

Chiapas by Numbers 1

Lesson Plan

Ages: 14+

Lesson objectives: To give participants background information about the history and current status of Chiapas and indigenous people in Mexico.

Learning outcomes: Participants will be familiar with some key facts and figures about Chiapas and Mexico.

Procedure: Participants are presented with five statements about Chiapas which they discuss and decide if they are true or false. They are asked to simply guess the answers based on what they think, rather than use the internet if they have access. The facilitator then gets feedback, provides the correct answer, and provides more information on each topic (see Facilitator's notes). They can then do a WebQuest to find out more about the topics covered if they have internet access.

Materials: Handout and/or slideshow.

Duration: 45 – 60 minutes.

Materials

Read the following statements and decide as a group if they are true or false.

1. At the start of the nineteenth century, Chiapas wasn't part of Mexico. **T/F**
 2. Chiapas is the richest state of Mexico. **T/F**
 3. The level of illiteracy in Chiapas is 36% of the population. **T/F**
 4. Half of the population of Mexico is indigenous. **T/F**
 5. Half of the population of Chiapas speaks an indigenous language. **T/F**
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Facilitator's notes:

- 1. True.** It was originally part of Guatemala. When Spain recognised the independence of Mexico in 1821, Chiapas declared independence from both Spain and Guatemala and sought integration with Mexico. The oligarchy wanted to better protect its interests in doing so. It joined the Mexican alliance in 1824 and became fully integrated in 1841.
- 2. False.** Although rich in natural resources, Chiapas is the poorest state in Mexico.
- 3. False.** The level of illiteracy is officially 18% (compared with the national average of 7%). Levels of illiteracy are probably somewhat higher and higher still for indigenous languages.
- 4. False.** Some 19 million people in Mexico are indigenous, representing about 15% of the population. The number of indigenous people is probably higher as many people do not declare themselves indigenous due to stigma and discrimination.
- 5. False.** According to the national census, about one and a half million people speak an indigenous language in Chiapas, some 28% of the population. A similar percentage of the population is indigenous, making it the state with the third highest proportion of indigenous people. In some regions of Chiapas the indigenous population is as high as 80%. It is lower in cities like Tuxtla Gutierrez, the state capital, which contains about a quarter of the total population of the state. The most spoken languages are Tseltal and Tsotsil.