirmative action bill in 1996, effectively banning these kinds of programs, the number of black students dropped by half during the subsequent five years (Lemann 2021). Though affirmative action is often viewed as a temporary solution, it is crucial to bear in mind that, until the disparities that harm black students in schools and high schools are eradicated, these programs must remain in place. Rather than enforcing rigid time frames, countries can instead adopt other metrics, focused on outcomes, for assessing their success and justifying their continuity—such as admission rates, diversity of student populations, and academic performance of beneficiaries.

76 Regarding quota size, if countries have disaggregated data by race, the percentage of Afro-descendants in the relevant municipality or region could serve as a reference point to determine the number of admission slots that will be reserved for them. But countries can be flexible about determining this figure.

In sum, affirmative action policies are a powerful tool for inclusion when implemented adequately. But countries must avoid seeing them as a magical fix that can easily undo the racial gaps of higher education. Quotas need to be considered within other long-term structural strategies that are sensitive to the cumulative disadvantages faced by Afro-descendants from the day they are born.

Invest in Ethnoracial Inclusion in the Job Market and Support Continuing Education for Afro-descendants

A main finding of this report is that, even when Afro-descendants overcome the many obstacles that prevent them from completing primary or secondary education, and even if they graduate from college, they consistently have lower returns to their educational investments in the labor market. In other words, they systematically earn lower wages than their white and mestizo counterparts, even when holding the same qualifications and doing the same tasks. Afro-descendant workers also confront glass ceilings to career development, which include being segregated into certain lines of work (mostly low paying and with little prospect for professional growth) or the informal sector. Afro-descendants also experience higher-than-average rates of unemployment and underemployment. It is no surprise that Afro-descendant youths are often skeptical of continuing their education, in general, or have problems identifying role models that could boost their intellectual curiosity and help them imagine a future outside the narrow fields that society prescribes for them, such as sports or the performing arts.

As countries invest in schools, students, and teachers, it is equally important to tackle the detrimental conditions in the job market for ethnoracial minorities. If labor markets remain unchanged, the human capital gains acquired in school will not lead to social mobility. Uruguay implemented quota systems in the public sector as a way of stimulating the recruitment of Afro-descendants into the state, but with limited success, as there were few incentives or

penalties to guarantee their implementation (Freire et al. 2020). Colombia has partnered with the private sector to launch a series of job fairs aimed exclusively at Afro-descendant candidates. Countries can also enact principles of diversity in workplaces to encourage the hiring of personnel from ethnic minorities, and collaborate with job placement agencies or online services to expand outreach to Afro-descendant prospective applicants.

A parallel strategy for strengthening the education–labor market nexus is to support continuing education programs. Until now, the region has prioritized investments and programs (such as scholarships and other benefits) targeted at school-age beneficiaries. However, for many Afro-descendant adults, continuing education or professional and technical instruction might be a more viable path for acquiring new skills that can make them more competitive in the job market. The region could thus broaden these professional training options by opening or expanding training centers, professional schools, or vocational institutions. Such spaces could put forth capacity-building programs specifically designed for Afro-descendants or embrace a teaching approach that is sensitive to ethnoracial inequality. Expanding the options beyond formal education could help persons that, due to their age or life trajectory, never received a primary or secondary degree but are eager to learn new skills and technical knowledge.

Generate Roadmaps for Ethnoracial Policies with Clear Goals, Budgets, and Funding

In the past two decades, the region has made meaningful strides in advancing an antidiscrimination legal agenda, with positive implications for the educational field. Yet, legal reforms must go beyond declarations of intent and lead to concrete actions. For this to happen, programs that target Afro-descendants—across all schooling levels—need to have clear and measurable goals, funding, concrete methodologies, and enforcement mechanisms. In fact, the modest results stemming from the current matrix of policies can be partially attributed to their unsystematic nature. The

absence of conditionalities, accountability mechanisms, incentives, or noncompliance sanctions frequently turns ethnoracial policies into something optional or inconsequential. One example is Brazil's landmark legislation on Afro-descendant education (Law 10.639/2003). While this law stipulated operational guidelines and specific goals, it was never accompanied by proper enforcement mechanisms. Hence, there were minimal or no consequences for those that did not abide by the law (Gomes and de Jesus 2013).

In a similar vein, the region must allocate sufficient funds and resources for ongoing and new initiatives. Even though education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean are already financially constrained, countries must make their best efforts to allocate financial resources that protect their sustainability. This entails funding bureaucracies that oversee and implement these efforts with stable specific budget lines. This is especially true for programs that are delivering good results, such as quota systems. As discussed above, rather than viewing these initiatives as temporary, they must be target driven, allowing sufficient time for institutions and people to adapt to a new way of thinking of and organizing social outcomes related to ethnoracial inclusion.

Countries must also engage in open conversations around their current structure of programs and the potential changes that can be made to enhance their reach and effectiveness. Very often, interventions on ethnoracial inclusion do not need substantial government spending, but rather small modifications to or changes in the scope of preexisting programs. A helpful tool that can guide these internal dialogues is the Social Inclusion Assessment Tool—an assessment proposed by the World Bank to determine the degree to which social inclusion is a priority in each policy or program design. This tool can be tailored to make it relevant to issues of ethnoracial inclusion in education (box 4.2).

Box 4.2

Social Inclusion Assessment Tool for Ethnoracial Inclusion in Education

The World Bank's Social Inclusion Assessment Tool considers four general questions that can be flexibly framed to assess actions that aim to include Afro-descendants in school:

1. **Are ethnoracial minorities identified?** Are the responsible entities or policies asking why Afro-descendants or other groups are overrepresented among those excluded from school? Do they provide historical or structural reasons to account for such patterns?

2. **Is there ex ante analysis on social inclusion?** Is the program or policy aware of the drivers of exclusion of vulnerable minorities? Has the program reflected on the processes and dynamics that cause or aggravate the exclusion of Afro-descendants from school?

3. **Are there actions intended to advance social inclusion?** Are there actions tailored to respond to the analysis of the drivers behind exclusion? Are there changes in budgets or staff in response to such analysis?

4. **Are there indicators to monitor social inclusion?** How can we know if there was any progress? In projects, does the results framework contain indicators that measure the outcomes for vulnerable minorities?

Through these four sets of questions, governments can have a quick and general understanding of whether selected programs are, in fact, designed and implemented in ways that target excluded minorities. Assessing if programs in education are sensitive to ethnoracial issues could lay the groundwork for future interventions or efforts to revamp existing programs.

In sum, policies adopted dogmatically almost always yield poor results, either because they fail to make the right connections or do not consider the multiple layers of exclusion that hold back vulnerable minorities. To avoid this, countries must generate a robust diagnosis of their programs on ethnoracial inclusion in education. This will undoubtedly shed light on the way forward.

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APPENDIX A
NOTES ON SOURCES AND METHODOLOGIES

The quantitative analysis is based on the latest harmonized household survey data available from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay. These were the only countries in the World Bank data set with sufficiently robust data for ethnoracial disaggregation. These data were harmonized for comparison by the Socio-Economic Database for Latin America and the Caribbean—SEDLAC (World Bank and CEDLAS), but the calculations and regressions are the sole responsibility of the authors.

SEDLAC is a database of harmonized socioeconomic statistics constructed from Latin America and the Caribbean household surveys. The SEDLAC database and project was jointly developed and is jointly maintained by CEDLAS (Universidad Nacional de La Plata) and the World Bank's Latin America and the Caribbean Team for Statistical Development in the Poverty and Equity Global Practice. SEDLAC includes information from over 300 household surveys carried out primarily in 18 Latin America and the Caribbean countries for which a comparable income aggregate (for welfare analysis) can be created: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

The harmonization project includes a categorical ethnicity variable for each country when it is possible to classify individuals by ethnic groups in the household survey. Still, it does not mean the data are representative of those populations. The harmonized ethnicity variable, named "raza", contains four major ethnic groups in Latin America and the Caribbean: (1) indigenous peoples; (2) Afro-descendants; (3) Afro-descendants and indigenous; and (4) everybody else. This report focuses on group (2), Afro-descendants, and group (4), everybody else, and, as stated previously, on the countries with sufficiently robust data for ethnoracial disaggregation.

Specific comments on the categories and calculations made throughout the report are presented below:

School attendance

This indicator corresponds to the share of Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants of school age that attend formal school. We present this indicator in three different versions: attendance to a public school and primary and secondary attendance.

We define the latter as follows:

- **Primary:** People ages 6 to 12 years assisting to school with less than primary complete;
- **Secondary:** People ages 13 to 17 years assisting to school with primary complete and secondary incomplete.

We present attendance to primary and secondary by gender only for Afro-descendants, and attendance to a public school by educational level for Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants.

School attainment

This indicator corresponds to the share of Afro-descendants and non-Afro-descendants that achieved primary and above, secondary and above, and tertiary education.

We present this indicator in three different versions, as follows:

- **Primary up:** People ages 15 to 25 years with primary complete and above;
- **Secondary up:** People ages 20 to 35 years with secondary complete and above;
- **Tertiary up:** People ages 25 years and above with tertiary complete.

We present the three indicators for the total of students, by gender, and by urban versus rural.

Probability of completing primary education if a person belongs to an Afro-descendant household

The dependent variable for this regression is an indicator if the individual completed at least primary education. We restricted the universe to people ages 15 to 25 years. The results we present correspond to the coefficient for Afro-descendant. This result controls for gender, marital status, geographic location (rural or urban), and whether the household lives in a low population area.

We estimated the following equation:

$$\text{Primary up}_{ij}=\beta_{1ij}+\beta_{2ij}\,AD_{ij}+\beta_{3ij}\,MA_{ij}+\beta_{4ij}\,UR_{ij}+\beta_{5ij}\,SR_{ij}$$

Where:

i represents **countries**: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay.

j represents **time**: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

AD is an indicator variable for **Afro-descendant individuals** (zero otherwise, excluding IP).

MA is an indicator variable for **married individuals** (zero otherwise).

UR is an indicator variable for individuals living in **urban areas** (zero for rural).

SR is an indicator variable for individuals living in **small regions** (in Colombia it is not possible to identify small regions since the population distributes almost evenly among regions).

Probability of completing secondary education if a person belongs to an Afro-descendant household

The dependent variable for this regression is an indicator if the individual completed at least secondary education. We restricted the universe to people ages 20 to 35 years. The results we present correspond to the coefficient for Afro-descendant. This result controls for gender, marital status, geographic location (rural or urban), and whether the household lives in a low population area.

We estimated the following equation:

$$\text{Secondary up}_{ij}=\beta_{1ij}+\beta_{2ij}\,AD_{ij}+\beta_{3ij}\,MA_{ij}+\beta_{4ij}\,UR_{ij}+\beta_{5ij}\,SR_{ij}$$

Where:

i represents **countries**: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay.

j represents **time**: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

AD is an indicator variable for **Afro-descendant individuals** (zero otherwise, excluding IP).

MA is an indicator variable for **married individuals** (zero otherwise).

UR is an indicator variable for individuals living in **urban areas** (zero for rural).

SR is an indicator variable for individuals living in **small regions** (in Colombia it is not possible to identify small regions since the population distributes almost evenly among regions).

Afro-descendant share of population versus Afro-descendant share of population with a tertiary degree

This section compares two different indicators: the Afro-descendant share of the population ages 25 years and above, and the Afro-descendant share of the population ages 25 years and above with a tertiary degree. We present these indicators for the total population, by gender, and by urban versus rural.

Digital gap

Access to computer and internet service in the household

ACCESS TO COMPUTER

This indicator corresponds to the share of Afro-descendant and non-Afro-descendant students with a computer at home.

We present the indicator for two educational levels, defined as follows:

- **Primary:** People ages 6 to 12 years assisting to school with less than primary complete;
- **Secondary:** People ages 13 to 17 years assisting to school with primary complete and secondary incomplete.

INTERNET

This indicator corresponds to the share of Afro-descendant and non-Afro-descendant students with internet service at home.

We present the indicator for two educational levels, defined as follows:

- **Primary:** People ages 6 to 12 years assisting to school with less than primary complete;
- **Secondary:** People ages 13 to 17 years assisting to school with primary complete and secondary incomplete.

COMPUTER AND INTERNET

This indicator corresponds to the share of Afro-descendant and non-Afro-descendant students with access to a computer and internet service at home.

We present the indicator for two educational levels, defined as follows:

- **Primary:** People ages 6 to 12 years assisting to school with less than primary complete;
- **Secondary:** People ages 13 to 17 years assisting to school with primary complete and secondary incomplete.

Returns by educational levels

For this indicator, we ran two sets of simple linear regressions of total labor income in 2011 PPP US dollars. The first set of regression is for Afro-descendant people, and the second set is for Non-Afro-descendants. We included the following variables in the estimation as explanatory variables:

- Binary of complete primary
- Binary of complete secondary

- Binary of complete tertiary
- Omitted: Binary of non-education
- Binary of gender (male = 1)
- Binary of area of residency (urban = 1)
- Region fixed effects
- Age range fixed effects

We restricted this indicator to people ages 15 to 65 years, and we present the coefficient obtained for three educational levels, defined as follows:

- **Primary:** People with primary complete and some secondary;
- **Secondary:** People with secondary complete and some tertiary;
- **Tertiary:** People with a tertiary degree.

Informal employees with tertiary education

This indicator corresponds to the share of Afro-descendant and non-Afro-descendant employees with a tertiary degree and with an informal job. In this case, we use the definition of informality linked to job benefits. We define as informal those who do not receive retirement benefits, health insurance, end-of-year bonus, and paid vacations. We exclude government employees from this definition. We present this indicator for the universe of employees and by gender.

Employees wishing for another job or to work more hours

This indicator corresponds to the share of Afro-descendant and non-Afro-descendant employees who express either a wish for having another job or for working more hours per week in the current job or another job.

APPENDIX B
LIST OF BOOKS ANALYZED IN CHAPTER 2

Country	Subject	Book	Publisher	Year of publication	Nº of pages analyzed	School year
Brazil	Portuguese Language	Se liga na lengua	Editorial Moderna	2016	91	9th of primary
		Se liga na lengua	Editorial Moderna	2016	180	3rd of secondary
	History	Historia	Editora FTD	2018	228	9th of primary
		Historia	Saraiva	2016	96	3rd of secondary
Colombia	Language	Lenguaje 6. Libro del estudiante	Ministerio de Educación Nacional – Editorial SM	2017	208	6th grade
		Lenguaje	Secundaria Activa – Ministerio de Educación Nacional	2012	303	9th grade
	History	Ciencias sociales 5. I y II	Escuela Nueva Ministerio de Educación Nacional	2011	112+112	5th grade
		Los caminos del Saber. Sociales. 10	Ed. Santillana, Colombia	2013	224	10th grade
Costa Rica	Language	Español 5	Publicaciones Porrás	2019	144	5th, second cycle of primary
		Español Comunicación y comprensión lectora	Publicaciones Porrás	2020	240	10th diversified education (secondary)
	History	Estudios sociales 6	Publicaciones Porrás	2018	152	6th, second cycle of primary
		Estudios sociales 11	Publicaciones Porrás	2018	200	11th diversified education (secondary)
Ecuador	Language	Lengua y literatura	Ministerio de Educación	2013	129	6th grade basic education
		Lengua y literatura	Ministerio de Educación	2013	241	10th grade basic education
	History	Estudios sociales	Ministerio de Educación	2016	145	6th grade
		Estudios sociales	Ministerio de Educación	2016	225	10th grade

Country	Subject	Book	Publisher	Year of publication	N° of pages analyzed	School year
Honduras	Language	Español 3. Libro de lectura	Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM) – Secretaría de Educación	2017	204	3rd grade I cycle
		Español 7. Libro del estudiante	UPNFM – Secretaría de Educación	2017	162	7th grade III cycle (sec.)
	History	Ciencias sociales 3	UPNFM – Secretaría de Educación	2020	176	3rd grade I cycle
		Ciencias sociales 7	UPNFM – Secretaría de Educación	2020	248	7th grade III cycle (sec.)
Mexico	Language	Español	Dirección General de Materiales Educativos de la Secretaría de Educación Pública	2019	178	5th grade of primary
		Español 3	Larousse	2017	271	3rd year of secondary
	History	Historia	Dirección General de Materiales Educativos de la Secretaría de Educación Pública	2019	190	5th grade of primary
		Historia II	Larousse	2017	271	3rd year of secondary
Nicaragua	Language	Lengua y literatura 4	Ministerio de Educación	3rd edition 2014	208	4th grade
		Lengua y literatura	Ministerio de Educación	1st edition No date	232	7th grade
	History	Estudios sociales	Ministerio de Educación	3rd editio 2014	216	4th grade
		Ciencias sociales	Ministerio de Educación	1st edition No date	280	7th grade

Country	Subject	Book	Publisher	Year of publication	Nº of pages analyzed	School year
Peru	Language	Mundo de palabras. Comunicación 4	Editorial COREFO	2011	279	4th of primary
		Comunicación I. Libro de área comunicación	Editorial COREFO	2016	183	1st of secondary
	History	Personal social y ciencia y ambiente	Santillana Perú	No date	167	2nd of primary
		Historia, geografía y economía 5 secundaria Texto escolar	Santillana	2015	319	5th of secondary
Uruguay	Language	Cuaderno para leer y escribir en quinto	Consejo de Educación Inicial y Primaria	2016	43	5th grade of primary
		Español 3: Las palabras en juego	Santillana	2010	29	3rd of the basic cycle
	History	Mundo, América y Uruguay, del s. XV al XIX	Santillana	2015	144	2nd of the basic cycle
		Mundo, América y Uruguay, (1850-2010)	Santillana	2016	268	3rd of the basic cycle
Venezuela	Language	El cardenalito. Lengua y literatura	Editorial Escuela. Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación	4th edition 2014	194	6th grade
		Ideario en palabras. Lengua y literatura	Editorial Escuela. Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación	4th edition 2014	267	2nd year
	History	Venezuela y su gente. Ciencias sociales	Editorial Escuela. Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación	4th edition 2014	178	6th grade
		Nuestra historia republicana. Ciencias sociales	Editorial Escuela. Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación	3rd edition 2014	226	2nd year


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