

## Fact Sheet: First Nation/Native Americans in the United States

While there are over 558 federally recognized Native American tribes, the most non-Indians have viewed North America's indigenous population as one people. The 2000 Census enumeration for the indigenous populations of the United States was reported at 281.4 million persons. Of this total, 4.1 million, or 1.5% of the total population, reported American Indian and/or Alaska Native. This number included 2.5 million (.9%) who reported American Indian only, and 1.6 million persons, or .6%, who reported Alaskan Native. Persons who reported their race as American Indian and Alaska Native, either alone or in combination with one or more races, were included in the number of American Indians (US Census 2000, AIANP). Although Native Americans were the first Americans, historically they were not counted by the Federal Government unless they had left their reservations and lived among the dominant society (US Commerce Department, 1993).

- ❑ The terms "American Indian" and "Alaska Native" refers to persons originating from the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America, and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment. This would include people who reported American Indian or Alaska Native or wrote this in as their principal or enrolled tribe. Alaskan Natives were previously reported in the American Indian racial category until 1970, when a separate response category was used to collect data on the Eskimo and Aleut population only in Alaska. Census 2000 provided for more extensive data collection on tribes than in previous Census taking. (US Census 2000, AIANP).
- ❑ The Native American population represents a number of tribes, the largest of which are Cherokee, Navajo, Sioux, Chippewa, Latin American Indians, and Choctaw. These six tribal groups accounted for 40% of all respondents who reported a single grouping or race, and accounted for 42% of all respondents who reported at least one additional race or Indian tribal groupings. (US Census, 2000) American Indian tribes with 50,000 or more individuals were Cherokee, Navajo, Choctaw, Blackfeet, Chippewa, Muscogee, Apache and Lumbee. In Alaska, Tlingit was the most populous Alaskan Native tribe, with 17,200 respondents. (US Census 2000, October 2002). There are over 558 federally recognized tribes with historical roots that range from the wilds of Alaska to the swamps of southern Florida (Willeto & Goodluck, 2004). These tribes, which vary greatly in size. Some of these remaining tribes had populations of less than 10,000 persons in 1990 (US Commerce Department, 1993).
- ❑ In 1990, the Native American and Alaskan Native population showed an increase of 38% from the 1980 total. This change is thought to be attributable to only natural increase. Other factors that may have contributed to the higher count include improvements in the way the Census Bureau counted people on reservations and trust lands, and in Alaska (US Commerce Department, 1993).
- ❑ Historically, American Indians have had high rates of intermarriage with other groups, mostly whites and blacks. Because of this a relatively large number

- of American Indian children identify with multiple racial groups (Snipp, 2002). Due to the reporting changes on Census 2000, as with persons of Asian American ancestry, there are at least two ways to report the change in population numbers from 1990 to 2000. This relates to reporting monoracial characteristics as Indian alone or bi-racial characteristics in the concept of Indian in combination. Using Indian alone, this population increased by 516,722 or 26%, and using in combination, this population increased to 2.2 million, or 110% (US Commerce Department, 1993).
- ❑ In 2002, those who reported American Indian were more likely to live in the West (43%), while 31% lived in the South, 17% in the Midwest, and 9% in the Northeast. The West's population would include the Alaskan Native American population. The ten states with the largest American Indian populations were California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, New York, Washington, North Carolina, Michigan and Alaska. Florida was the only other state with an American Indian population greater than 100,000. Combined, these 11 states constituted about 62% of the Native population. California (627,562) and Oklahoma (391,949) combined make up about 25% of this population. There were nineteen states where the American Indian population exceeded the US proportion of 1.5%, led by the western state of Alaska at 19%, the southern state of Oklahoma at 11%, and the western state of New Mexico, at 10% (US Census 2000, AIANP).
  - ❑ American Indians were the majority of the population in fourteen counties in the West and twelve counties in the Midwest. In the west, the counties were in four states: Alaska, Arizona, Montana, and Utah. In the Midwest, the counties were also in four states: South Dakota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Nebraska. In Alaska, Alaska Natives accounted for over 50% of the population in nearly all the boroughs and census areas in northern and western Alaska (US Census 2000, AIANP). Ten percent of Anchorage, Alaska residents were reported to be American Indian and Alaskan Native. This number is larger than the Tulsa, Oklahoma number of 8% (US Census FAF, October 2002).
  - ❑ In the Southwest, American Indians were represented in high percentages and in large numbers in the counties in the Four Corners area of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado (where the boundaries of these four states meet). In the Great Plains, American Indians were concentrated in a cluster of counties in central and western South Dakota, southeastern Montana, and in several counties along the US Canadian border in Montana and North Dakota. In the southern Plains, American Indians accounted for relatively high percentages of the population in a cluster of counties in eastern Oklahoma, where American Indians comprised more than the US average level of 1.5% in all but one county (Harper) in Oklahoma (US Census 2000, AIANP).
  - ❑ East of the Mississippi, counties in which American Indians were represented in percentages higher than the US average level of 1.5% were scattered throughout the South, Northwest and upper Midwest. The places with the largest American Indian populations were New York (87,241) and Los Angeles

- (53,092) The next eight places with the largest American Indian populations had between 15,743 and 35,093 persons. Five of the top ten places: Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Diego, Anchorage, and Albuquerque, were in the west. The ten largest places of American Indians in total accounted for only 8.2% of the US total Indian population. Among places with an American Indian population of 100,000 or more, the highest proportion was in Anchorage (10%) (US Census 2000, AIANP). Most counties are home to relatively few American Indian children (under 18 years of age). In 2000, less than half of the counties in the United States had more than 100 American Indian children apiece, which is not surprising given the relatively small size of the population.
- While the prominent image, or stereotype of the American Indian depicts people living in remote Indian reservations, about 60% of American Indians and Alaska Natives live in America's urban areas. Much of this is attributable to the U.S. relocation policies of the 1950's when many American Indian and Alaska Natives were born and raised off reservations, or have moved to urban areas for employment opportunities (Willeto & Goodluck, 2004). Most American Indians live either on reservations or in a small number of cities. Counties that have a sizable number of American Indians almost always include all or part of these types of places. For example, Cook County has a relatively large American Indian population because it is part of the Chicago metropolitan area where a large number of American Indians live (Snipp, 2002).
  - Of the 4.1 million persons who reported being American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination with one or more races, 538,300 persons lived on reservations or other trust lands. Of this number, 175,200 resided on the Navajo Nation reservation and trust lands, which span portions of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, and is the most populous reservation or other trust land. The percentage of persons living on reservations or trust lands compared to the total of all persons reporting American Indian and Alaska Native alone was 17.4%, and for those persons reporting American Indian and Alaska Native alone and in combination with other tribes or races, this number was at 13.1% (US Census 2000, FAF October 2002). The ten largest reservations and trust lands are Navajo, Pine Ridge, Fort Apache, Gila River, Papago, Rosebud, Hopi, San Carlos, Zuni Pueblo, and Blackfeet (US Census, FAF, October 2002). Approximately 29% of all American Indian children lived on reservations or in Alaska Native villages. For this group of children, 87% reported only one racial ancestry (Snipp, 2002).
  - The median age of the American Indian and Alaska Native population is relatively young, at 28.7, several points lower than the median age for the non-Hispanic White population of 35.3 years. The number of American Indians and Alaska Natives aged 65 and over was 259,663, which is 48.2% of the number reservation Native Americans and 6.3% of all reporting Native American and Alaskan Native in any combination (US Census FAF, October 2002) Native American families tend to have comparatively larger families, 3.6 persons, than those in the total US population at 3.1 persons (Willeto & Goodluck, 2004). In 1995, the percentage of Native American families in

- married couple families was 65.8 (versus 79.5% for non-White Hispanics), 26.2% for female householders with no husband present (versus 16% for non-White Hispanics) and 8% (versus 4% for non-White Hispanics) for male householders with no wife present (US Census, socioeconomic, 1995)
- Of those who said that American Indian and Alaska Native was their only race, 71% attained at least a high school diploma. However, their high school drop out rate is much higher than average (Willeto and Goodluck, 2004). Only 11% of those persons aged 25 and over who said that American Indian and Alaska Native was their only race attained a bachelor's degree or higher at the time of Census 2000 (US Census FAF, October 2002). In 1995 only 63.2% of American Indians 18-24 years of age had attained a high school diploma or equivalent (US Census, socioeconomic, 1995).

### **Cited References**

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Willeto, Angela A.A., and Goodluck, Charlotte, *American Indian Children: state level measures of child well being from the 2000 Census*, Baltimore, MD: the Ann E. Casey Foundation, January 2004

### US Census

American Indian and Alaska Native Area and Alaska Native Regional Corporation, GCT-PH1, Population, Housing Units, Area and Density: 2000, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Facts and Features, American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month: November 2002, October 2002

Table 2: Selected Social and Economic Characteristics for the 25 largest American Indian Tribes, August 1995

The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2000, U.S. Census Bureau, Issued February 2002

US Department of Commerce, *We the First Americans*, US Department of Commerce, Issued September 1993

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