

# Alternative Governance Mechanisms for Water Delivery: The Case of Ecuador

**Speaker:**

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# Land Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional lands of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.



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# Outline

1. Background information
2. Water provision indicators
3. Research question and hypothesis
4. Research methodology
5. Potential contributions

# Background

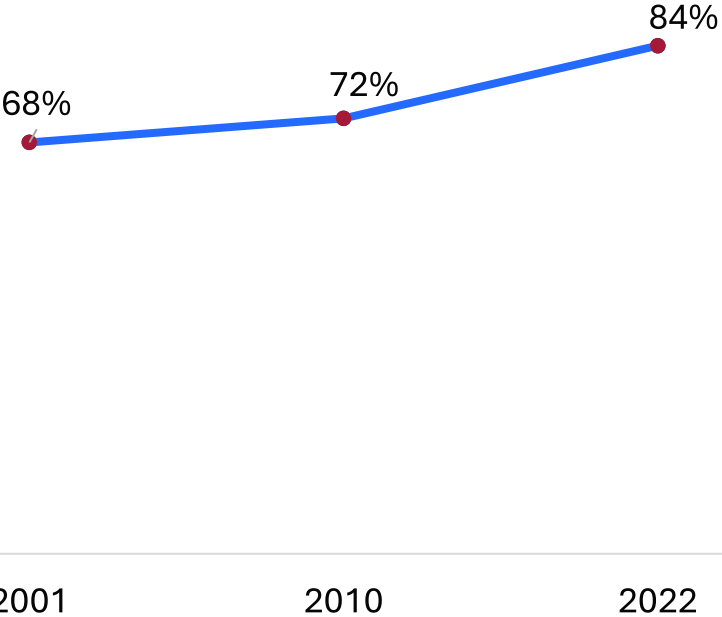
- Household water reflects territorial disparities in Latin America
- In Ecuador, 3.8 million people still lack access to safely managed drinking water (ARCA, 2025)
- 17% of infants below 5-years-old affected by diarrheal diseases (2014)
- Urban-rural gap: 89–73%( National Census 2022)
  - Coast: 84–56%
  - Highlands: 97–90%
  - Amazon: 71–69%
- Water provision range in rural municipalities: 19–99%

# Research question

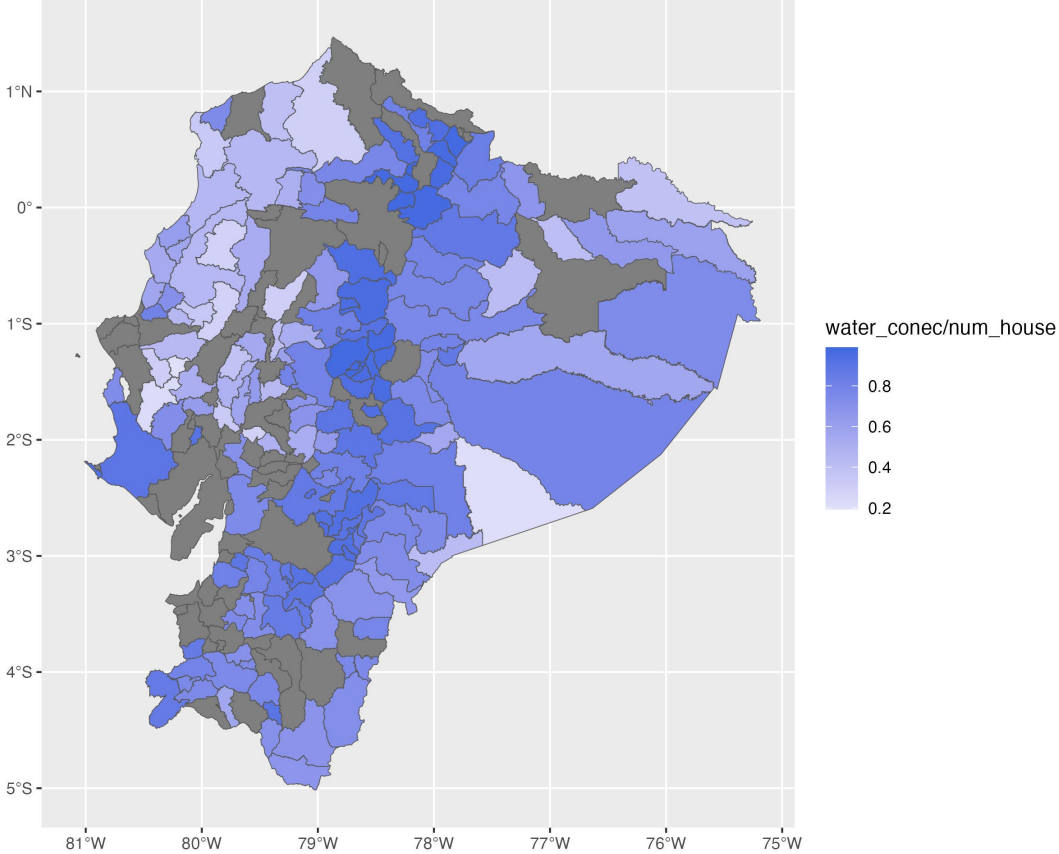
- What explains variation in the provision of household water delivery in rural Ecuador?

# Ecuador's water provision

Ecuador's National Water Provision



Source: National Census

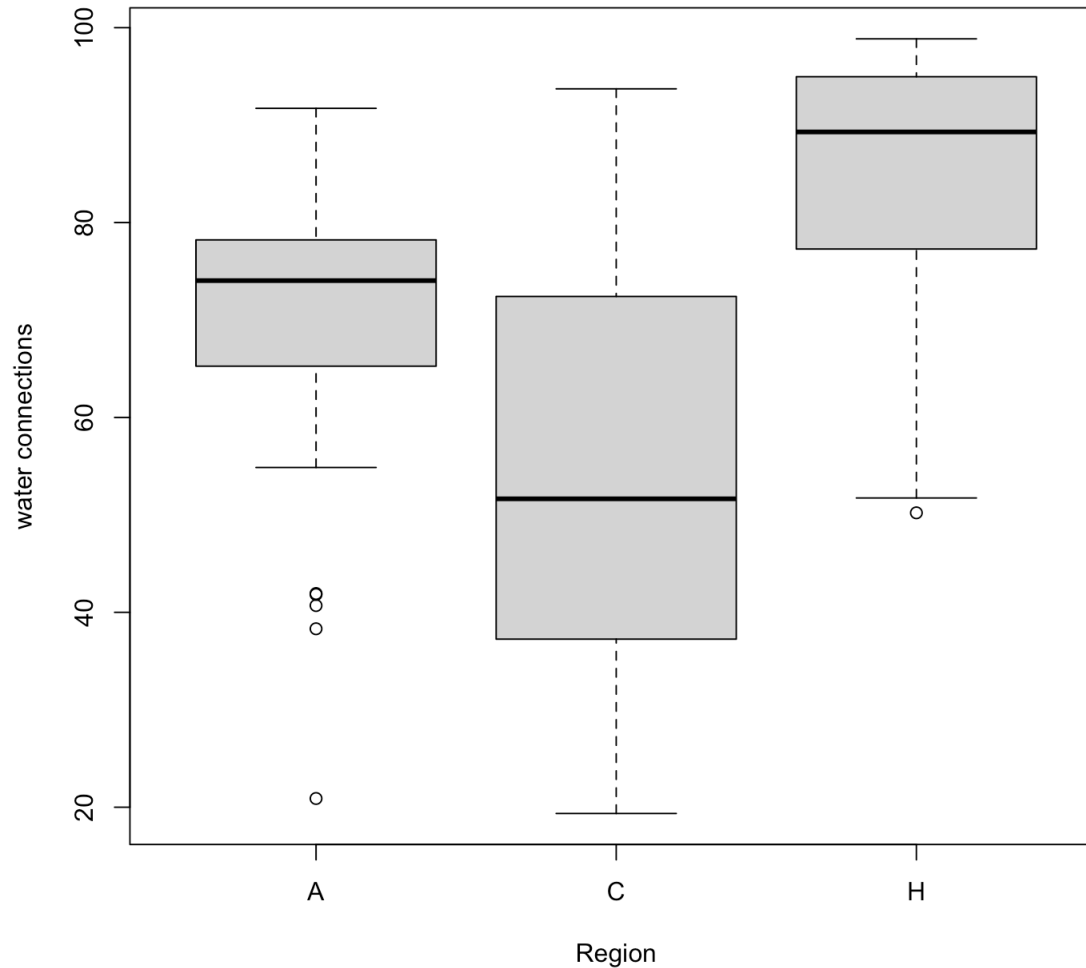


Source: National Census, 2022

# Rural municipalities

- Municipalities in which more than 50% of the population live in rural areas.
- 157/220 municipalities in 24 provinces

Distribution of Water Connections by Region



Rural municipalities

Coast: 19–94%

average population: 31,821

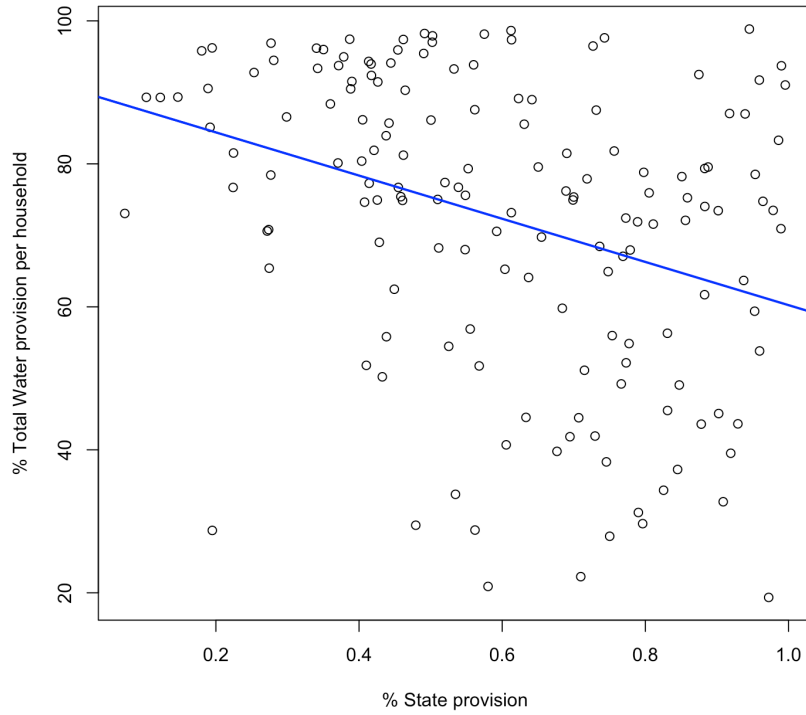
Highlands: 50–99%

average population: 22,554

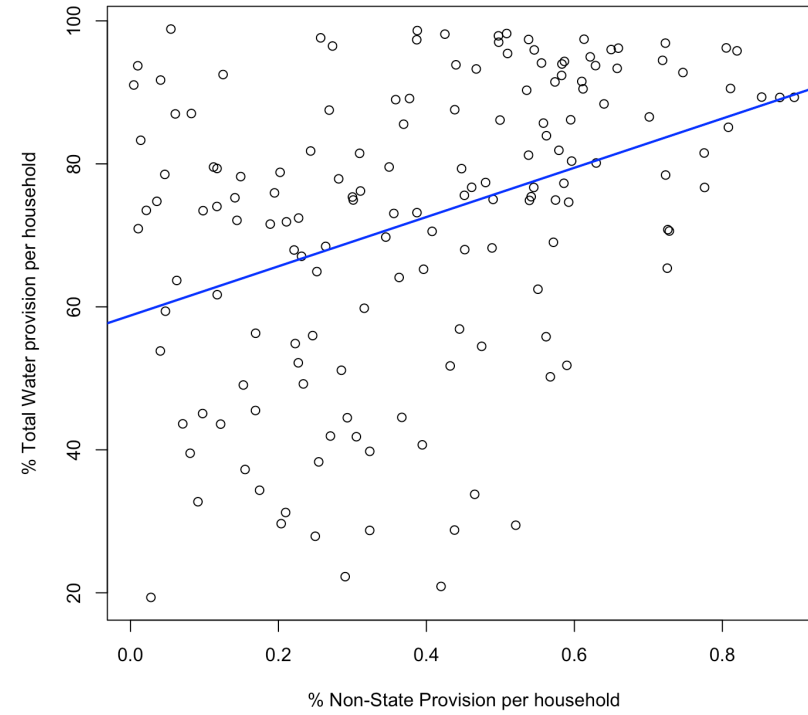
Amazon: 21–72%

average population: 12,540

National: % State Provision

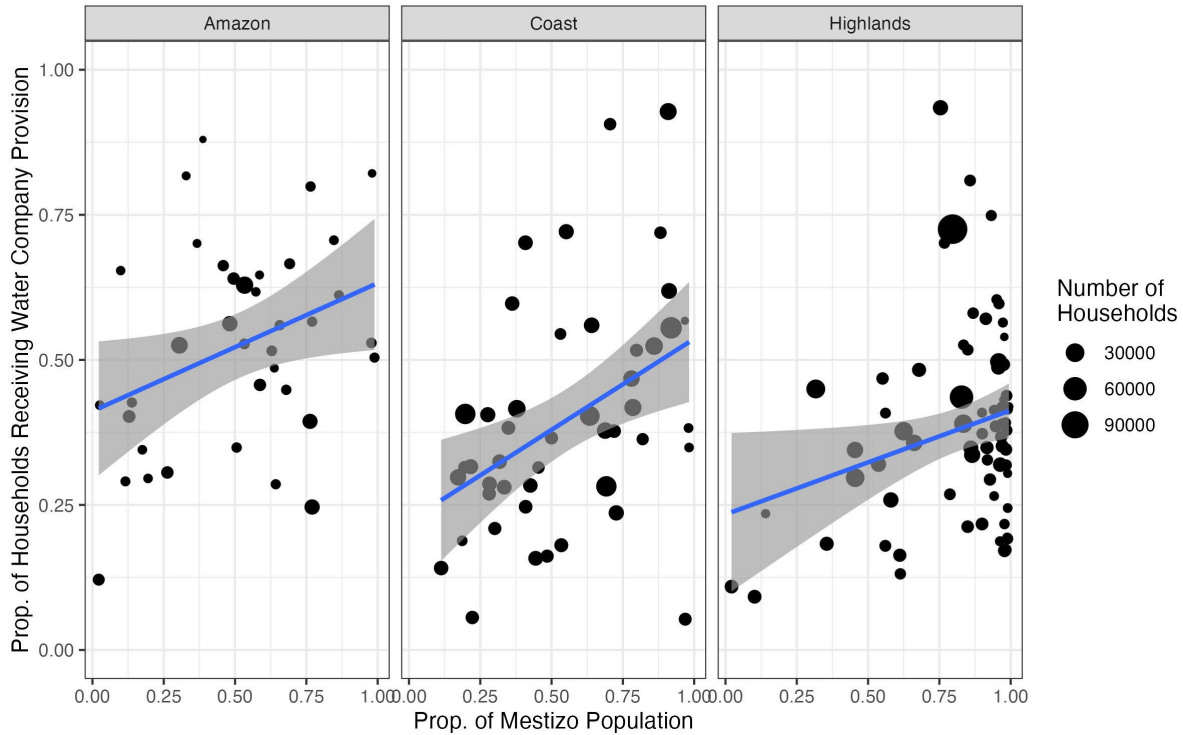


National: % Non-State provision

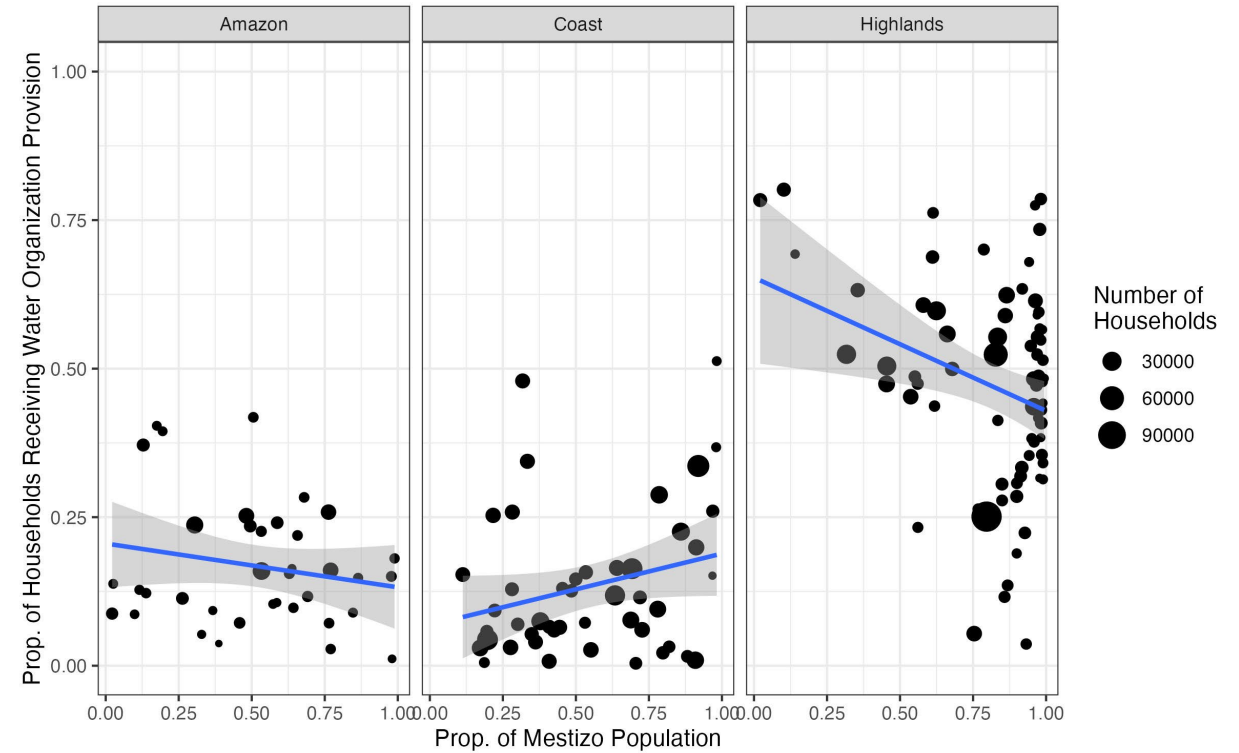


# Water coverage by type of provider and ethnicity

## State Provider & Mestizo Population

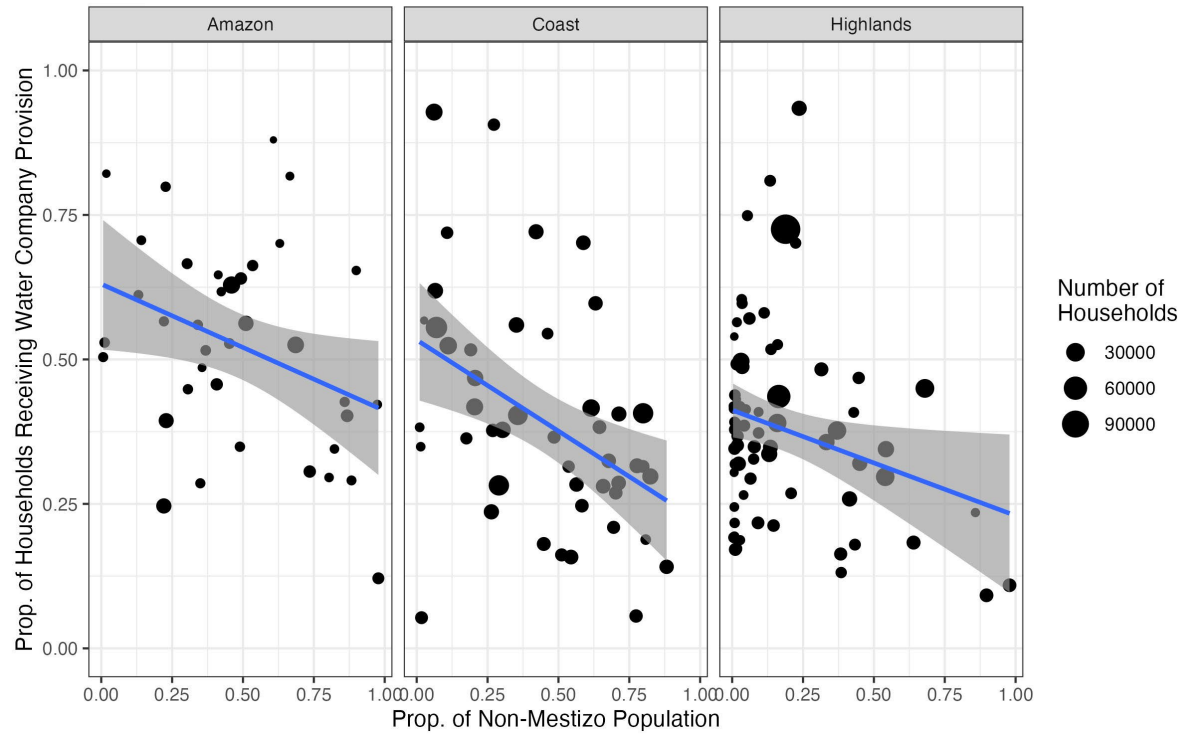


## Non-State Provider & Mestizo Population

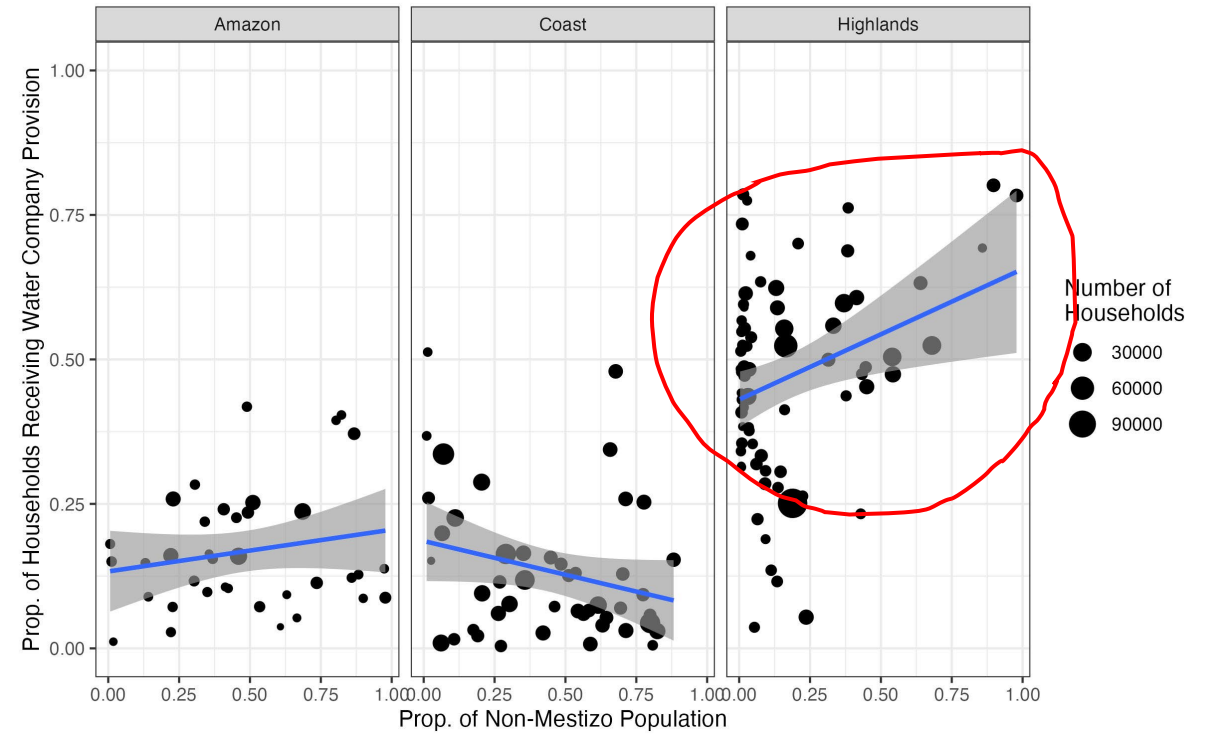


# Water coverage by type of provider and ethnicity

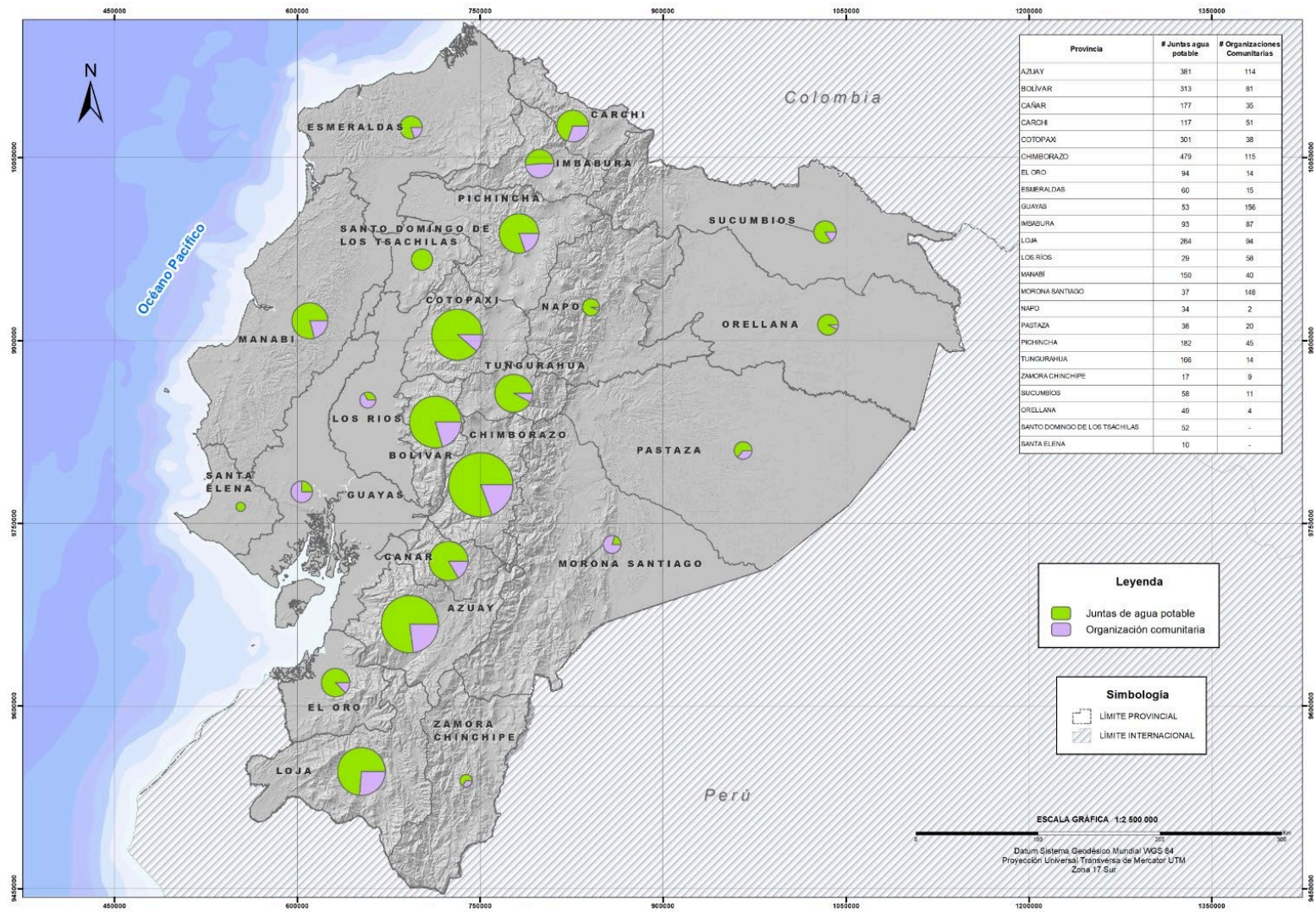
## State Provider & Non- Mestizo Population



## Non-State Provider & Non- Mestizo Population



# MAPA DE JUNTAS DE AGUA POTABLE Y ORGANIZACIONES COMUNITARIAS REGULADAS POR LA ARCA

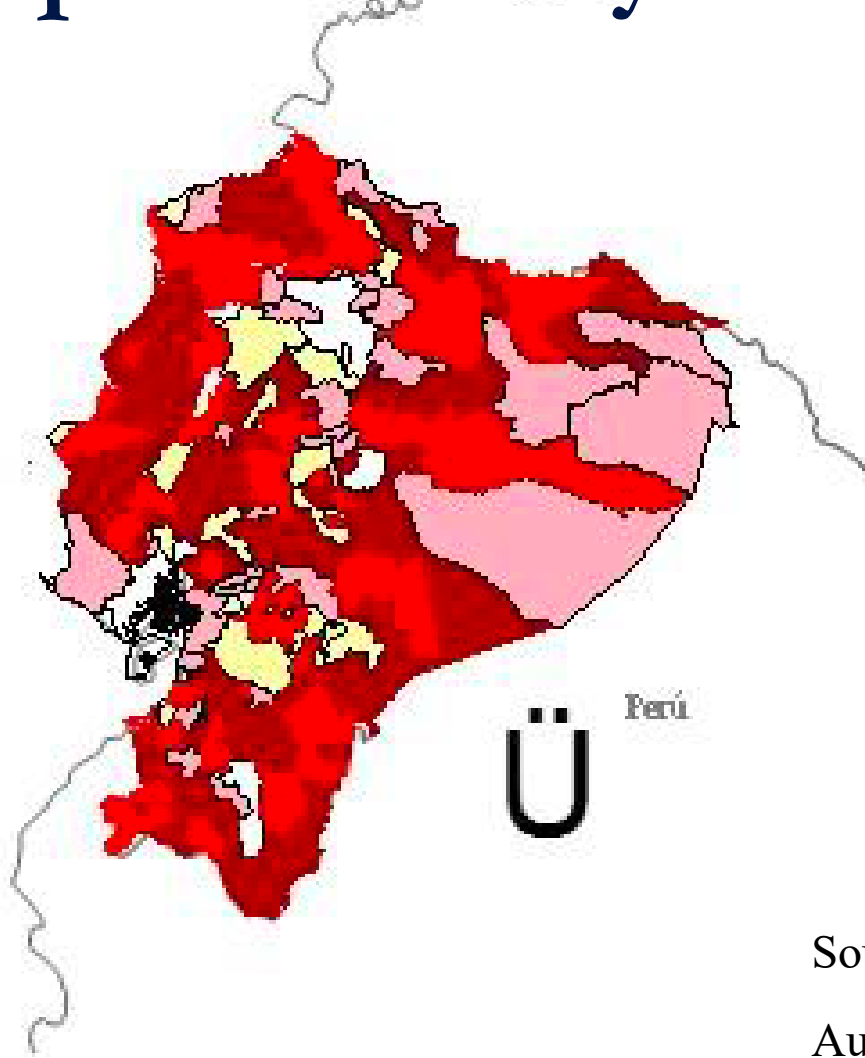


Source: ARCA, 2025

# Rural municipalities' fiscal constraints

- Medium and small-size municipalities show weak financial capacity and autonomy – highly dependent on central government transfers (approx. 60% of revenues)
- Water investment in rural areas is costly: household dispersion and poverty

# Financial dependence by municipality



Source: Banco del Estado & Central Bank

Author: Parreno 2018, p. 227

# Research question

- What explains the variation in the provision of household water delivery in rural Ecuador?
- This project aims to understand:
  - Differences in rural household water provision between and within geographic regions

# Research hypothesis

- Collective action by rural communities and their linkages to the state can explain variation in water provision in rural Ecuador.
- Internal aspect:
  - Collective action – collective assemblies, governance bodies for decision-making, coordination, conflict resolution and overseeing functions.
- External aspect
  - Relationships between WCO and municipalities

H1. When a group of rural communities shows a high degree of collective action and have established linkages with the municipality, it will have a better water supply.

H2. In the absence of or limited activity by rural communities, and no linkages to municipalities, there will be a lower water supply.

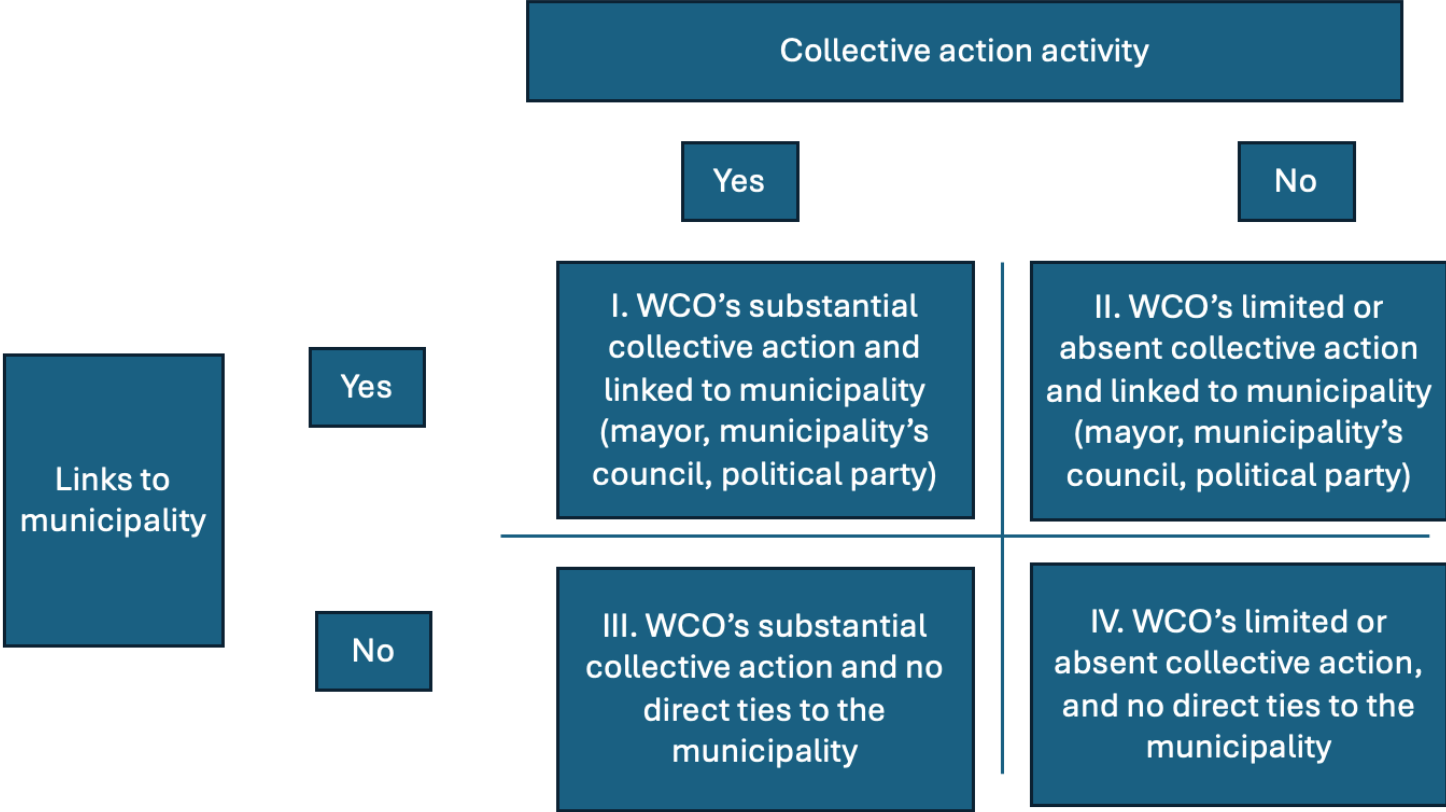
# Research Method

- Subnational lens, using mixed methods.
- Research centered on clusters of communities within rural cantons – integrates state capacity and state-society relationships – giving a broader picture of water supply in rural cantons
- To develop a typology: the two independent variables

# Variables

- **Dependent V:**
  - Water provision index measuring:
    - % of continuous water service,
    - % of households' water coverage by the community, and
    - the delinquency rate of water payments.
- **Independent V:**
  - Communities' collective action
  - Community/municipality relationships
- **Control variables:** geography, socioeconomic indicators, community size, distance to nearest metropolitan area, years since municipalities' foundation

# A typology



# Potential contributions

- Identify mechanisms to strengthen relationships – municipalities and WCO.
- Material resources are needed but not sufficient to improve water coverage.
- Contribute to the concept of “place-sensitivity.”
- Recognize, strengthen, and learn from Indigenous governance structures, and to model and replicate similar organizations in other settings.
- A broader picture: WCO’s state recognition would show concrete ways to build a plurinational state, democracy in an ethnically diverse developing country.

# Thank you

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