



CENTER FOR  
INDIAN COUNTRY  
DEVELOPMENT



# CULTIVATING NATIVE ECONOMIES IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

**Tribal Broadband**

OCTOBER 16, 2023





*The views expressed here are the presenter's and not necessarily those of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis or the Federal Reserve System.*



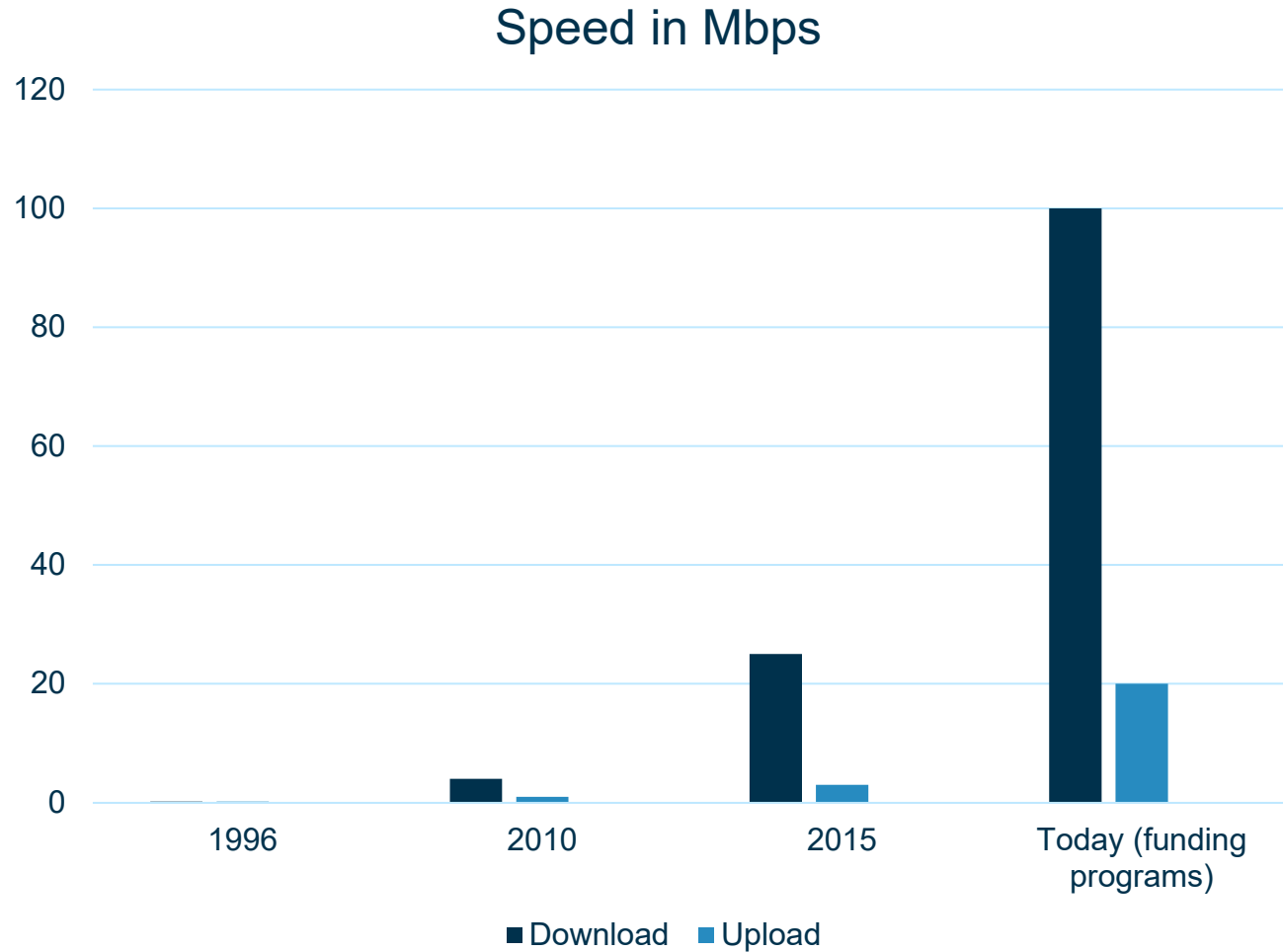
# AGENDA

- Statistics & Data
- History
- Today



# STATISTICS & DATA

# Definition of Broadband (1996 – Present)



*For more information:*

*The FCC Definition of Broadband:  
Analysis and History  
([broadbandnow.com](http://broadbandnow.com))*

# Statistics (Pre-Pandemic)

**18** percent of people on tribal lands lack broadband Internet access<sup>1</sup>

**30** percent of people on rural tribal lands lack broadband Internet access<sup>1</sup>

**33** percent of people on rural tribal lands do not have home Internet service<sup>2</sup>

- 21 percentage points higher than households on rural, neighboring non-tribal lands<sup>2</sup>



1. FCC Form 477 Data, June 2020

2. American Community Survey 2015-2019 Data; [Bauer, Feir, & Gregg \(2022\)](#)

# Data Overview



Speed Tests

Federal Communications Commission

U.S. Census Bureau

National Telecommunications and  
Information Administration



# HISTORY





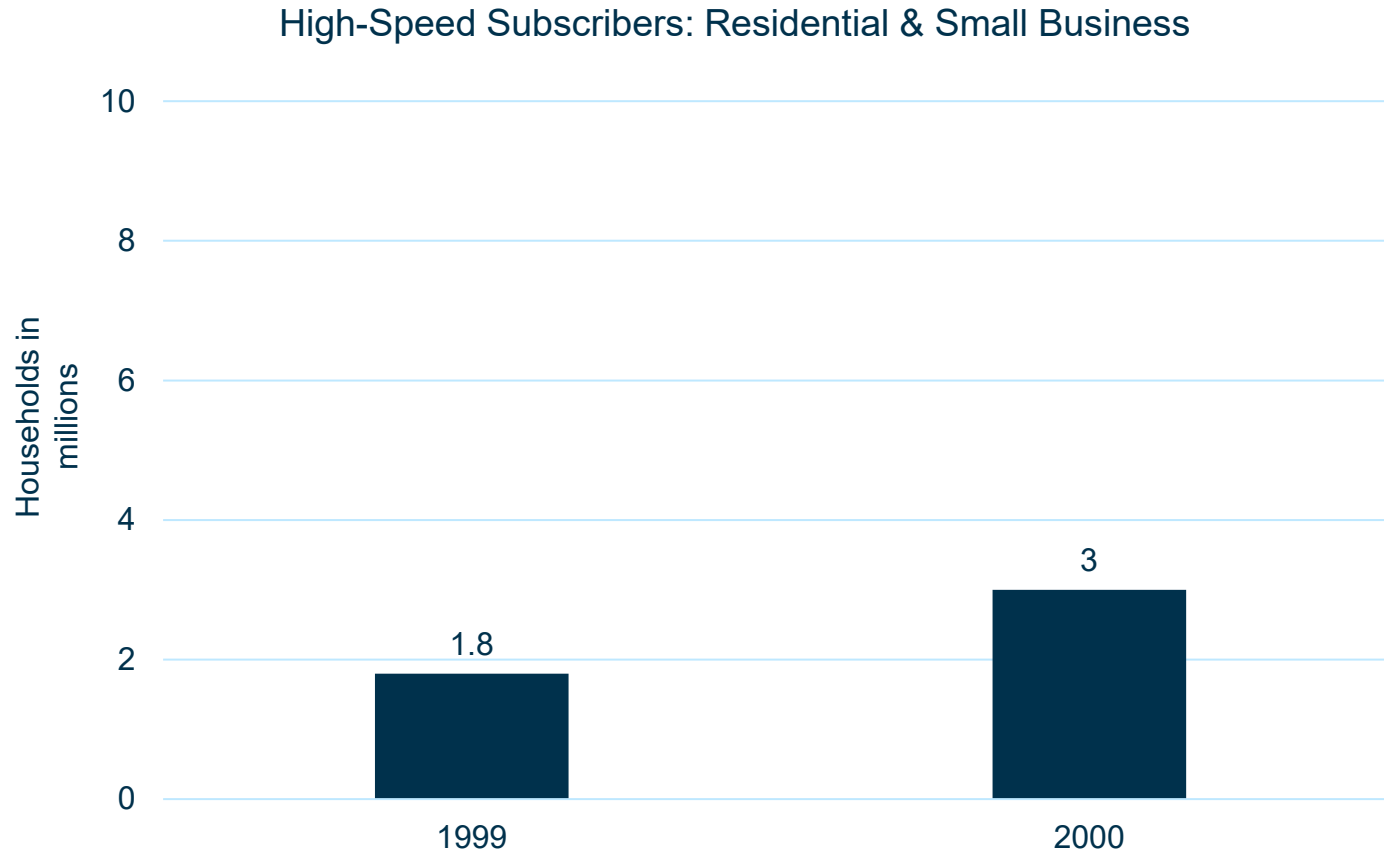
**PEOPLE IN INDIAN COUNTRY HAVE ALWAYS  
BEEN EARLY ADOPTERS OF TECHNOLOGY**

# The 1996 Telecommunications Act



Lack of Tribal Input

# 1996 Broadband Definition in 1999 and 2000



*At the time, the U.S. had 105.5 million households.*

*Only 70% of Zip Codes reported at least one subscriber of high-speed Internet access.*

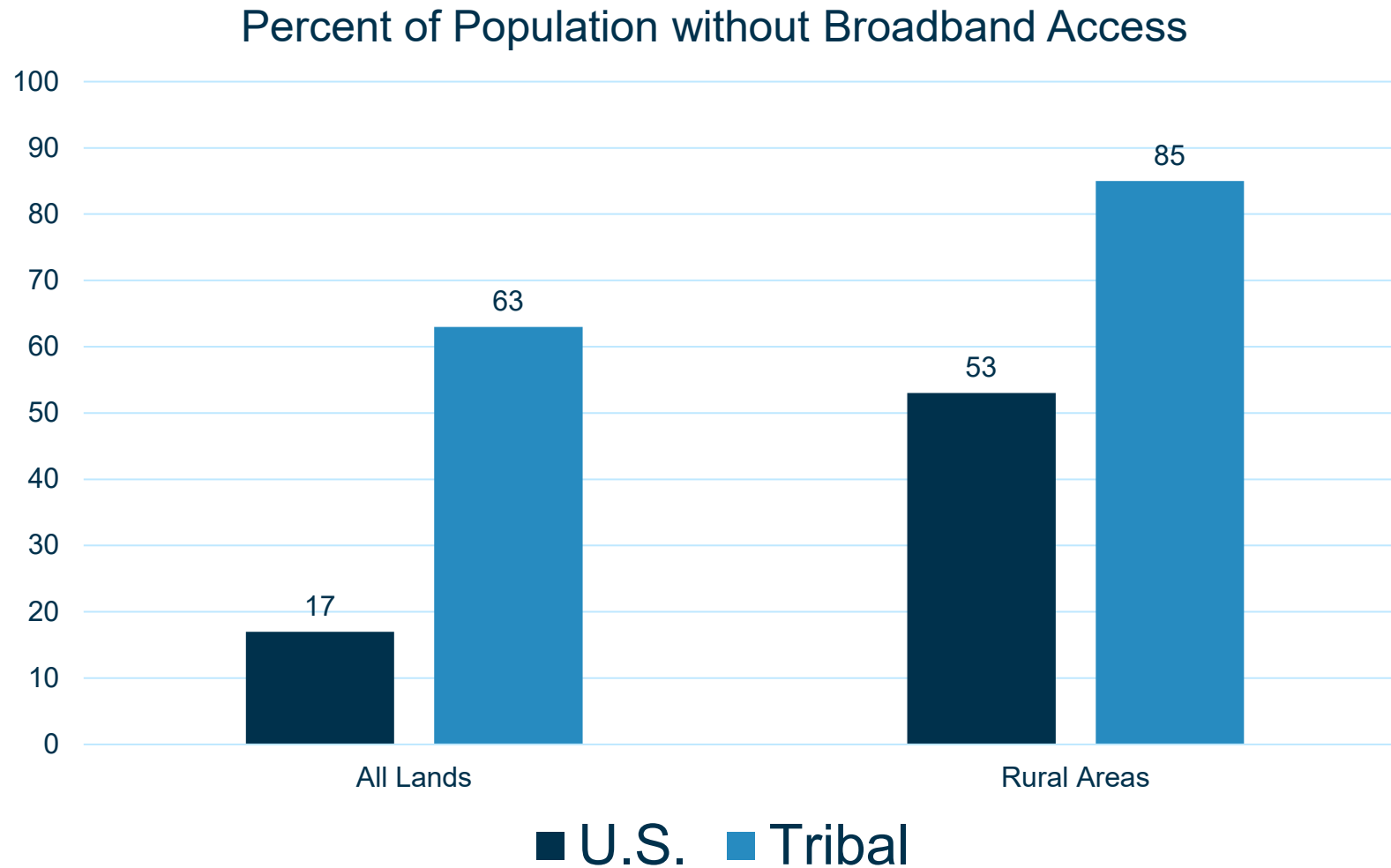


# Little Information About Tribal Lands

The focus in the 2000s was on the expansion of broadband nationally, not on the disparities in access.



# 2015: Disparities in Access



# 2020: 2.5 GHz Tribal Priority Window

Free licenses for wireless spectrum available for tribes





# COVID-19

- Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program created
- BEAD program created
- Emergency Broadband Benefit created (later renamed to Affordable Connectivity Program)
- News coverage about lack of Internet access in Indian Country



An aerial photograph of a wide river valley, likely the Snake River Valley, captured in a monochromatic blue color scheme. The river flows from the foreground towards the background, winding through a valley. On the left bank, there are several buildings and a road. The surrounding hills and mountains are covered in dense forests. The sky is clear and blue. The word "TODAY" is overlaid in the center of the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**TODAY**

# U.S. Department of Agriculture

- Broadband expansion for rural economies
- The role of technology in agriculture
- Supporting local cooperatives and utilities





# Federal Communications Commission

FCC National Broadband Map

Search by Address

Enter address

Location Providers Area Download

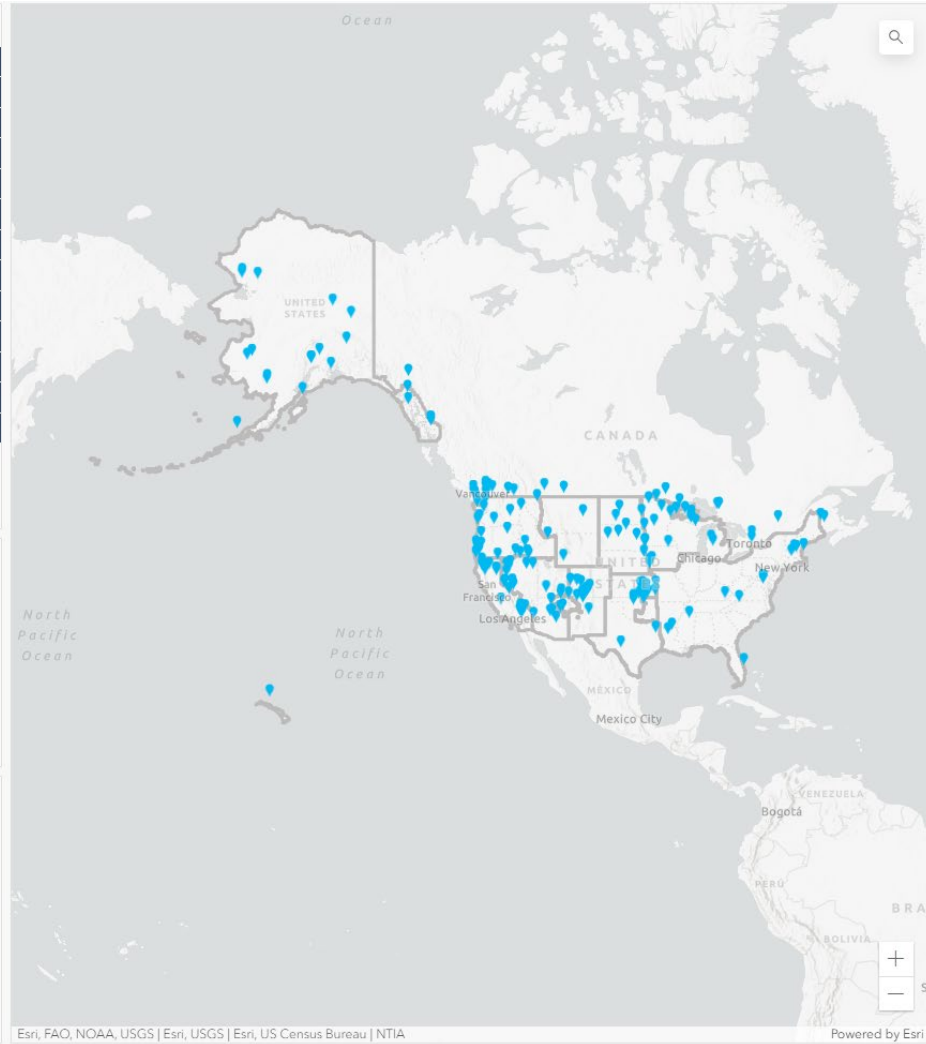
mapbox

Mapbox © OpenStreetMap Improve this map

## FCC National Broadband Map

# National Telecommunications and Information Administration

BIA Region Selector
Alaska (ARO)
Eastern (ERO)
Eastern Oklahoma (EOR)
Great Plains (GPR)
Hawaii (Hawai)
Midwest (MWR)
Navajo (NRO)
Northwest (NWR)
Pacific (PRO)
Rocky Mountain (RMR)
Southern Plains (SPR)
Southwest (SWR)
Western (WRO)



## Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

Total Projects

**198**

Total Amount Funded

**\$1,790,929,457.84**

Esri, FAO, NOAA, USGS | Esri, USGS | Esri, US Census Bureau | NTIA

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# Takeaways



*Broadband access on tribal lands is a complex policy issue.*

*Broadband is just one area that shows data gaps on tribal lands.*



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