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Affirmative action around the world: insights from a new dataset

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Abstract: Affirmative action, or positive discrimination favouring the members of marginalized populations, is a key policy approach for addressing group-based inequalities along ethnic, religious, and racial lines (e.g. horizontal inequalities). It is adopted in dozens of countries around the world in the areas of, for instance, university enrolment, public employment, and political representation as corrective social justice measures and means to mitigate ethnic conflict. Public debate over affirmative action is heated in many contexts, underscoring both potential benefits— for correcting historical injustices, supporting marginalized groups, and promoting equality—and potential harms, especially in terms of perceptions of fairness and societal conflict. In order to better evaluate such claims and to consider the appropriateness of affirmative action policies across diverse contexts, further information about these policies is needed. Although there is a large research literature on affirmative action, much of it focuses on a limited number of countries. This paper introduces a new Affirmative Action (AA) Dataset which speaks to this research gap. It provides detailed information in a standardized format on the design and modalities of AA policies, as well as on their adoption, implementation, and impact, and on associated controversies. The AA Dataset can thus be used to provide a systematic description of policies and, together with other cross-country datasets, to situate and examine these experiences comparatively, including in regional and global perspectives. Version 1, discussed in this paper, covers 53 countries.

Key words: affirmative action, positive discrimination, horizontal inequality, ethnic groups, ethnic conflict, race, social justice

JEL classification: I38, J5, J15, Z13

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1   Introduction

Group-based inequality and exclusion are core global challenges (UNDP 2011, 2013; United Nations and World Bank 2018). One key policy approach to promoting greater equality between groups is affirmative action, or positive discrimination favouring the members of marginalized populations in, for instance, university enrolment, public employment, and political representation. Public debate over affirmative action points to both its potential benefits—for correcting historical injustices, supporting marginalized groups, and promoting equality—and its potential harms, especially in terms of perceptions of fairness and societal conflict.

Although there is a large research literature on affirmative action, much of it focuses on a small subset of country programmes (e.g., Arcidiacono et al. 2011; Bagde et al. 2016; Gulzar et al. 2020; Kerr et al. 2017; Prakash 2020; Valente and Berry 2017). In particular, much of what we know about affirmative action is based on the experiences of the United States and India, and to a lesser extent Brazil, Malaysia, and South Africa (see Schotte et al. 2023). While affirmative action policies are found in dozens of countries around the world, the literature to date does not provide a comprehensive view of the universe of cases. This is true even in comparative studies based on considerations of diverse country experiences (Brown et al. 2012; Gomez and Premdas 2012; Lee 2020; Sowell 2004).

While much can be learned from case studies, they alone cannot provide insight into the generalizability of their findings (see King et al. 1994). Without a stronger sense of the universe of cases, we do not know whether particular country experiences are typical or unusual, much less whether they have any leverage on explaining the ways in which macrostructural, institutional, and other factors may critically influence the adoption, implementation, and impact of affirmative action across diverse contexts. This gap in the literature thus has implications for the rigour with which we can build and test theories, evaluate interventions, and inform policy.

The Affirmative Action Dataset speaks to this research gap and builds comparative knowledge on affirmative action (AA) policies around the world. It provides detailed information in a standardized format on the design and modalities of AA policies, as well as on their adoption, implementation, and impact. The AA Dataset can thus be used to provide a systematic description of policies and, together with other cross-country datasets, to situate and examine these experiences comparatively, including in regional and global perspectives. Version 1, discussed in this paper, covers 53 countries based on a review and analysis of material by at least two coders per country. In addition to the dataset, country factsheets explaining the data coding and providing additional context information have been prepared. In Version 2, coverage will be expanded and an additional review of coding will be undertaken.

This paper introduces the dataset and describes key findings based on an analysis of Version 1. As discussed below, the 53 countries included in Version 1 were selected as the countries most likely, according to the existing literature, to have some form of AA policies. They thus offer a useful snapshot of the different types of AA policies implemented around the world. As Version 1 does not provide focused coverage of countries without AA policies, it is not used here to consider how the experiences of countries with and without AA policies compare, which is a useful topic for future research.

The remainder of this paper introduces the dataset and summarizes key descriptive insights based on Version 1. Section 2 provides a short overview of the research methodology, including the scope, information sources, coding strategy, and country coverage. Section 3 presents the data at

the policy domain level. Section 4 provides a short overview of the factors influencing policy adoption, amendment, and termination, while Section 5 discusses common controversies that have been coded at the country level, and presents a snapshot of coded evaluation assessments by policy domain. Section 6 presents a set of preliminary conclusions. More detailed information about the Codebook is provided in the Appendix.

2 Research methodology

This section offers an overview of the research methodology used. We discuss the scope and inclusion criteria, the literature search, data extraction, and coding strategy, and the timing and country coverage.

2.1 Inclusion criteria

The dataset captures AA policies implemented as a corrective policy measure to increase the representation of historically marginalized, ethnically defined groups. AA policies provide special opportunities and active support to those who have been historically marginalized, and are to be distinguished from anti-discrimination measures that intend to give all citizens the same opportunity to thrive. Although some policies were adopted and implemented by subnational actors in some localities within one country, our focus in this project is on national-level policies operating at scale to enable cross-national comparison. The data thereby exclude initiatives undertaken by non-governmental actors at programme or project level.

Specifically, the following inclusion criteria for AA policies were defined:

(i)   Anchored in the constitution or national/federal law;
(ii)   Targeting a nationally recognized ethnopolitical group—broadly defined by 'culture', ethnicity, race, language, religion, or caste;
(iii)   Active in 2000 or implemented between 2000 and 2021.

2.2 Literature review, data extraction, and coding

The information for this dataset has been extracted using a combination of different information sources, ranging from government documents and scholarly articles to media reports. As much as possible, highly trained coders relied on multiple sources for each code assigned. Country factsheets were used to summarize and document the information for all country cases for which ethnic AA policies had been identified. In addition, each data section includes several string variables that document the main sources of information underlying the coding. The factsheets and source variables are intended to increase transparency and make information easier to verify for dataset users.

This project was conducted over a period of 17 months between September 2021 and February 2023. During the preparatory phase, between September and October 2021, initial versions of the coding frame, coding manual, and factsheet template were developed and modified. This phase also included the onboarding and training of research assistants, who were responsible for the initial coding of information, which was subsequently checked by the project's lead investigators.

Table 1 presents the data structure of the dataset. The unit of observation is the country, and detailed information is provided by the policy domain in which the AA policies are adopted, including the following five categories: (i) education, (ii) public sector employment, (iii) private sector employment, (iv) political representation, and (v) other.

Table 1: Data structure

Section	Description	Variables	Total no. variables
Roster	Country list (incl. identifiers to merge data with other sources).	Identifier (6); Region (4); Income/ Development Status (7); Population (3); Ethnic Fractionalization (1); Data Monitoring (6)	27
AA	General (country-level) information on AA policies	General (8); Origins (10); Controversy (29)	47
AA_EDU	Information on AA policies in education	General (3); Target Group (7); Origins (1); Amendment (16); Termination (14); Evaluation (13)	54
AA_EMP	Information on AA policies in public employment	General (3); Target Group (7); Origins (1); Amendment (16); Termination (14); Evaluation (13)	54
AA_EMP	Information on AA policies in private-sector employment/business	General (3); Target Group (7); Origins (1); Amendment (16); Termination (14); Evaluation (13)	54
AA_POL	Information on AA policies in political representation	General (3); Target Group (7); Origins (1); Amendment (16); Termination (14); Evaluation (13)	54
AA_OTH	Information on AA policies in other policy domains	General (3); Target Group (7); Origins (1); Amendment (16); Termination (14); Evaluation (13)	54
AA_policies	Detailed information on up to three AA policies (based on legislative documents)	Policy 1 (20); Policy 2 (20); Policy 3 (20)	60
No AA	Abridged information on countries with no detected AA policy	General (9)	9
TOTAL			413

Source: authors' elaboration.

2.3 Timing and country coverage

The coding of country cases was rolled out following a three-stage priority list, as described below. The sample covers 53 countries across the globe that in 2000 were administered by a sovereign state with a minimum population of 500,000.

Priority 1

During the pilot phase, between November 2021 and January 2022, information for the first 10 countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, and the United States) was researched and coded (see Figure 1 and Table 2). In this phase, the data coding frame and factsheet template underwent several rounds of revisions as part of the process. The 10 pilot countries were strategically selected from the pool of cases commonly studied in the AA literature. The focus was set on countries with overall higher-than-average levels of ethnic fractionalization that had ethnic AA policies.[1] Furthermore, the intention was to provide wide coverage of different world regions, income levels, and ethnic group criteria (covering groups defined by race, indigeneity, ethno-region, and religion). This was useful for identifying a wide range of variables that capture the dynamics of affirmative action policies in our coding framework.

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[1] The Ethnic Fractionalization Index (EFI) measures the diversity of ethnic groups within a country. The index ranges from 0 to 1, in which 0 represents complete homogeneity and 1 represents complete heterogeneity.

Figure 1: Priority 1 country map
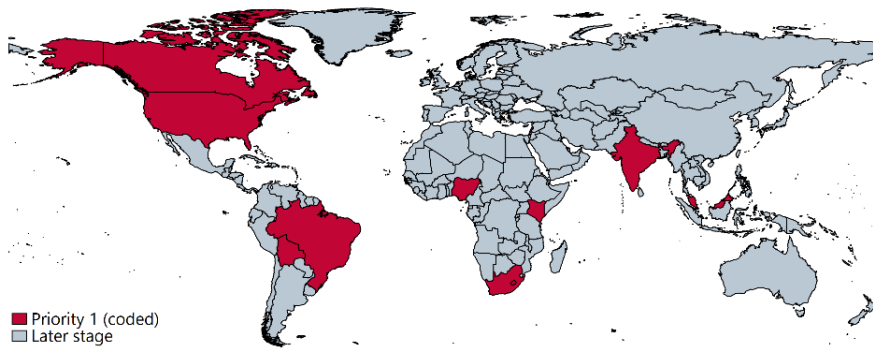
Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 2: Priority 1 country list

No.	Country w/ AA	EFI
1	Bolivia	0.58
2	Brazil	0.56
3	Canada	0.71
4	India	0.42
5	Kenya	0.86
6	Lebanon	0.13
7	Malaysia	0.59
8	Nigeria	0.85
9	South Africa	0.86
10	United States	0.44
	Average	**0.60**

Source: authors' elaboration.

Priority 2

We added 20 cases between February and May 2022 (see Figure 2 and Table 3). In this phase, we also included the United Kingdom as the first case in the dataset that consciously refrains from the use of AA to address horizontal ethnic inequalities, instead opting for equal opportunity measures. The focus was set on countries that have been commonly studied in the AA literature so that the research team could benefit from a wide array of data sources to capture the varying dimensions of AA.

Figure 2: Priority 1 and 2 country map
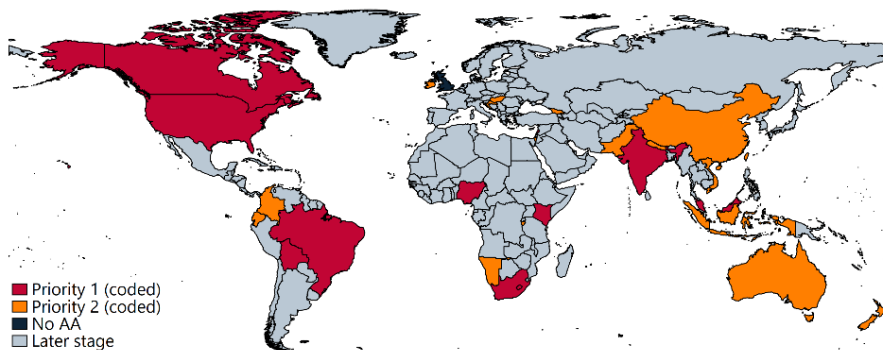
Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 3: Priority 2 country list

No.	Country w/ AA	EFI
11	Australia	0.16
12	Burundi	0.30
13	China	0.16
14	Colombia	0.65
15	Croatia	0.25
16	Ecuador	0.59
17	Fiji	0.55
18	Georgia	0.45
19	Hungary	0.15
20	Indonesia	0.79
21	Ireland	0.14
22	Israel	0.33
23	Namibia	0.74
24	Nepal	0.84
25	New Zealand	0.39
26	Pakistan	0.71
27	Singapore	0.39
28	Taiwan	0.32
29	Viet Nam	0.26
	Average	**0.43**

No.	Country w/o AA	EFI
30	UK	0.36

Source: authors' elaboration.

Priority 3

Between June and September 2022, the dataset was further extended, and the coding was refined, by incorporating 23 additional cases (see Figure 3 and Table 4). We included a mix of cases with ethnic AA policies in place and countries that refrain from the use of AA in managing ethnic horizontal inequalities. The inclusion of non-AA cases enabled us to further refine the coding criteria and procedure.

Figure 3: Priority 1, 2, and 3 country map
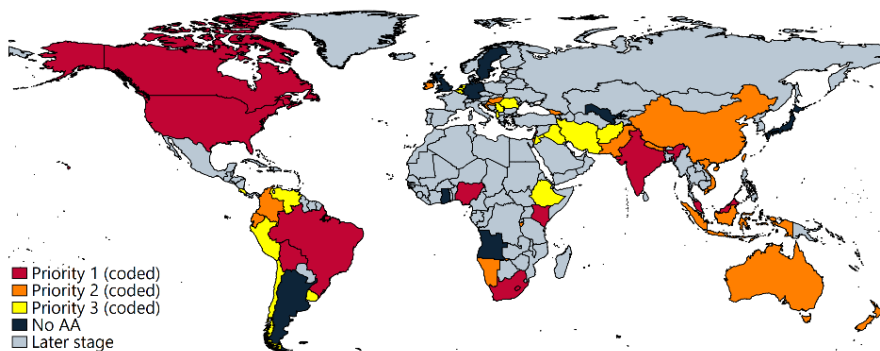
Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 4: Priority 3 country list

No.	Country w/ AA	EFI
31	Afghanistan	0.73
32	Albania	0.12
33	Belgium	0.58
34	Chile	0.46
35	Costa Rica	0.36
36	Ethiopia	0.79
37	Iran	0.74
38	Iraq	0.43
39	Jordan	0.04
40	Mauritius	0.47
41	Netherlands	0.17
42	Peru	0.62
43	Romania	0.20
44	Serbia	0.46
45	Uruguay	0.18
46	Venezuela	0.51
	Average	**0.43**
No.	**Country w/o AA**	**EFI**
47	Angola	0.78
48	Argentina	0.13
49	Germany	0.16
50	Ghana	0.74
51	Japan	0.02
52	Sweden	0.19
53	Uzbekistan	0.40
	Average	**0.34**

Source: authors' elaboration.

3 Data description

This section provides an overview of the country and policy characteristics for the cases included in Version 1 of the AA Dataset.

3.1 Country characteristics

Version 1 of the AA Dataset is global in coverage, including 53 countries spread across all five world regions (Table 5). Countries located in Asia account for the largest share of the AA policies, followed by the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Oceania.

With populous countries such as India and China among the coded countries, the country cases included in Version 1 of the dataset account for 69 per cent of the world population in 2020. The coded countries are spread across different levels of economic and human development, including Burundi and Afghanistan as the world's two poorest countries in 2021, and the United States as one of the world's richest countries measured by per capita Gross National Income (GNI). While the focus in Version 1 is on middle- and high-income countries (accounting for 90 per cent of all country cases), 68 per cent of the covered countries fall within the United Nations' 'developing country' definition, based on their standard of living, industry base, and Human Development Index (HDI) (Table 6 and Table 7).

Table 5: Regional classification

Regional classification	w/ AA		w/o AA		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
TOTAL	45	100%	8	100%	53	100%
Africa	7	16%	2	25%	9	17%
Sub-Saharan Africa	7	16%	2	25%	9	17%
Americas	11	24%	1	13%	12	23%
Latin America and the Caribbean	9	20%	1	13%	10	19%
Northern America	2	4%			2	4%
Asia	16	36%	2	25%	18	34%
Central Asia	0	0%	1	13%	1	2%
Eastern Asia	2	4%	1	13%	3	6%
South-eastern Asia	4	9%			4	8%
Southern Asia	5	11%			5	9%
Western Asia	5	11%			5	9%
Europe	8	18%	3	38%	11	21%
Eastern Europe	2	4%			2	4%
Northern Europe	1	2%	2	25%	3	6%
Southern Europe	3	7%			3	6%
Western Europe	2	4%	1	13%	3	6%
Oceania	3	7%			3	6%
Australia and New Zealand	2	4%			2	4%
Melanesia	1	2%			1	2%

Source: authors' elaboration based on UN regional classification.

Table 6: Development-level classification

Development-level classification		w/ AA		w/o AA		TOTAL	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	TOTAL	45	100%	8	100%	53	100%
World Bank	High income	13	29%	5	63%	18	34%
	Upper-middle income	19	42%			19	36%
	Lower-middle income	8	18%	3	38%	11	21%
	Low income	4	9%			4	8%
	Unclassified	1	2%			1	2%
UN	Least developed countries (LDC)	4	9%	1	13%	5	9%
	Land-locked developing countries (LLDC)	5	11%	1	13%	6	11%
	Small island developing states (SIDS)	3	7%			3	6%
	Developing countries	31	69%	4	50%	36	68%
OECD membership		12	27%	4	50%	16	30%

Source: authors' elaboration based on World Bank and UN classifications.

Table 7: Socio-economic indicators

Indicator	Coded countries w/ AA				World			
	No.	Mean	Min.	Max.	No.	Mean	Min.	Max.
Population 2020 (million)	45	110.8	0.9	1439.3	239	32.8	0.8	1439.3
GNI per capita 2021 (current US$)	44	17,169	220	76,110	255	15,739	220	122,470
Poverty headcount at $2.15 a day (2017 PPP) (%)	41	6.6	0.0	65.1	168	12.0	0.0	82.2
Poverty gap at $2.15 a day (2017 PPP) (%)	41	2.2	0.0	25.2	168	4.4	0.0	42.6
Income share held by poorest 40%	40	17.7	7.2	23.2	156	18.1	7.2	24.9
Income share held by richest 10%	40	29.8	22.2	50.5	156	29.2	18.8	50.5
Income share held by richest 1%	43	16.2	6.9	27.1	173	16.0	6.5	31.1
Gini index	41	38.3	27.2	63.0	168	37.6	23.2	63.0
Human Development Index (HDI)	44	0.76	0.43	0.95	191	0.72	0.39	0.96
Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)	40	0.64	0.30	0.89	156	0.60	0.24	0.92
Coefficient of human inequality	40	16.3	6.2	36.0	156	18.2	4.4	43.1
Inequality in education	44	15.5	1.8	45.4	176	18.0	0.6	50.1
Population aged 15+ with completed tertiary schooling (%)	40	9.6	0.3	29.7	144	8.1	0.0	30.0
EFindex	45	0.47	0.04	0.86	159	0.45	0.01	0.89
V-Dem electoral democracy index	45	0.57	0.08	0.90	179	0.51	0.02	0.91
V-Dem liberal democracy index	45	0.46	0.02	0.85	179	0.39	0.01	0.88
V-Dem participatory democracy index	45	0.38	0.04	0.69	179	0.33	0.01	0.79
V-Dem deliberative democracy index	45	0.45	0.04	0.85	179	0.39	0.01	0.87
V-Dem egalitarian democracy index	45	0.42	0.08	0.81	179	0.38	0.03	0.87
V-Dem clean elections index	45	0.63	0.00	0.97	179	0.53	0.00	0.97
V-Dem equality before the law and individual liberty index	45	0.73	0.14	0.98	179	0.66	0.01	0.99

Note: latest available data (various years) unless otherwise specified.

Source: authors' elaboration based on World Development Indicators (World Bank 2023); UN World Population Prospects 2020 (UN 2019); UN inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (HDI) Dataset (UN 2023); Dataset of Educational Attainment (Barro and Lee 2018); Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (EFIndex) (Drazanova 2019); V-Dem Dataset (Coppedge et al. 2023).

Our initial analysis of Version 1 provides several interesting and counterintuitive findings. While our focus in this study is on AA policies that have been adopted to address horizontal inequalities between ethnic groups, it is interesting to see that the countries with AA policies are not necessarily more unequal or more ethnically fractionalized than the world average. Comparing their Gini Index, the income shares held by those at the bottom/top of the national income distribution, and the Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (Drazanova 2019), we find that the average values for the countries with AA policies in place are in a similar range to the world average. These findings suggest that the socioeconomic conditions of ethnic groups and ethnic cleavages of a country alone do not explain the adoption of AA policies. That said, the coefficient of socioeconomic inequality and the level of inequality in education among the coded countries with AA policies in place fall slightly below the world average, and the population share with completed secondary schooling is slightly higher. Whether these patterns reflect a causal link, and whether a higher and less unequal level of education in the population is a driver or result of the adoption of AA policies (or both) are topics for continuing consideration in future versions of the dataset.

Table 8 compares the average characteristics of countries with and without AA by policy domain. To avoid any bias resulting from the small sample of countries without any AA policies in place, here we limit the sample to the set of 45 countries that have adopted AA in at least one domain. While the sample in Version 1 is too small to draw robust conclusions, these patterns may be explored further in future research.

Table 8: Socio-economic indicators, by domain of AA policy adoption

Indicator	AA in education			AA in public employment			AA in private employment			AA in political representation			AA in other domain		
	w/ AA	w/o AA	Diff.	w/ AA	w/o AA	Diff.	w/ AA	w/o AA	Diff.	w/ AA	w/o AA	Diff.	w/ AA	w/o AA	Diff.
GNI per capita 2021 (current US$)	14,439	21,948	-7,509	15,110	20,773	-5,663	25,288	10,999	14289**	13,900	22,889	-8,989	18,567	16,107	2,460
Poverty headcount at $2.15 a day (2017 PPP) (%)	5.57	8.38	-2.807	6.85	6.11	0.738	5.84	7.25	-1.412	7.36	5.42	1.937	2.63	9.41	-6.783*
Gini index	38.77	37.55	1.223	38.28	38.41	-0.129	36.93	39.52	-2.591	36.19	41.65	-5.458**	38.06	38.50	-0.439
Income share held by poorest 40%	17.32	18.29	-0.977	17.56	17.87	-0.314	18.17	17.19	0.983	18.84	15.88	2.960**	17.51	17.77	-0.264
Income share held by richest 10%	30.07	29.20	0.873	29.73	29.84	-0.105	28.68	30.75	-2.063	28.23	32.08	-3.846*	29.31	30.10	-0.793
Income share held by richest 1%	16.06	16.52	-0.455	15.98	16.66	-0.677	13.68	18.07	-4.395***	16.40	15.96	0.442	15.60	16.69	-1.092
Human Development Index (HDI)	0.76	0.75	0.003	0.74	0.78	-0.041	0.81	0.72	.090**	0.73	0.81	-.079*	0.80	0.72	.073*
Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)	0.64	0.64	0.003	0.63	0.67	-0.041	0.71	0.59	.116**	0.62	0.68	-0.062	0.69	0.61	0.081
Coefficient of human inequality	16.43	16.15	0.273	17.19	15.02	2.167	13.15	18.67	-5.513**	16.74	15.62	1.124	13.79	18.20	-4.408*
Inequality in education	15.18	15.97	-0.793	16.13	14.30	1.830	9.71	19.84	-10.125***	18.36	10.39	7.977*	10.80	19.01	-8.212**
Population aged 15+ with completed tertiary schooling (%)	8.49	11.73	-3.233	8.13	12.12	-3.997	10.26	9.05	1.211	9.28	10.20	-0.925	10.67	8.68	1.996
EFindex	0.49	0.44	0.052	0.44	0.52	-0.088	0.37	0.55	-.186***	0.47	0.47	-0.009	0.43	0.50	-0.068
V-Dem electoral democracy index	0.59	0.52	0.068	0.56	0.57	-0.009	0.61	0.53	0.084	0.50	0.68	-.175**	0.57	0.57	-0.003
V-Dem liberal democracy index	0.48	0.41	0.070	0.45	0.47	-0.016	0.52	0.41	0.112	0.39	0.58	-.190**	0.45	0.47	-0.016
V-Dem participatory democracy index	0.41	0.33	0.074	0.38	0.38	0.004	0.43	0.34	0.084	0.33	0.46	-.129**	0.38	0.38	0.004
V-Dem deliberative democracy index	0.46	0.42	0.039	0.43	0.47	-0.036	0.49	0.41	0.088	0.39	0.55	-.165**	0.42	0.47	-0.044
V-Dem egalitarian democracy index	0.43	0.40	0.037	0.41	0.44	-0.027	0.50	0.36	.132**	0.37	0.52	-.153**	0.42	0.43	-0.009
V-Dem clean elections index	0.65	0.58	0.070	0.61	0.65	-0.039	0.68	0.59	0.087	0.57	0.73	-.165*	0.68	0.59	0.083
V-Dem equality before the law and individual liberty index	0.75	0.70	0.056	0.73	0.73	0.004	0.80	0.68	.122*	0.66	0.87	-.211***	0.77	0.70	0.070

Note: latest available data (various years) unless otherwise specified. Sample limited to countries that have AA policies in place in at least one of the policy domains. P-value (*) represents the statistical significance of the difference in means between AA and non-AA cases.

Source: authors' elaboration based on World Development Indicators (World Bank 2023); UN World Population Prospects 2020 (UN 2019); UN inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (HDI) Dataset (UN 2023); Dataset of Educational Attainment (Barro and Lee 2018); Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (EFIndex) (Drazanova 2019); V-Dem Dataset (Coppedge et al. 2023).

Furthermore, we observe that the countries with AA policies in Version 1 perform significantly below the world average in terms of democracy ratings according to the V-Dem Dataset (Table 8). In other words, less democratic countries introduce AA policies more than democratic countries. Yet this finding may be driven by the sample selection in Version 1, and the robustness of this observation remains to be assessed in future versions.

Even though we find no clear link between the assessed county-level characteristics and the adoption of AA policies in education or public sector employment, we do observe some statistically significant patterns in the characteristics of countries that do or do not adopt policies in private sector employment and political representation (Table 8).

Specifically, first, we observe that countries that adopt AA policies in private employment tend to be better off in terms of per capita incomes and human development. At the same time, these countries see a lower concentration of incomes at the very top of the distribution and lower inequality in human development outcomes, particularly in education. While the available data do not allow us to draw any causal conclusions, we may imagine that the adoption of AA in private employment is more politically feasible in country settings where labour market discrimination based on people's ethnic identities occurs more frequently and visibly. In addition, we observe that countries that adopt AA measures in the private sector score higher on the V-Dem 'egalitarian democracy' and 'equality before the law and individual liberty' indices.

Second, according to Version 1, countries that adopt AA in political representation tend to have a less unequal distribution of incomes than those without such policies in place. At the same time, the average development outcomes are slightly lower and, most remarkably, the distribution of education tends to be much more unequal. The last finding may reflect discrepancies in opportunities to attain positions of political influence. At the same time, it is important to remember that these policies are often adopted to ensure the representation of national minority groups, which are not adequately reflected in national average statistics.

3.2   Policy characteristics

Education

AA policies in the area of education are relatively common according to our data, being identified in 29 out of the 45 coded country cases that have some type of AA policy in place (Figure 4 and Table 9). These policies generally grant ethnically marginalized applicants preferential access to (public) universities and colleges, often by specifying admission quotas, awarding additional points in examinations, or lowering entrance thresholds. Examples are racial quotas for people of African descent in Latin America (Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Uruguay) and ethno-regional quotas in Afghanistan, Kenya, Nigeria, and Pakistan. However, there are also AAs in education that are not based on 'strong' preferences in admission but on 'soft' measures such as scholarships and financial aid for indigenous people in Australia, Canada, Chile, Fiji, Indonesia, and Taiwan.

Figure 4: AA in education country map
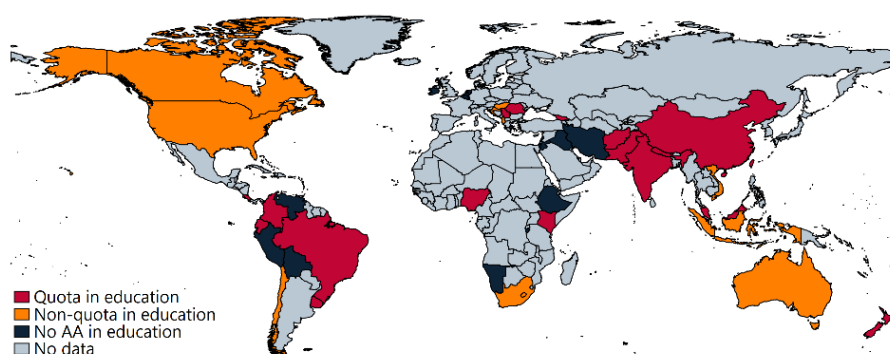
Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 9: AA in education

a) Quota	Cases	Share (%)
Race/colour	6	29.4
Indigeneity	2	11.8
Ethno-regional	4	23.5
Language	1	5.9
Caste	2	11.8
Other	3	17.7
Total	**17**	**100**
b) Non-quota	**Cases**	**Share (%)**
Race/colour	2	16.7
Indigeneity	6	50.0
Ethno-regional	1	8.3
Other	3	25.0
Total	**12**	**100**

Source: authors' elaboration.

Public sector employment

As in education, AA measures in public sector employment are relatively common according to our data, also being identified in 29 out of the 45 coded country cases (Figure 5 and Table 10). Here we see an almost even split between policies involving quotas and policies granting 'soft' preferences, for example in the form of preferential hiring policies for marginalized groups at equal levels of qualification. Examples of AA in public employment are ethno-regional quotas in civil service employment and public procurement in Afghanistan, Burundi, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Viet Nam, racial quotas in Brazil (ministry-level goals), Costa Rica, and Uruguay, non-quota measures for racial groups in Ecuador, Namibia, South Africa, and the United States, and measures for ethnic minorities in China, Croatia, and Israel—specifically for Roma in Albania, Hungary, Romania, and Serbia.

Figure 5: AA in public employment country map
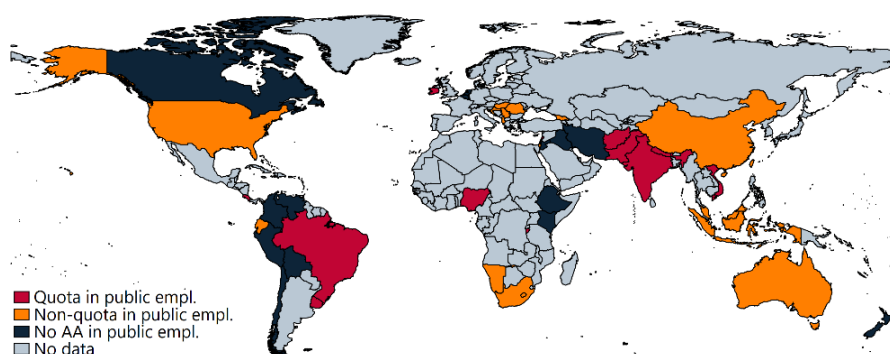
Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 5: AA in public employment

a) Quota	Cases	Share (%)
Race/colour	3	21.4
Indigeneity	2	14.3
Ethno-regional	3	21.4
Language	2	14.3
Caste	2	14.3
Other	2	14.3
Total	**14**	**100**
b) Non-quota	**Cases**	**Share (%)**
Race/colour	4	26.7
Indigeneity	3	20.0
Ethno-regional	1	6.7
Language	1	6.7
Caste	6	40.0
Total	15	100

Source: authors' elaboration.

Private sector employment

AA policies in private sector employment were observed in 20 out of the 45 countries, which had some type of ethnic AA policy in place (Figure 6 and Table 11). In this case, however, only four countries adopted quota systems, including Australia (e.g. 50,000 jobs to be filled by indigenous applicants), Burundi (e.g. a fixed Hutu/Tutsi quota in NGO staff), Malaysia (e.g. racial equity to receive a manufacturing licence), and Taiwan (e.g. to win public bids businesses need at least 1 per cent of the indigenous employees). Examples of non-quota systems are preferential treatment for providing employment subsidies and training for specific racial groups in Namibia, South Africa, and Uruguay.

Figure 6: AA in private employment country map
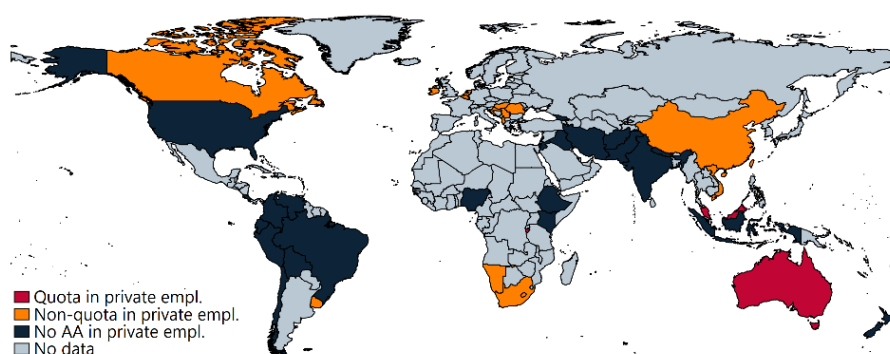
Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 6: AA in private employment

a) Quota	Cases	Share (%)
Indigeneity	3	75.0
Other	1	25.0
Total	**4**	**100**
b) Non-quota	**Cases**	**Share (%)**
Race/colour	4	25.0
Indigeneity	2	12.5
Ethno-regional	1	6.3
Language	1	6.3
Other	8	50.0
Total	**16**	**100**

Source: authors' elaboration.

Political representation

AA policies in political representation generally include providing reserved seats for specific groups in the national parliament and executive branches of the government as well as minority self-governments. Of the 45 countries, 29 provided some kind of AA policies (Figure 7 and Table 12). These include indigenous quotas in the form of reserved seats in the national parliament or key public offices in Bolivia, Chile, Fiji, Indonesia, Jordan, New Zealand, Peru, Taiwan, and Venezuela. Typical non-quota-based AA policies are those of Nigeria and Hungary. In Nigeria, major ethnic groups receive vital public offices and parliamentary seats on a rotation basis (Aiyede 2012). In Hungary, officially designated minorities can form self-governments when these are composed of more than 30 per cent of ethnic minority candidates at the local level and 10 per cent at the regional level (Burton 2007).

Figure 7: AA in political representation country map
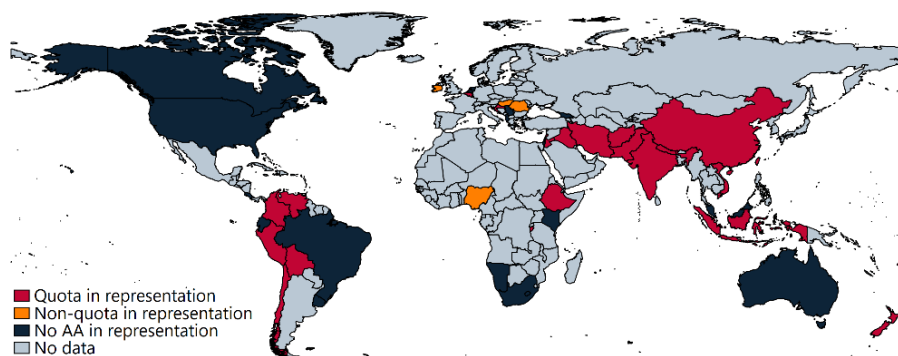
Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 7: AA in political representation

a) Quota	Cases	Share (%)
Race/colour	1	3.7
Indigeneity	9	33.3
Ethno-regional	3	11.1
Language	1	3.7
Religion	3	11.1
Caste	2	7.41
Other	8	29.6
Total	**27**	**100**
b) Non-quota	Cases	Share (%)
Ethno-regional	1	50.0
Other	1	50.0
Total	**2**	**100**

Source: authors' elaboration.

Other policy domains

Last but not least, 20 out of the 45 countries have adopted AA policies in other policy domains (Figure 8 and Table 13). These include quotas for social/public housing in Albania and Singapore and non-quota preferential housing policies for Roma in Croatia, Hungary, Romania, and Serbia. Other non-quota cases include indigenous rights to land and other resources in Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Taiwan, the United States, and Viet Nam.

Figure 8: AA in other policy domains country map
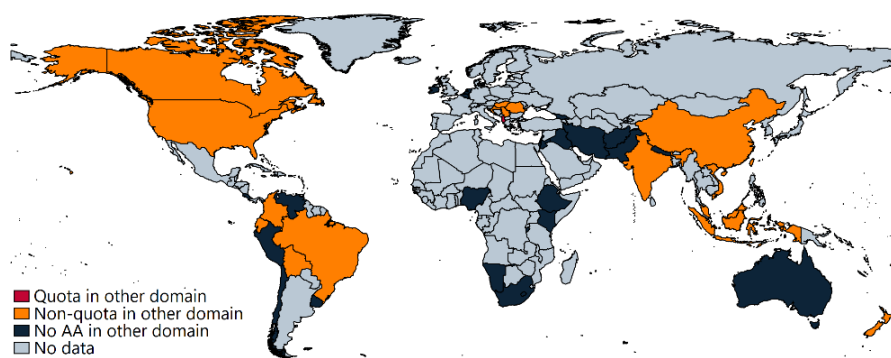
Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 8: AA in other domains

a) Quota	Cases	Share (%)
Indigeneity	1	33.3
Other	2	66.7
TOTAL	3	100
b) Non-Quota	Cases	Share (%)
Indigeneity	9	56.3
Ethno-regional	1	6.3
Caste	1	6.3
Other	5	31.3
TOTAL	16	100

Source: authors' elaboration.

4 Adoption, amendment, and termination of AA policies

This section gives an overview of the adoption, amendment, and termination of AA policies according to information provided in Version 1 of the AA Dataset.

4.1 Adoption of AA policies

Commonly, India is described as the first country to have adopted AA policies—a practice originating from the British colonial provision of quotas for certain disadvantaged castes in the governing bodies. Since independence, the reservation system (backed by the 1950 constitution and the first constitutional amendment of 1951) has guaranteed the representation of historically disadvantaged groups not only in politics but also in employment and education. However, the earliest form of AA policies in our dataset is New Zealand's Māori Representation Act of 1867, which reserved four legislative seats for native aboriginal inhabitants.[2]

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[2] The 1867 Māori Representation Act was in effect until 1993, when a proportional representation system was introduced under the Electoral Act. As a result, the reserved seats were increased to five in 1996, to six in 1999, and to seven in 2002 (Clarke 2015; Joseph 2008).

In Version 1 of the dataset, we see a rapid increase in the adoption of AA policies from the 1990s onwards, particularly in the political representation domain. Since the 2000s there has been a rapid expansion in policies in public sector employment and education, and in the 2010s in private sector employment. Figure 9 plots the year in which AA policies were adopted.

Figure 9: Year of AA policy implementation, by policy domain
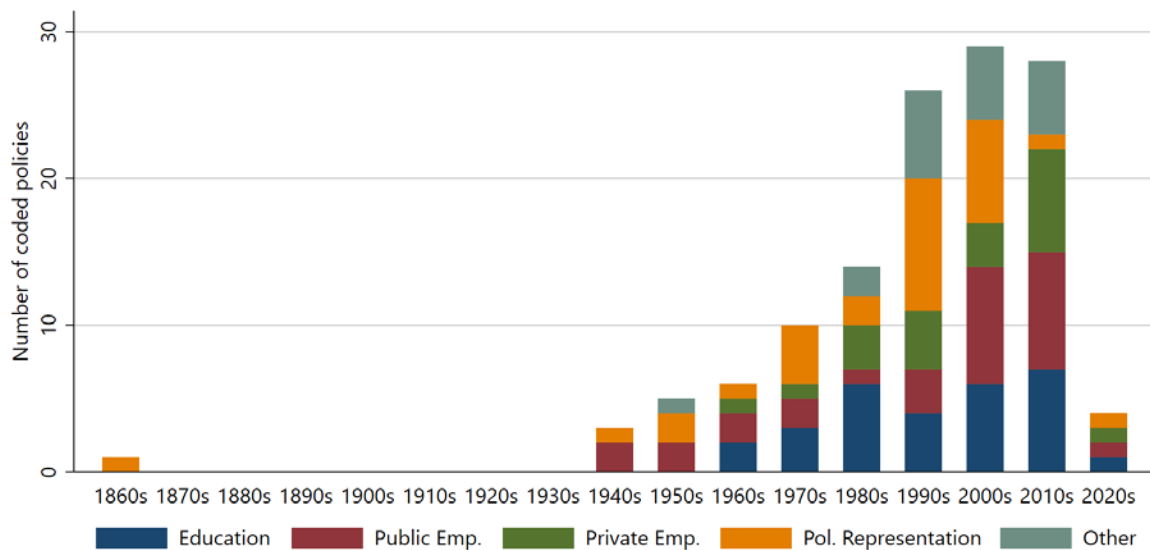
Source: authors' elaboration.

Different political motives can drive the adoption of AA policies. Particularly in democratic societies, AA often responds to direct demands by under-represented groups to address inequalities. In this regard, 'in most cases, a defining moment or an event has acted as a catalyst for affirmative action' (Kalev et al. 2006: 1). These catalyst events may range from the end of colonization and establishment of a new constitution (71 per cent in our sample), over violent or non-violent protests, to a change in government and political turnover, for example (Figure 10).

Figure 4: origins of AA policies
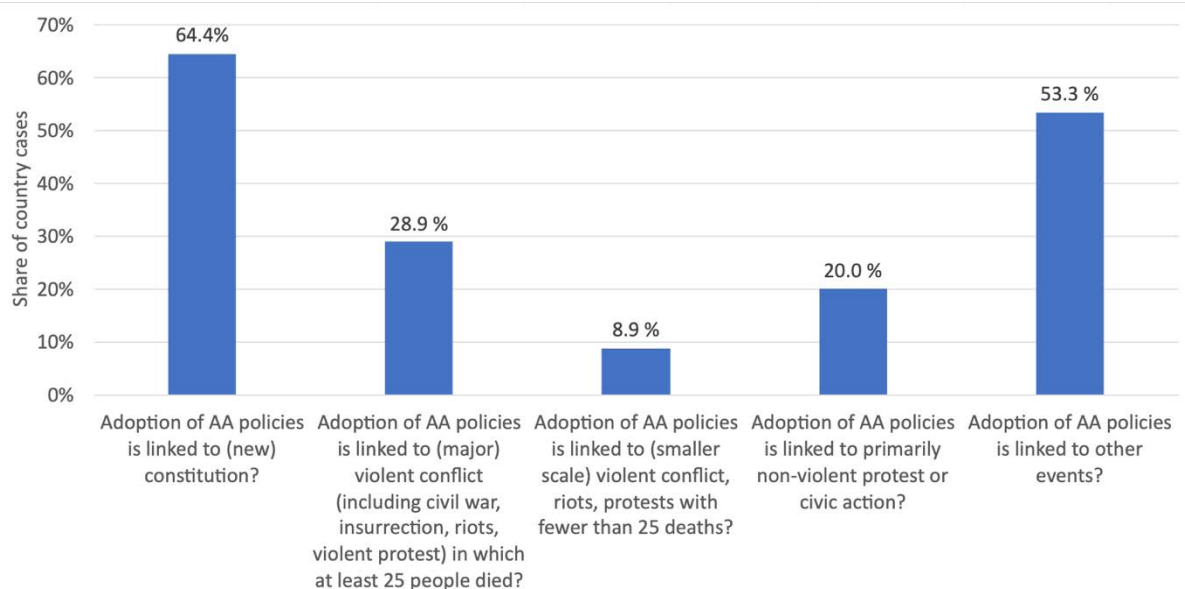
Source: authors' elaboration.

AA policies are commonly designed to promote equal opportunities and reduce discrimination against groups that have historically faced socioeconomic and political disadvantages. In some instances, AA policies may provide a viable power-sharing tool in an effort to establish a unity government or to mediate social conflict in a divided society. In this sense, AA policies provide under-represented groups with access to decision-making processes and resources that were previously unavailable to them, essentially increasing the cost of resorting to violence. In so doing, AA policies may promote stability and peace in conflict-affected societies.

Some countries emerging from conflict have adopted AA policies providing more access to the under-represented warring group in the political sphere. In Burundi, for instance, quota-based AA policies in public sector employment and political representation were introduced following the 2003 peace agreement that ended a decade-long ethnic civil war in order to ensure ethnic integration through power-sharing arrangements between the previously warring parties (Samii 2003). Similarly, in Afghanistan, AA policies in public sector employment and political representation were enshrined in the new constitution that followed the conclusion of the civil war, which promoted ethnic balance in the governing bodies (Girardin et al. 2021).

Importantly, contrary to conventional wisdom, we find that AA policies can be initiated by marginalized dominant majority groups in a country to advance their political and economic status vis-à-vis more privileged ethnic minorities. In other words, although the policies favour economically, politically, and/or socially marginalized groups, these groups do not necessarily constitute a minority in the population (Schotte et al. 2023). In Malaysia, for example, the collapse of the multi-ethnic coalition government following the 1969 ethnic violence enabled the Malay-dominated government to introduce AA policies under the New Economic Policy in 1971–90, which specifically targeted ethnic Malays in education and public/private sector employment (Milne 1976).

4.2 Amendments of AA policies

AA policies, once adopted, tend to be amended as political and social contexts change. In our data, the highest proportion of amendments are in the political representation domain, followed by private employment, education, public employment, and other sectors (Table 14).

Table 9: Country cases with policy amendment

Country cases	AA in education	AA in public employment	AA in private employment	AA in political representation	AA in other domain
No.	18	16	15	22	11
%	62.1%	55.2%	75.0%	75.9%	55.0%

Source: authors' elaboration.

Factors associated with AA policy amendments in our sample include: extending initial AA policies that were about to expire, redefining the scope/targets of the policy, addressing failures in existing policies, expanding/narrowing the target group, responding to legal decisions, violent/non-violent events, change of government, and other events (Table 15). Caution should be taken in causal interpretation of these factors, but they provide important contextual information in considering circumstances associated with AA policy change.

Table 10: Events linked to AA policy amendment

AA amendment is linked to …?	AA in education	AA in public employment	AA in private employment	AA in pol. representation	AA in other domain
Expansion of target groups	41.2%	41.2%	20.0%	60.0%	18.2%
Fixed term for reassessment specified at adoption	29.4%	29.4%	26.7%	4.8%	27.3%
Non-violent protest or civic action	23.5%			13.3%	
Addressing policies' failure to reach targets	23.5%	11.8%	20.0%	26.7%	
Need to redefine scope or targets due to policy success (e.g. progress made in some areas)	17.6%	11.8%	6.7%	13.3%	
Change in government	11.8%	11.8%	6.7%	26.7%	
Narrowing of target groups	5.9%	17.6%	13.3%	6.7%	
Legal action / challenge in the courts	5.9%	5.9%		13.3%	
Violent conflict	5.9%	11.8%		13.3%	
Other key events	11.8%	29.4%	53.3%	53.3%	63.6%

Note: policy amendments may be linked to more than one type of event.

Source: authors' elaboration.

The most frequent reason for policy amendment in our sample is the expansion of target groups covered by the policy. A notable example is the expansion of the quota in higher education in India for students of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) to include Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The SC and ST students were traditionally the core target group of the reservation policy in higher education but, following a constitutional amendment in 2019, the Indian government introduced a new bill that provided a 27 per cent reservation for students from OBCs in medical and dental education from 2021/22 onwards.

About one-third of the policies are amended in accordance with a fixed term for reassessment specified at adoption (that is, governments extended initial AA policies). For instance, the Albanian and Croatian governments amended the existing National Plans for Roma (commonly covering periods of five to ten years) to extend the policy coverage for another five to ten years.

Non-violent protests or civic actions also appear to be a common catalyst for governments to amend AA policies, most notably in the education domain (23.5 per cent in our sample). The Chilean government, for instance, amended the 1993 Indigenous Grant Programme in 2016, in response to mounting protests by indigenous students for education reform. A country's exposure to violent conflicts can bring about changes in AA policies as well. In Lebanon, the Constitution was amended in 1990 as a result of the 1989 Ta'if Agreement that ended the 15-year civil war. The amended constitution included a new provision to ensure an equal representation of Muslims and Christians in the public sector. Other key events—such as the new population census that has resulted in changes to public housing access in Singapore—can also bring about amendments to AA policies.

4.3   Termination of AA policies

During the period we covered (2000–21), the termination of AA policies occurred more frequently in public and private employment (20 and 25 per cent, respectively) than in other domains (Table 16). The most common reason for termination is the expiration of the fixed term specified at adoption. However, in public employment and political representation we also observe cases where termination is linked to violent conflict and/or changes in government (Table 17). For

instance, a violent takeover of the central government by the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021 effectively terminated public employment quotas among major ethnic minorities.

Table 11: Country cases with policy termination

Country cases	AA in education	AA in public employment	AA in private employment	AA in political representation	AA in other domain
No.	1	6	5	2	2
%	3.6%	20.7%	25.0%	6.9%	10.0%

Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 12: Events linked to AA policy termination

Events associated with AA termination	AA in education	AA in public employment	AA in private employment	AA in pol. representation	AA in other domain
Fixed term specified at adoption	100%	66.7%	100%		50%
Official decision that policy has reached its targets			20%		
Policies' failure to reach targets					50%
Legal action / challenge in the courts					50%
Violent conflict		16.7%		50%	
Non-violent protest or civic action					
Change in government		33.3%		50%	50%
Other key events		33.3%	20%	50%	50%

Note: policy terminations may be linked to more than one type of event.

Source: authors' elaboration.

5 Views on AA policies

The effectiveness of AA policies in driving positive societal change has been controversially debated in the literature (Chowdhury et al. 2020; Holzer and Neumark 2000; Ratuva 2013). A core critique has been that governments target policies on the basis of group-defining ascriptive characteristics, thereby ignoring other relevant individual circumstances (Cancian 1998; Darity et al. 2011; Ellison and Pathak 2021; Reardon et al. 2018). In this section, we map the core controversies concerning AA policies based on our Version 1 dataset.

5.1 Common controversies

AA policies in the education domain are associated with the highest rate of controversies compared with AA policies in other domains (89.7 per cent in our sample), followed by political representation (72.4 per cent), public sector employment (69 per cent), 'others' (63.2 per cent), and private sector employment (57.1 per cent) (Figure 11). One of the recurring debates on AA policies in education concerns enduring inequality in educational access between the target and non-target groups.

Figure 11: Controversies in policy domains
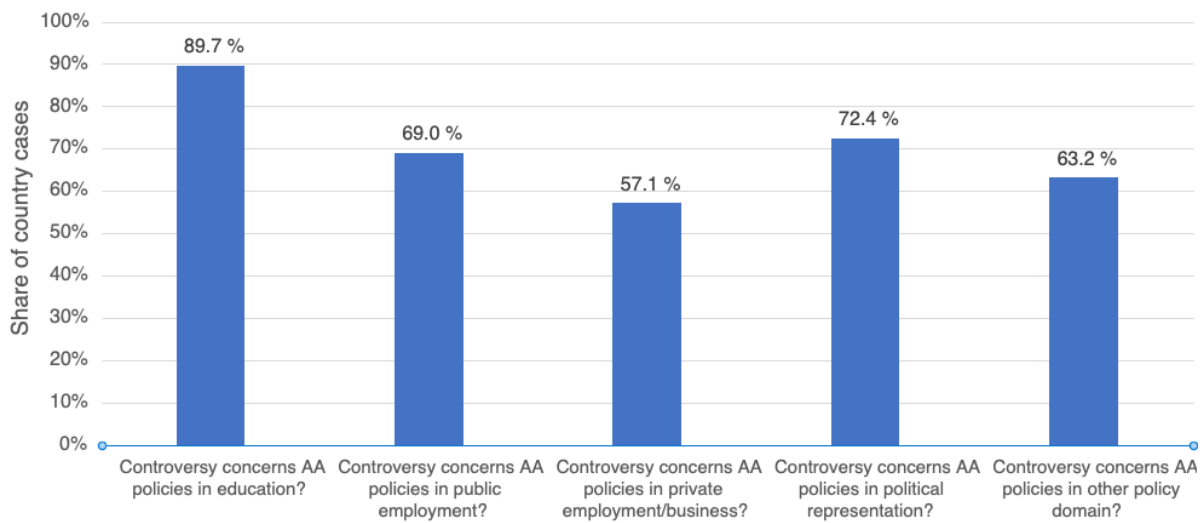
Controversies over AA policies take diverse forms. In our data, they are more usually associated with national protests and civic action (57.8 per cent in our sample) than violent events (Figure 12). On a few occasions non-violent protests have escalated into violence over time. In Ecuador, for instance, indigenous demonstrators protested in the capital in June 2022 to pressure the government to address enduring structural problems affecting indigenous populations, including access to education, employment, and resources. Reports suggest that five civilians and one member of the military died and over 300 people were injured (Broner and Ragozzino 2022).

Figure 5: The occurrence of protest and violent conflict associated with controversies
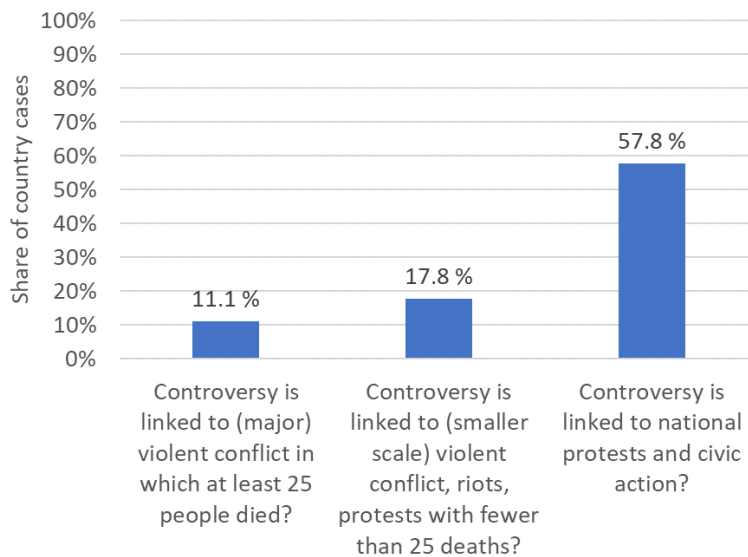
Most controversies in our sample are associated with critiques about the impact of AA policies on target groups (80 per cent of countries) (Figure 13). Examples are the collective mobilization by black and indigenous populations to oppose a new bill to abolish the quota policy in Brazilian education, and criticism of the government by some members of minority populations for not providing sufficient resources to enhance education and employment access in Georgia. In just

over a third of the countries in our sample (37.8 per cent), controversies relate to ineligible non-target groups raising critiques of AA policies. For instance, we identify controversies around the expansion of the reservation policy to noneligible groups in India, and the abolition of the police hiring quota relating to Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. Some controversies involved broader societal concerns (35.6 per cent of countries), such as the negative role of enrolment quotas in educational quality or the persistence of negative stereotypes of target minorities.

Figure 6: Link of controversies to claims raised by target vs. non-target groups
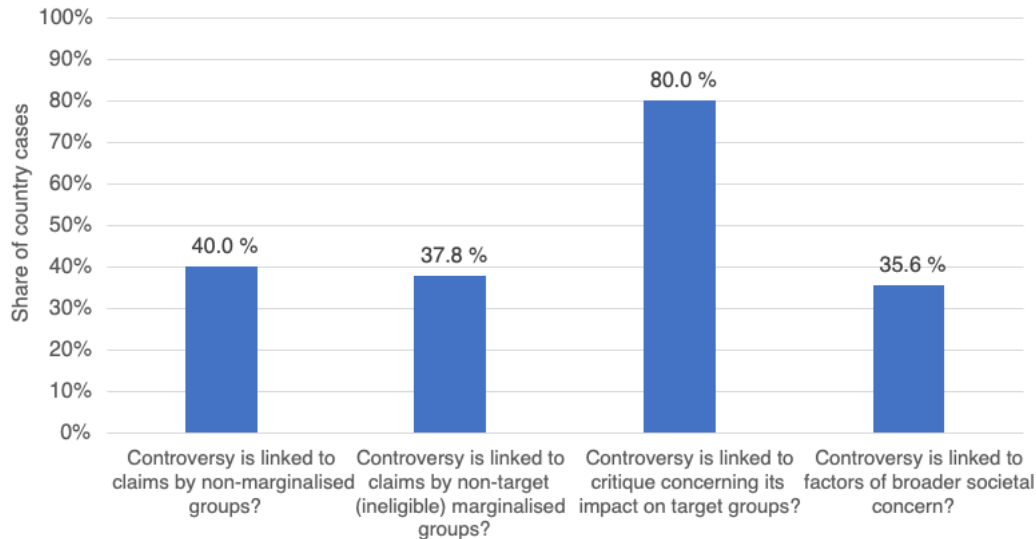
Source: authors' elaboration.

Controversies are more likely to lead to the amendment of existing policies (17.8 per cent) than their termination (2.2 per cent) (Figure 14). A notable example is Venezuela's AAs in the political representation domain. In 2020, the National Security Council introduced a controversial law that revoked the indigenous group's right to vote secretly and directly for their parliamentary representatives. A public outcry brought about an amendment to the electoral law (Freedom House 2022; Uzcátegui 2020).

Figure 7: Link of controversies to policy amendments and termination

Source: authors' elaboration.

21
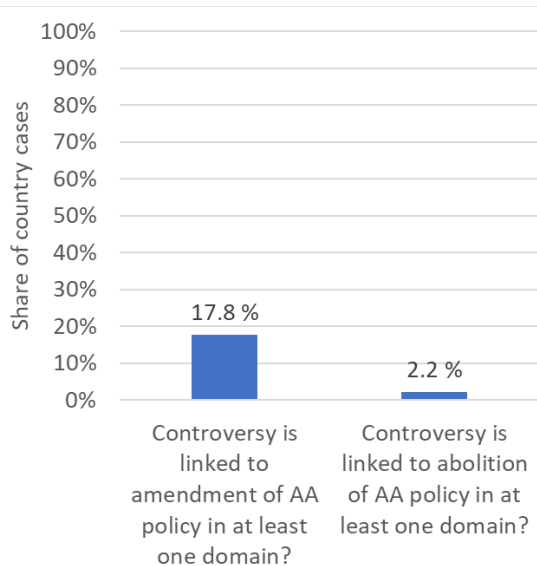
5.2 Impact evaluations

Finally, Version 1 of the dataset included coding of the conclusions drawn in major evaluations of AA policies, whether conducted by government bodies or scientific communities (including academics as well as international and non-governmental organizations) or resulting from public discourses in the media. This coding aims to increase understanding of the politics and public discussion around these policies in each country; it is not intended to reflect our assessment of the 'correct' impact of policies. In other words, we do not evaluate the evaluations, conduct independent analysis of available data on programmes, or reflect findings from a systematic review or meta-analysis of all evaluations of a given policy. We consider the impact of AA policies extensively in other work drawing on systematic review methodology (see Schotte et al. 2023).

Our dataset indicates that there is significant variety in the major evaluations of AA policies, as 'failures', 'successes', or something in the middle ('mixed'), although few policy domains emerge as unequivocal successes from these evaluations. We find suggestive differences in the conclusions drawn in evaluations by governments as compared with evaluations by the scientific community and public discourse: in general, public discourse is more critical of AA policies than either government or scientific evaluations (Figure 15). Looking across domains, evaluations by government tend to be more critical of AA policies relating to political representation, whereas the scientific community is more critical of public employment and other policy domains (Table 18).

Figure 8: Institutional evaluations in each policy domain
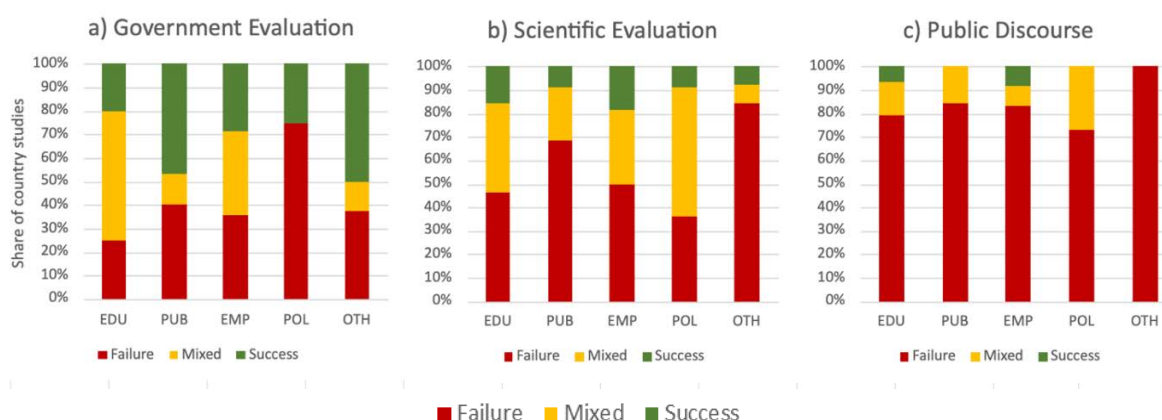
Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 13: Institutional evaluations in each policy domain

	Education		Public employment		Private employment		Political representation		Other domain	
	Cases	Share	Cases	Share	Cases	Share	Cases	Share	Cases	Share
a) Government										
Failure	5	25.0%	6	40.0%	5	35.7%	3	75.0%	3	37.5%
Mixed	11	55.0%	2	13.3%	5	35.7%	0	0%	1	12.5%
Success	4	20.0%	7	46.7%	4	28.6%	1	25.0%	4	50.0%
b) Science										
Failure	12	46.2%	15	68.2%	8	50.0%	8	36.4%	11	84.6%
Mixed	10	38.5%	5	22.7%	5	31.3%	12	54.6%	1	7.7%
Success	3	15.4%	2	9.1%	3	18.8%	2	9.1%	1	7.7%
c) Discourse										
Failure	16	72.7%	16	84.2%	10	83.3%	16	72.7%	12	100.0%
Mixed	4	12.5%	3	15.8%	1	8.3%	6	27.3%	0	0%
Success	2	6.3%	0	0%	1	8.3%	0	0%	0	0%

Source: authors' elaboration.

6   Preliminary conclusions

In this paper, we provide a brief introduction to our Affirmative Action Dataset and a summary of the data in Version 1. Based on a rigorous literature review and systematic coding on each case, our dataset provides nuanced insight into the origins, characteristics, and implications of, as well as debates around, AA policies globally.

We have three core aims in ongoing work on Version 2 of the Dataset. The first is to further probe and strengthen the validity of our coding, in particular through broader consultation, discussion, and review of Version 1 of the Dataset with other thematic and country experts.

Second, we aim to expand the country coverage of the Dataset so that it can be used to draw more fully comparative insights about AA policies. Version 1 offers a solid starting point for empirical investigation of AA in countries with AA policies of some type. In particular, it includes all countries for which some AA policy has been studied in the literature according to our systematic review. However, as our work on the AA Dataset has underscored, there are a number of AA policies—and some countries with AA policies—that do not appear in the literature identified in our systematic review (thus the systematic review does not identify the universe of relevant countries for the Dataset). In Version 2, we are working to better understand which countries with AA policies may be missing from our initial sample and to correct potential biases in the identification of countries in Version 1. An alternative approach would be to expand the coding to all countries, but we opt for a more graduated approach given project resources.

Third, we will investigate further the relationship between AA policies and ethnic power-sharing arrangements in divided societies. Our initial analysis points to the use of AA policies as a powerful tool in post-war societies, facilitating buy-in by disadvantaged combatant groups through preferential access to political representation and public employment in particular. To what extent AA policies function as stabilizers in post-conflict environments, and through what precise mechanisms, are questions for our ongoing research.

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Appendix: Codebook

I. ROSTER

Variable	Code	Description	Type
countryname		Country name	string
code_iso2		ISO-alpha2 Code	string
code_iso3		ISO-alpha3 Code	string
code_m49		M49 Code	numeric
code_cow		The Correlates of War (Singer and Small) country code	numeric
code_vdem		V-Dem country code	numeric
reg_name_un		UN region name	string
reg_code_un		UN region code	numeric
	2	Africa	
	19	Americas	
	142	Asia	
	150	Europe	
	9	Oceania	
sreg_name_un		UN sub-region name	string
sreg_code_un		UN sub-region code	numeric
	53	Australia and New Zealand	
	143	Central Asia	
	30	Eastern Asia	
	151	Eastern Europe	
	419	Latin America and the Caribbean	
	54	Melanesia	
	57	Micronesia	
	15	Northern Africa	
	21	Northern America	
	154	Northern Europe	
	61	Polynesia	
	35	South-eastern Asia	
	34	Southern Asia	
	39	Southern Europe	
	202	Sub-Saharan Africa	
	145	Western Asia	
	155	Western Europe	
inc_name_wb		WB income level name	string
inc_code_wb		WB income level code	numeric
	1	Low income (LIC)	
	2	Lower-middle income (LMC)	
	3	Upper-middle income (UMC)	
	4	High income (HIC)	
ldc		UN least developed countries (LDC)	numeric
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
lldc		UN land-locked developing countries (LLDC)	numeric
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
sids		UN small island developing states (SIDS)	numeric
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
developing		UN developed / developing countries	numeric
	0	No	
	1	Yes	

Variable	Code	Description	Type
pop2000		UN World Population Prospects 2000	numeric
pop2010		UN World Population Prospects 2010	numeric
pop2020		UN World Population Prospects 2020	numeric
EFindex		Index of ethnic fractionalization (Drazanova 2019)	numeric
quota_er		Legislative Ethnicity Quota Dummy (Htun 2004)	numeric
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
quota_e		Statutory ethnicity quota dummy (Htun 2004)	numeric
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
quota_e7		Ethnic quota dummy (including Reynolds 2007)	numeric
	0	No	
	1	Yes	

Source: authors' construction.

II. AA

II.1 General

Variable	Code	Description	Type
AA		Existence of any affirmative action (AA) policy in the country that addresses ethnic horizontal inequalities?	numerical
		Note: The dataset only captures AA policies that target ethnic groups (broadly defined). If a country has AA policies that target other disadvantaged groups (e.g. women) but the policies have no ethnic dimension, this is coded as 0.	
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
AA_edu		Any AA policy that addresses ethnic horizontal inequalities in education?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
AA_pub		Any AA policy that addresses ethnic horizontal inequalities in public sector employment/business contracts?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
AA_emp		Any AA policy that addresses ethnic horizontal inequalities in private sector employment/business operations?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
AA_pol		Any AA policy that addresses ethnic horizontal inequalities in political representation?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
AA_oth		Any AA policy that addresses ethnic horizontal inequalities in any other policy domain not mentioned above?	numerical
		Note: If information is not readily available, code as missing.	
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
AA_oth_d		If AA policy in other policy domain, please specify.	string
AA_title		Title by which AA policies in the country are commonly referred to (if applicable) (e.g., Reservation, Black Economic Empowerment)	string

Source: authors' construction.

II.2 Origins

Variable	Code	Description	Type
orig_cons		Adoption of AA policies is linked to (new) constitution?	numerical
		Note: All variables in this section refer to the first time an AA policy was introduced in the country. For example, in Kenya the first quota system was introduced in 1985. However, the system was revised in response to the 2010 constitution, which provided broadened ethnic AA policies. In this case, the coding would be 0, as the origins are not linked to a new constitution; only the later amendment is.	
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
orig_viol1		Adoption of AA policies is linked to (major) violent conflict (including civil war, insurrection, riots, violent protest) in which at least 25 people died?	numerical
		Note: A broad definition is adopted here. This variable and the subsequent two variables are coded as 1 if the AA policy was introduced to address ethnic inequalities that had sparked violent conflict or protests in the recent past. That is, there should be a clear link, but it does not need to be a direct causal relationship. For example, in South Africa, AA policies were introduced to address racial inequalities that had sparked violent protests. They should thus be coded as 1, even though the eventual transition in government (which led to a new constitution and the adoption of AA) was peaceful.	
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
orig_viol2		Adoption of AA policies is linked to (smaller scale) violent conflict, riots, protests with fewer than 25 deaths?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
orig_prot		Adoption of AA policies is linked to primarily non-violent protest or civic action?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
orig_oth		Adoption of AA policies is linked to other events?	numerical
		Note: Other events could, e.g., be a change in government (which may or may not coincide with the adoption of a new constitution).	
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
orig_oth_d		If linked to other events, please specify.	string
orig_reason		Provide a short explanation for the coding of the origins section.	string
orig_source1		1st main source used for coding origins section (APA style).	string
orig_source2		2nd main source used for coding origins section (APA style).	string
orig_source3		3rd main source used for coding origins section (APA style).	string

Source: authors' construction.

II.3 Controversy

Variable	Code	Description	Type
cntrvrs		Have AA policies been subject to major controversy (understood as prolonged public dispute or debate that raised mainstream concerns about the policies' potential to positively influence major national outcomes) in the country? *Note: The remainder of this section is completed only if this variable is 'Yes'. If 'No', then all following numerical variables in this section are coded as 888.*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_edu		Controversy concerns AA policies in education? *Note: Variable coded as 888 if the country has no ethnic AA policy in education.*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_pub		Controversy concerns AA policies in public employment/business? *Note: Variable coded as 888 if the country has no ethnic AA policy in public sector employment/business contracts.*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_emp		Controversy concerns AA policies in private employment/business? *Note: Variable coded as 888 if the country has no ethnic AA policy in private sector employment/business operations.*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_pol		Controversy concerns AA policies in political representation? *Note: Variable coded as 888 if the country has no ethnic AA policy in political representation.*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_oth		Controversy concerns AA policies in other policy domain? *Note: Variable coded as 888 if no other ethnic AA in the country.*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_viol1		Controversy is linked to (major) violent conflict in which at least 25 people died? *Note: Intended to capture the occurrence of violence that can be directly linked to an AA policy, e.g. violent protests by upper-castes against the expansion of the reservation policy to OBCs in India.*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_viol1_d		If applicable, short description of 'cntrvrs_viol1'.	string
cntrvrs_viol2		Controversy is linked to (smaller-scale) violent conflict, riots, protests with fewer than 25 deaths?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_viol2_d		If applicable, short description of 'cntrvrs_viol2'.	string

Variable	Code	Description	Type
cntrvrs_prot		Controversy is linked to national protests and civic action?	numerical
		Note: Here we are looking for protests that can be directly linked to an AA policy. College students in the US protesting against affirmative action and urging for an equal opportunity in education would be an example.	
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_prot_d		If applicable, short description of 'cntrvrs_prot'.	string
cntrvrs_nmarg		Controversy is linked to claims by non-marginalized groups?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_nmarg_d		If applicable, short description of 'cntrvrs_nmarg'.	string
cntrvrs_marg		Controversy is linked to claims by non-target (ineligible) marginalized groups?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_marg_d		If applicable, short description of 'cntrvrs_marg'.	string
cntrvrs_tgr		Controversy is linked to critique concerning its impact on target groups?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes: Inadequate implementation / ineffective	
	2	Yes: Negative indirect effects on target group	
	3	Yes: Both	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_tgr_d		If applicable, short description of 'cntrvrs_tgr'.	string
cntrvrs_soc		Controversy is linked to factors of broader societal concern?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_soc_d		If applicable, short description of 'cntrvrs_soc'.	string
cntrvrs_oth		Controversy is linked to linked to other issues not specified above?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_oth_d		If applicable, short description of 'cntrvrs_oth'.	string
cntrvrs_amd		Controversy is linked to amendment of AA policy in at least one domain?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_amd_d		If applicable, list domains for 'cntrvrs_amend' (EDU, EMP, POL, OTH).	string
cntrvrs_end		Controversy is linked to termination of AA policy in at least one domain?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
cntrvrs_end_d		If applicable, list domains for 'cntrvrs_end' (EDU, EMP, POL, OTH).	string
cntrvrs_source1		1st main source used for coding controversy section (APA style).	string
cntrvrs_source2		2nd main source used for coding controversy section (APA style).	string
cntrvrs_source3		3rd main source used for coding controversy section (APA style).	string

Source: authors' construction.

III. DOMAINS (EDU, EMP, PUB, POL)

III.1 General

Variable	Code	Description	Type
quota		AA policies in domain use quotas to reserve a certain portion of admission seats for target group(s)?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
quota_d		If AA policies use quota, please provide a brief description.	string

Source: authors' construction.

III.2 Target Group

Variable	Code	Description	Type
tgr_type		Type of targeting?	numerical
	1	Generic	
	2	Specific	
	3	Mixed	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
tgr_eth		Primary (main) criterion that defines ethnic groups targeted by AA policies in domain.	numerical
	1	Race/colour	
	2	Indigeneity/indigenous status	
	3	Ethno-regional	
	4	Language	
	5	Religion	
	6	Caste	
	7	Other (specify)	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
tgr_eth_d		Please specify ethnic groups targeted by AA policies in domain.	string
tgr_gen		AA policies additionally target women?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
tgr_oth		AA policies additionally target other non-ethnic/non-culturally defined marginalized group(s)?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
tgr_oth_d		If other non-ethnic/non-culturally defined marginalized group(s) targeted, please specify.	string
tgr_elig		AA policies are limited to those in the target group, who meet additionally defined eligibility criteria? *Note: This variable captures whether target groups need to meet additional criteria to be eligible. If any, additional eligibility criteria would most often be defined in socio-economic terms (e.g. members of minority group falling below a certain income threshold).*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes, socio-economic	
	2	Yes, other (specify)	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
tgr_elig_d		If other eligibility criteria defined, please specify.	string

Source: authors' construction.

III.3 Origins

Variable	Description	Type
orig_year	Year in which policies in this domain were first implemented.	numerical

Source: authors' construction.

III.4 Amendment

Variable	Code	Description	Type
amd		Have there been major amendments to AA policies in this domain? *Note: Only complete this section if 'Yes'. Answer questions with regard to all major amendments that occurred in the policy domain.*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
amd_year		Year of last major amendment to AA policies in this domain.	numerical
amd_fix		Major amendment(s) linked to a fixed term for reassessment specified at adoption?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
amd_succ		Major amendment(s) linked to need to redefine scope or targets due to policy success (i.e. progress made in some areas)?	Numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
amd_fail		Major amendment(s) linked to addressing policies' failure in reaching targets?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
amd_exp		Major amendment(s) linked to an expansion of target groups?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
amd_nar		Major amendment(s) linked to a narrowing of target groups?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
amd_leg		Major amendment(s) linked to legal action / a challenge in the courts?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
amd_viol		Major amendment(s) linked to violent conflict?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
amd_prot		Major amendment(s) linked to primarily non-violent protest or civic action?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	

Variable	Code	Description	Type
amd_gov		Major amendment(s) linked to a change in government?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
amd_oth		Major amendment(s) linked to other key events?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
amd_d		Brief description of major amendment(s) considered in this section, incl. main reasons/events that let to the amendment(s).	string
amd_source1		1st main source used for coding amendment section (APA style).	string
amd_source2		2nd main source used for coding amendment section (APA style).	string
amd_source3		3rd main source used for coding amendment section (APA style).	string

Source: authors' construction.

III.5 Termination

Variable	Code	Description	Type
end		Have all AA polices in this domain been terminated?	numerical
		Note: Only complete this section if 'Yes'.	
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
end_year		Year in which AA policies in this domain were terminated (if applicable).	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
end_fix		Termination is linked to a fixed term specified at adoption?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
end_succ		Termination is linked to official decision that policy has reached its targets and no further preferential treatment is required?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
end_fail		Termination is linked to policies' failure to reach targets?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
end_leg		Termination is linked to legal action / a challenge in the courts?	Numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
end_viol		Termination is linked to violent conflict?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
end_prot		Termination is linked to primarily non-violent protest or civic action?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
end_gov		Termination is linked to a change in government?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
end_oth		Termination is linked to other key events?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
end_d		Short description of reasons for termination.	string
end_source1		1st main source used for coding termination section (APA style).	string
end_source2		2nd main source used for coding termination section (APA style).	string
end_source3		3rd main source used for coding termination section (APA style).	string

Source: authors' construction.

III.6 Evaluation

Variable	Code	Description	Type
eval_inst		National institution tasked with evaluation of AA policy.	string
eval		'eval_inst' provided assessment(s) of the policy after its adoption? *Note: Only complete next two questions if 'Yes'.*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
eval_impct		If applicable, impact on ethnopolitical target group(s) as reported by 'eval_inst'.	numerical
	0	Failure	
	1	Mixed	
	2	Success	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
eval_impct_d		If applicable, short description of 'eval_inst' assessment of the policy .	string
eval_science		Are there independent scientific evaluations of AA policies in domain?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
eval_science_impct		If applicable, impact on ethnopolitical target group(s) as reported by 'eval_science'.	numerical
	0	Failure	
	1	Mixed	
	2	Success	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
eval_science_d		If applicable, short description of 'eval_science' assessment of the policy .	string
eval_discourse		Is the impact of AA policies in domain discussed in mainstream public discourse? *Note: This variable attempts to provide a rapid assessment of how AA policies are being discussed in the country's political discourse (e.g. critique by opposition party) and media (e.g. major news outlets).*	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
eval_discourse_impct		If applicable, impact of AA policies in domain according to mainstream public discourse.	numerical
	0	Failure	
	1	Mixed	
	2	Success	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
eval_discourse_d		If applicable, short description of public discourse.	string
eval_source1		1st main source used for coding evaluation section (APA style).	string
eval_source2		2nd main source used for coding evaluation section (APA style).	string
eval_source3		3rd main source used for coding evaluation section (APA style).	string

Source: authors' construction.

IV. POLICY

Variable	Code	Description	Type
title_short		Short title by which the policy is commonly known.	string
title_long		Official full title.	string
pol_edu		Policy concerns education?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
pol_pub		Policy concerns public sector employment/business operations?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
pol_emp		Policy concerns private sector employment/business operations?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
pol_pol		Policy concerns political representation?	numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
pol_oth		Policy concerns any other policy domain not mentioned above?	
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
pol_oth_d		If policy regards other policy domain, please specify.	string
objective		General objectives of the policy (as stated in legislation).	string
tgr_group		Target group(s) (as stated in legislation).	string
Mechanism		Description of means through which the policy seeks to benefit the target group (as stated in legislation).	string
URL		URL to official legislative text.	string
legal_src		Legal source.	numerical
	1	Constitution	
	2	Federal law (statute)	
	3	State law	
	4	Other (specify)	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
legal_src_d		Specify other legal source.	string
year_start		Year of implementation.	numerical
duration		Timeframe for which the policy was is adopted.	numerical
	1	Indefinite	
	2	Definite	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	
year_end_planned		If definite, specify planned year of termination.	numerical
year_end_actual		Year of termination (if applicable).	numerical
year_amend		Year of last major amendment (if applicable).	numerical

Source: authors' construction.

V. NO AA

Variable	Code	Description	Type
NO_AA_reason			numerical
	0	No	
	1	Yes	
	888	Not applicable	
	999	Missing / Don't know	

Source: authors' construction.