

Voter turnout of Amazon natives in municipal and regional elections 2010

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Native voter turnout is relatively recent in Peru. Since 1983 Peru's Amazonian natives have been participating in municipal elections, and since 2002 law has required mandatory participation fees by natives in the electoral lists in towns with native population. This research has sought to systematize the present information on the native voter turnout since 1983, but especially during elections of 2010.

The first elections in which natives took part, both voters and candidates, are those that took place in 1983, after the Constitution of 1979 ratifies the voting rights of the illiterate. Between 1983 and 2010, 9 elections were held and a hundred native mayors were elected, both in districts and provinces. This number seems quite high, but actually, the average elected mayors in every election would be between 10 and 12, which is a very low number of native authorities if it is considered that native people represent the majority in 23 districts of the Peruvian Amazon.

The elections of 2010 confirmed this trend, since native candidates have been selected in 10 districts and 1 province; although it seems the number of native candidates has increased. For this election, there have been native candidates for the post of mayor in 31 districts of 106 districts with a native population where district mayors are elected. However, the 21 electoral districts with a majority native population, native candidates have been only selected in 9 of them.

The last elections as well as the history of voter turnout and district and municipal native authorities in the Peruvian Amazon show a growing interest among Amazon natives in this political participation, although there are still important sectors of the native population that distrust this system. Do not forget that electoral politics is just one of many possible ways that Amazon natives live and express their political life.

At the same time, an important sector of the native population is inclined to the pursuit of its own political parties or movements that express its interests. In several regions and provinces, this search has led to the creation of local native lists or alliances with regional movements.

Finally, we must add that current law is not in favor of native population. Moreover, in recent years, Peru has lagged behind in terms of legislation and public policies for native peoples, unlike other states, substantive reforms are not being discussed to ensure real opportunities for self-government and native representatives at local, regional and national levels.