

Chiapas by Numbers 2

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. Chiapas is one of the states in Mexico with the highest levels of vaccination against COVID-19. **T/F**
 2. Chiapas is one of the states most affected by migration. **T/F**
 3. Chiapas is not really affected by environmental problems because many people vote for the Green Ecologist Party. **T/F**
 4. Paramilitary groups in Chiapas have links to organized crime/narcos. **T/F**
 5. The vast majority of indigenous people in Chiapas is Catholic. **T/F**
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Facilitator's notes:

- 1. False.** Chiapas is the state in Mexico with the third lowest level of vaccination against COVID-19. The true extent of the effects of the pandemic will never be known as there was little or no testing and tracking at the time. Mexico never closed its borders and this meant that Chiapas in particular experienced a tourism boom at a time when many other countries were in lockdown. Distrust of government resulted in many people rejecting vaccination, which was provided free of charge. Some 30% of the population received the first dose.
- 2. True.** Chiapas experiences migration on four different levels. The drift from the land has seen a huge increase in internal migration and the number of indigenous people moving to live in the cities. There is also overseas migration, especially to the USA for work in agriculture and construction. Traditional, seasonal migration sees an influx of migrant workers from Guatemala, especially for coffee harvests. More recently, Chiapas has seen a boom in international migration from Latin America, Africa and Asia. Although Donald Trump never finished his wall in the north of the country, the government of López Obrador heavily militarized the southern border, resulting in an increase of illegal trafficking of persons in the state.
- 3. False.** Although the Green Ecologist Party is one of the most popular in the state, it has no links to the international Green movement and very little or no interest in environmental issues. On the contrary, it has strong links to organized crime, which, among other activities, is involved in illegal logging.
- 4. True.** This has given rise to the phenomenon of narco-paramilitaries. Chiapas has witnessed a huge increase in the presence of organized crime in recent years. Among other factors, this partly due to the battle for control of migrant routes and people trafficking, a business as lucrative as drugs. The organized crime groups found ready-to-use recruits who were organized, armed and trained as part of the counterinsurgency in response to the Zapatista uprising of 1994.
- 5. False.** Some 60% of indigenous peoples in Chiapas currently belong to evangelical churches and the number is growing. The Catholic Church, under the direction of Archbishop Samuel Ruíz, traditionally promoted indigenous culture together with liberation theology. This was one of the key factors in the development of the Zapatista movement. The political outlook of the evangelical churches contrasts greatly with this approach and they are often funded and promoted by ultra-right, conservative elements in the USA.