The American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut Population

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The American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut population has grown rapidly since 1970.

In the last two decades, the American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut population grew rapidly. In 1970, this population numbered 827,000; it reached 1.4 million in 1980 and nearly 2 million in 1990. The 1990 census counted 1,878,285 American Indians, 57,152 Eskimos, and 23,797 Aleuts. Census Bureau estimates and projections suggest that on July 1, 1994, the American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut population numbered 2.2 million, and that it will reach 4.3 million and just over 1 percent of the population by 2050.

The 72 percent increase between the 1970 and 1980 censuses and the 38 percent increase between the 1980 and 1990 censuses cannot be attributed only to natural increase. Other factors that may have contributed to the higher count of American Indians[1] include improvements in the question on race; improvements in the way the Census Bureau counted people on reservations, on trust lands, and in Alaska Native villages; continued use of self-identification to obtain information on race; a greater propensity in 1990 than in earlier censuses for individuals (especially those of mixed Indian and non-Indian parentage) to report themselves as American Indian; and improved outreach programs and promotion campaigns.

[1]In the text, American Indian represents American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts.

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Nearly one-half of the American Indian population lived in the West in 1990, 29 percent in the South, 17 percent in the Midwest, and 6 percent in the Northeast. Between 1980 and 1990, the proportion of American Indians increased noticeably only in the South, from 26 to 29 percent. In 1990, four States had an American Indian population over 100,000 — Oklahoma, California, Arizona, and New Mexico. The population in these four States comprised 42 percent of the total U.S. American Indian population. Oklahoma was the State with the largest American Indian population in 1990, climbing from second in 1980. Between 1980 and 1990, California dropped from first to second place, and Arizona and New Mexico stayed at third and fourth place, respectively.

The American Indian population is young.

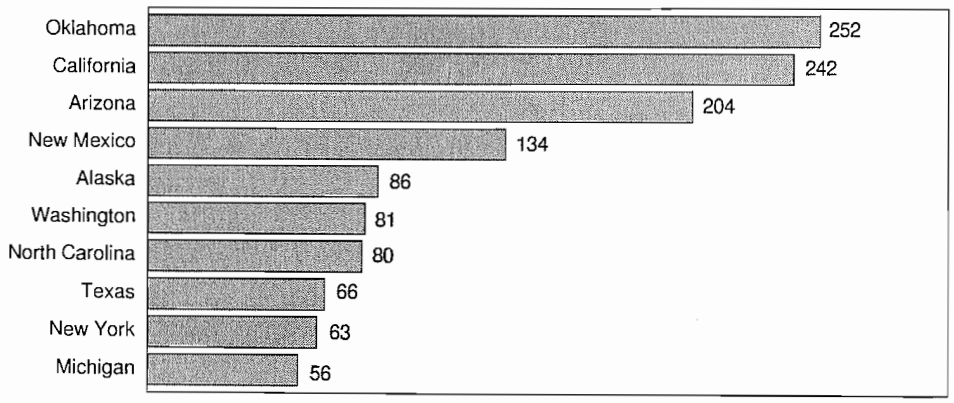
Thirty-nine percent of the American Indian population was under 20 years old in 1990, compared with 29 percent of the Nation's total population. The median age in 1990 of the American Indian population was 26 years, considerably younger than the U.S. median age of 33 years. The comparable median ages in 1980 were 23 years and 30 years, respectively. The American Indian population is younger in part because of higher fertility rates than the total population.

Nearly two-thirds of American Indian families are married-coupled families.

About 6 in 10 of the Nation's 442,000 American Indian families were married-couple families in 1990, compared with about 8 in 10 of the Nation's 64.5 million families. The proportion of American Indian husband and wife

Ten States With the Largest Number of American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts: 1990

(In thousands)



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families was 71 percent in 1980, compared with 82 percent of all husband and wife families. Consistent with the national trend, the proportion of American Indian families maintained by a female householder with no husband present increased during the last decade and reached 27 percent in 1990. This proportion was considerably larger than the national figure of 17 percent.

The educational attainment levels of American Indians has improved significantly.

In 1990, 66 percent of the 1,080,000 American Indians 25 years old and over were high school graduates or higher, compared with only 56 percent in 1980. Despite the advances, the 1990 proportion was still below that for the total population (75 percent). American Indians were also less likely than the entire U.S. population to have completed a bachelor's degree or higher. About 9 percent of American Indians completed a bachelor's degree or higher in 1990, compared with 8 percent in 1980 — still lower than the 20 percent for the total population in 1990.

American Indian family incomes were low.

The median family income in 1989 of all American Indian families declined from its 1979 level (1989 dollars) by 5 percent. In 1990, the median family income of American Indians was $21,750, about 62 percent of the $35,225 median for all families. The median income of American Indian married-couple families was $28,287 or 71 percent of the $39,584 median for all married-couple families. The median income for American Indian families maintained by a female householder with no husband present was $10,742, about 62 percent of the $17,414 median for all families maintained by women with no husband present.

More American Indian families and persons were in poverty, compared with all families and persons.

Between 1979 and 1989, the poverty rate increased for both American Indian families and persons.[2] Twenty-seven percent of American Indian families were poor in 1989, compared with 24 percent in 1979. This compared with a poverty rate of 10 percent for all families in both 1989 and 1979. In 1989, 50 percent of American Indian families maintained by females with no husband present were poor, compared with 31 percent of all families maintained by women with no husband present.

The 1980 and 1990 censuses show that the poverty rate for American Indians has remained considerably higher than that of the total population. In 1989, 31 percent of American Indian persons lived below the poverty level, up from 27 percent in 1979. The national poverty rate was about 13 percent in 1989 and 12 percent in 1979.

[2]In 1989, the poverty threshold for a family of four was $12,674; unchanged from 1979 (in 1989 dollars).

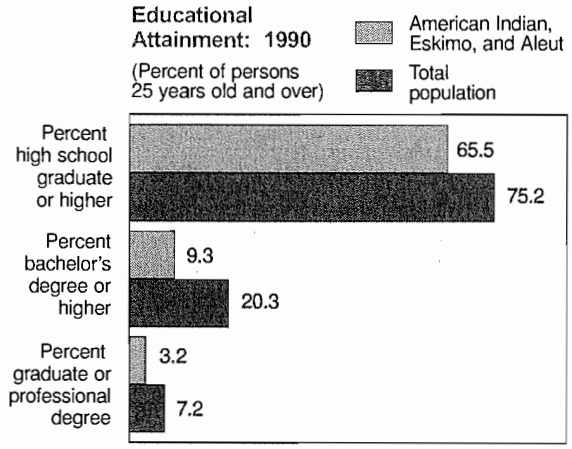
The number of American Indians living on reservations and trust lands varied considerably.

Of the 314 reservations and trust lands identified for the 1990 census, only the Navajo Reservation and Trust Lands located in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah had more than 100,000 American Indians — 143,405 lived there.

An additional nine reservations had more than 7,000 American Indians in 1990: Pine Ridge, NE-SD (11,182); Fort Apache, AZ (9,825); Gila River, AZ (9,116); Papago, AZ (8,480); Rosebud, SD (8,043); San Carlos, AZ (7,110); Zuni Pueblo, AZ-NM (7,073); Hopi, AZ (7,061); and Blackfeet, MT (7,025). The 218,320 American Indians living on these 10 reservations and trust lands accounted for about half of all American Indians living on reservations and trust lands.

Educational levels of American Indians differ among the reservations and trust lands.

Fifty-four percent of American Indians 25 years old and over living on all reservations and trust lands were high school graduates or more. Among the 10 largest reservations and trust lands, this proportion ranged considerably. Blackfeet (66 percent) and Hopi (63 percent) had similar proportions of high school graduates. Gila River, at about 37 percent, had the lowest proportion who had at least graduated from high school, followed by Navajo with 41 percent.



American Indians on reservations and trust lands had low per capita incomes.

The per capita income in 1989 was about $4,478 for American Indians residing on all reservations and trust lands, compared with $8,328 for all American Indians. The per capita income of American Indians on the 10 largest reservations ranged from about $3,100 on the Papago and Pine Ridge Reservations to over $4,500 on the Blackfeet ($4,718) and Hopi ($4,566) Reservations.

NOTE: The most recent data for the American Indian population are from the 1990 census. The Current Population Survey is not sufficiently large to provide reliable estimates for this population.

For Further Information:

See: 1990 CP-2-1, 1990 Census of Population, *Social and Economic Characteristics, United States Summary.* 1990 CP-2-1A, 1990 Census of Population, *Social and Economic Characteristics, American Indian and Alaska Native Areas.*

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