



*Braiding the past and future
of Native economies*



ANALYZING NATIVE ECONOMIES ACROSS TIME AND PLACE

AMY BESAW MEDFORD, RESEARCH AFFILIATE, HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL
AMALEA JUBARA, RESEARCH ASSISTANT, CICD

CICD 10TH ANNIVERSARY DATA SUMMIT
OCTOBER 9, 2025



Social and Economic Changes in American Indian Reservations, 1990–2020

Amy Besaw Medford, Research Affiliate

October 9, 2025



HARVARD Kennedy School

**PROJECT ON INDIGENOUS
GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT**

Databook, First Edition 1990 and 2000

CABAZON, THE INDIAN GAMING REGULATORY
ACT, AND THE SOCIOECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES
OF AMERICAN INDIAN GOVERNMENTAL GAMING
A TEN-YEAR REVIEW

AMERICAN INDIANS ON RESERVATIONS:
A DATABOOK OF SOCIOECONOMIC
CHANGE BETWEEN
THE 1990 AND 2000 CENSUSES

JONATHAN B. TAYLOR
JOSEPH P. KALT

JANUARY 2005

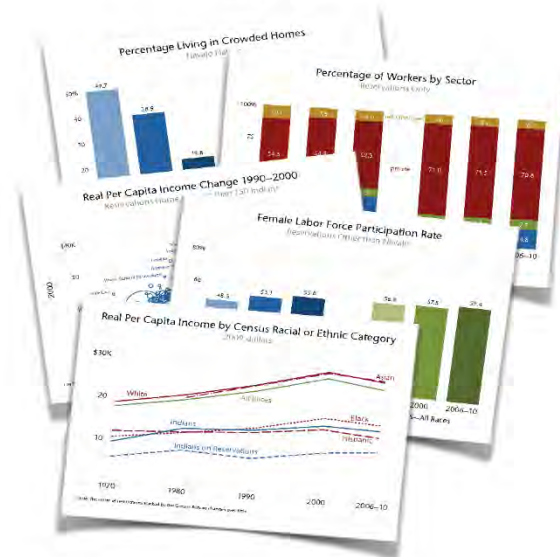


“Indeed, the progress evident among non-gaming tribes in the 1990s suggests that it is not so much gaming that is driving the socioeconomic changes evident across Indian America as it is a broader policy of Indian self-government. Jurisdiction over the gaming choice is part, but hardly the entirety, of that policy.”

Databook, Second Edition 1990, 2000, and 2010

Social and Economic Change on American Indian Reservations

A Databook of the US Censuses and the
American Community Survey
1990–2010



May 15, 2014

Randall K.Q. Akee

Jonathan B. Taylor

“By 2010, the vast majority of American Indian tribes could be considered gaming tribes....Gaming operations have an impact on almost every American Indian reservation given the existence of revenue-sharing funds and intertribal gaming-device leasing...”

“The fact that growth from 1990 to 2010 occurred despite low and declining federal funding for tribal governments indicates the power of increased Native sovereignty and economic development.”

Databook, Third Edition

1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020

Social and Economic Changes in
American Indian Reservations

A Databook of the US Census and the
American Community Survey,
Third Edition

1990–2020

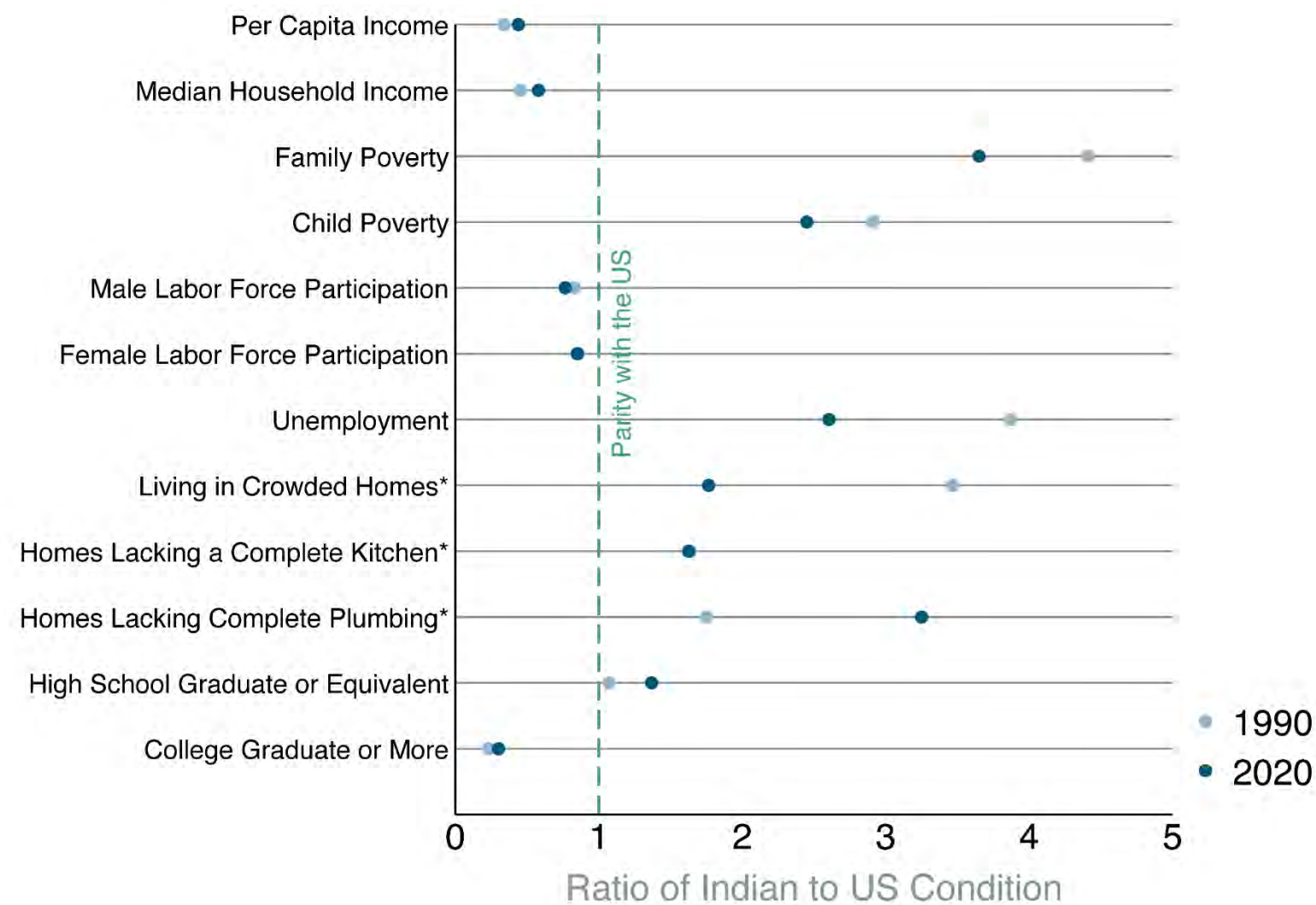
Randall Akee, Elijah Moreno, and
Amy Besaw Medford

September 2025



“The self-determination policies initiated in the 1970s matured into broader self-governance frameworks in the 1990s, allowing tribes to reclaim control over vital areas such as education, healthcare, and natural resources...These developments marked a transformative era for tribal economies in the first two decades of the 21st century, notwithstanding the gap between life on reservations and the US.”

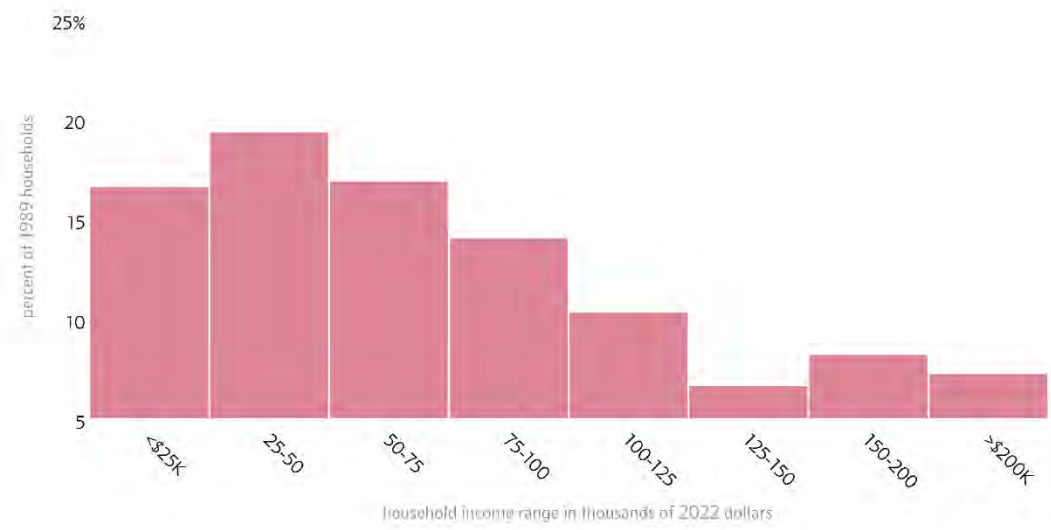
Third Edition Findings



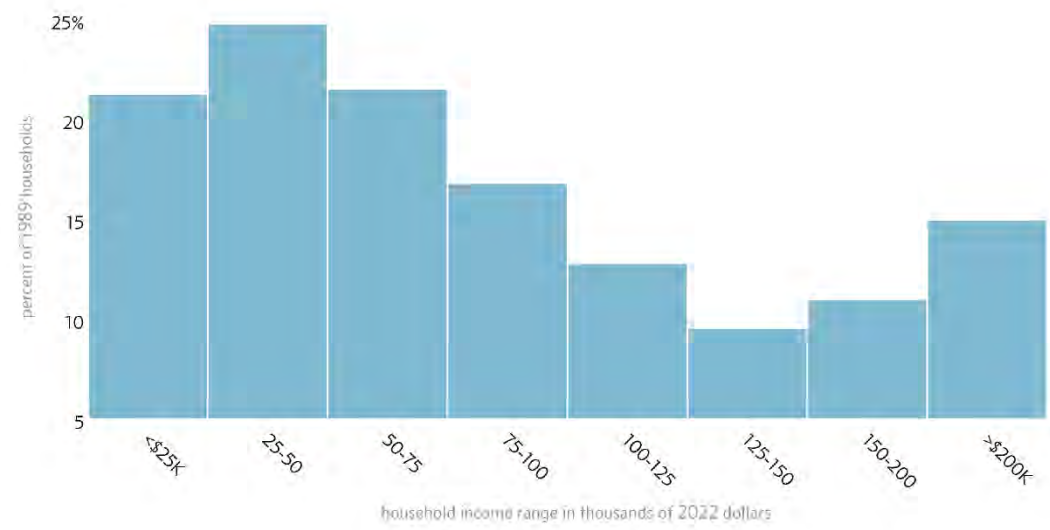
Data Limitations

- Self Identification vs. Tribal Citizenship
- AIAN Alone Population Outside Indian Areas
- Decennial vs American Community Survey
- Variations of Reservations
- Sparse Historical Data

Income Distribution of the United States, All People, 1989 and 2020



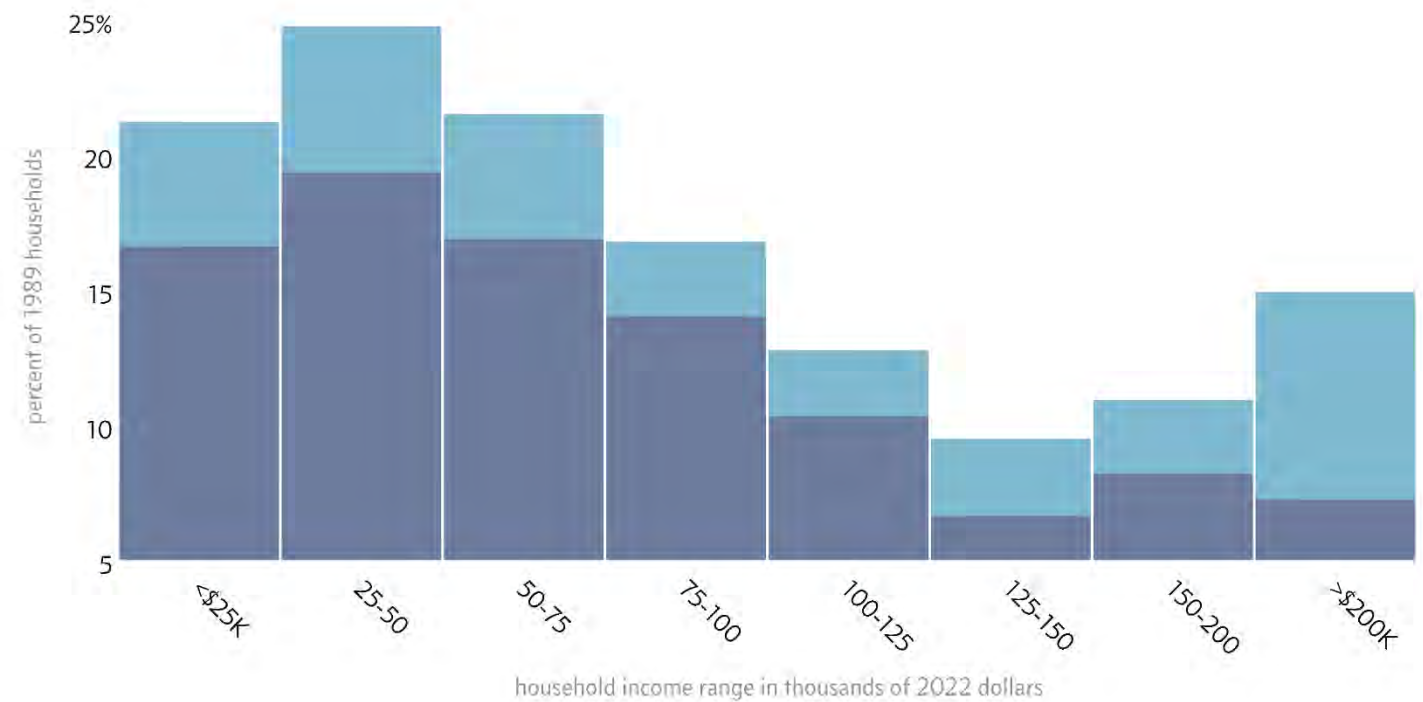
1989



2020

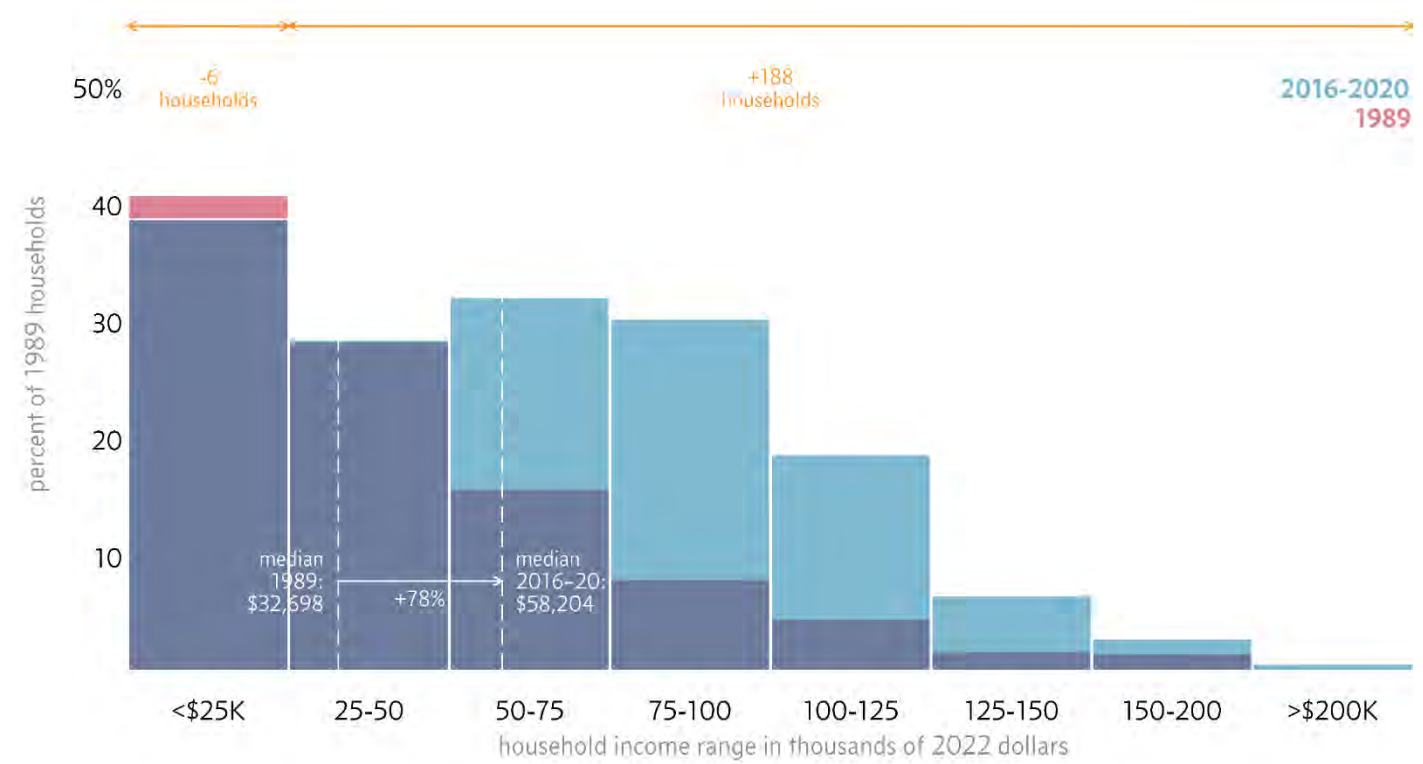
Jonathan B. Taylor, *The Strength of Multi-Institutional Development: The Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, 1990–2022*, Taylor Policy Group, Inc., Hyannis, MA, December 12, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.61235/TVVZ1237>.

Change in the Income Distributions of the United States, All People, 1989 and 2020



Jonathan B. Taylor, *The Strength of Multi-Institutional Development: The Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, 1990–2022*, Taylor Policy Group, Inc., Hyannis, MA, December 12, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.61235/TVVZ1237>.

Change in the Income Distributions of the Winnebago Reservation, AIAN Alone, 1989 and 2020



Jonathan B. Taylor, *The Strength of Multi-Institutional Development: The Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, 1990–2022*, Taylor Policy Group, Inc., Hyannis, MA, December 12, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.61235/TVVZ1237>.

Honoring Nations Awards

- Ho-Chunk, Inc. (2000)
- Whirling Thunder (2002)
- Winnebago Community Development Fund (2006)
- Ho-Chunk Village (2015)

Thank you!

Please reach out if you have any questions:

Amy Besaw Medford

amy_besaw_medford@hks.harvard.edu



NATIVE ECONOMIC TRENDS

Visualizing Indian Country data across time and place

AMALEA JUBARA, RESEARCH ASSISTANT, CICD

CICD 10TH ANNIVERSARY DATA SUMMIT
OCTOBER 9, 2025



Data work is embedded in CI CD's core strategies

Our impact is anchored to three core strategies:

(Grounds everything else!)

- **Engage** with Native nations and Indigenous communities, businesses, and organizations to understand their economic conditions and opportunities;
- **Analyze** Indian Country economic data and research to provide data on policy gaps and evidence-based solutions; and
- **Inform** economic practitioners and policymakers with credible, objective research that can advance economic prosperity for Indian Country.

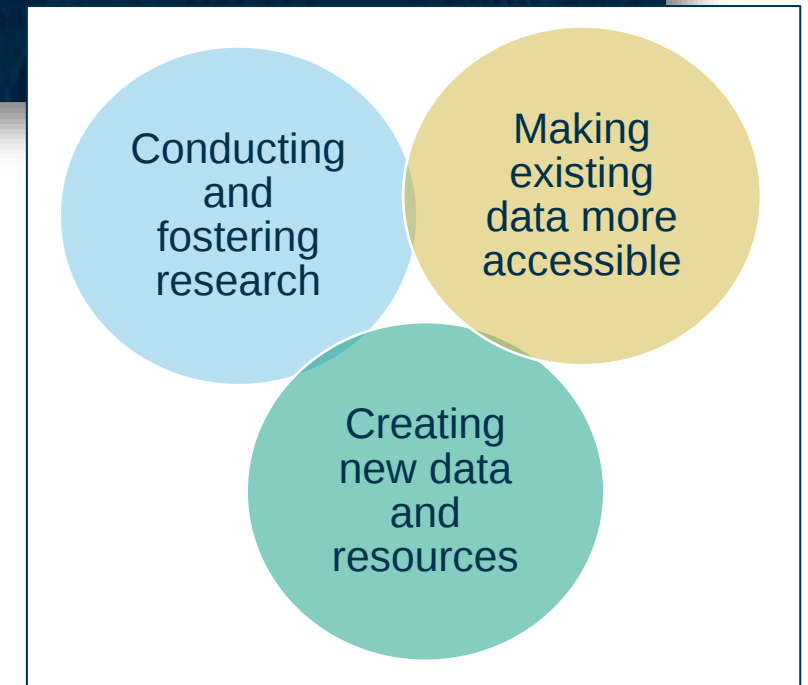


CICD's Data Initiative facilitates expanded data work

2022 **data initiative** expansion:
Federal Reserve System effort to
strengthen data and research to inform
economic policy and economic
development in U.S. Indigenous
communities

**Aim: Make data available and easier
to find and use for economic empowerment
in Indian Country—and do that in a good way.**

- Principles for Research and Data Use
- Internal data stewardship working group
- Feedback from external experts on specific data questions and products

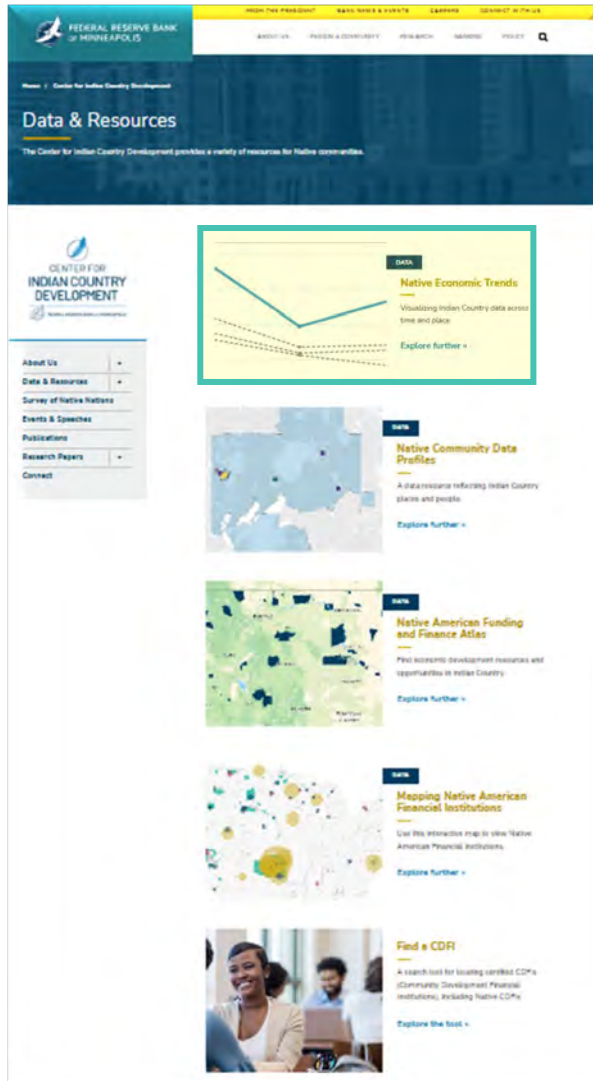


Building on Native Community Data Profiles



- **Native Community Data Profiles** offers an easy-to-use, place-based **snapshot** of economic and demographic conditions
- Visualizes the **most recently available data** from more than a dozen public sources
- Engagement with community members and data users highlighted ongoing data needs...
 - What does this data look like **over time**?
 - What if I want to look at data for **multiple areas at once**?
 - How does my geography **compare to other areas**?
- That feedback directly shaped the development of a new interactive tool...

NEW: Native Economic Trends



A new interactive tool designed to support Native communities in exploring how conditions have shifted over the past three decades—highlighting changes in economic opportunity, education, housing, and more.

Purpose

Offer a flexible, visual way to explore long-term trends across Native geographies—whether you're focused on a single community or comparing patterns across a region.

Key features

- See long-term trends at a glance
- Select multiple Native areas
- View state and national comparisons
- Overlay indicators in a dynamic and responsive tool

Native Economic Trends: Current data domains

Places

- 718 Native geographies (all geographies tabulated by Census)
- States and commonwealths
- United States as a whole



People

- Total population
- Native population
- Population density
- Median age
- Age groups



Education

- Total K–12 enrollment
- Educational attainment (*all, Native*)



Infrastructure

- Land, water, and total area
- Total housing units
- Median home value
- Median gross rent
- Vacancy
- Share owner-occupied (*all, Native*)
- Share crowded (*all, Native*)
- Share cost-burdened
- Computer access
- Internet access
- High-speed internet access

\$ Economy

- Total civilian labor force
- Labor force participation (*all, Native*)
- Employment-to-population ratio (*all, Native*)
- Unemployment (*all, Native*)
- Median household income (*all, Native*)
- Per-person income (*all, Native*)
- Poverty (*all, Native*)
- Youth poverty (*all, Native*)
- Aggregate income

Getting started: Compare mode



Getting started: **Combine** mode



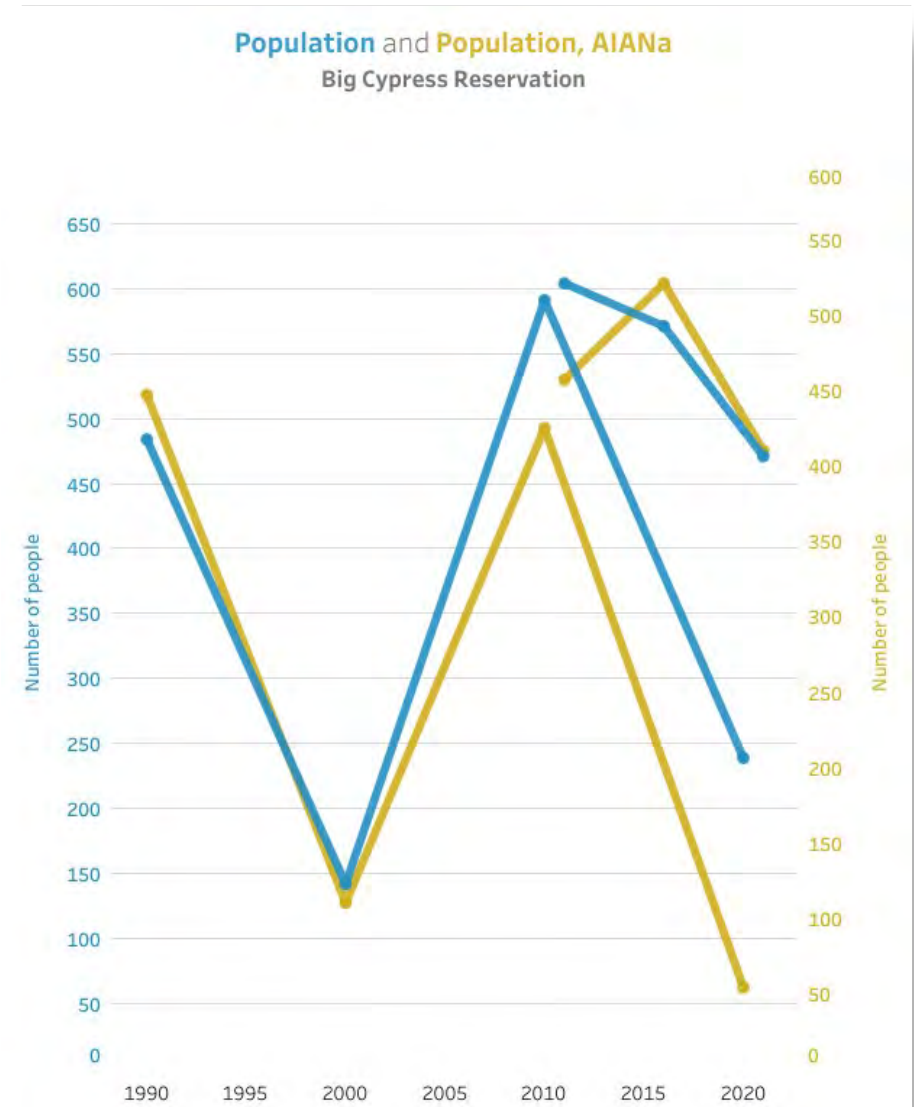
Considerations for data use

- Place based $\neq$ Native-entity based
- *Census estimates $\neq$ directly measured quantities*
- Methodological changes such as differential privacy and changes in question formatting and instructions impact the stability of data over time
 - Smaller American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Areas are most affected
- These extreme shifts often reflect **methodological changes** and **differences between surveys**, not actual demographic change

Data note: This datapoint represents a small number of observations (N = 142); use care when interpreting.

Data note: Respondents could self-identify beginning in 2000 as more than one race. This may affect the comparability of this datapoint to before that time.

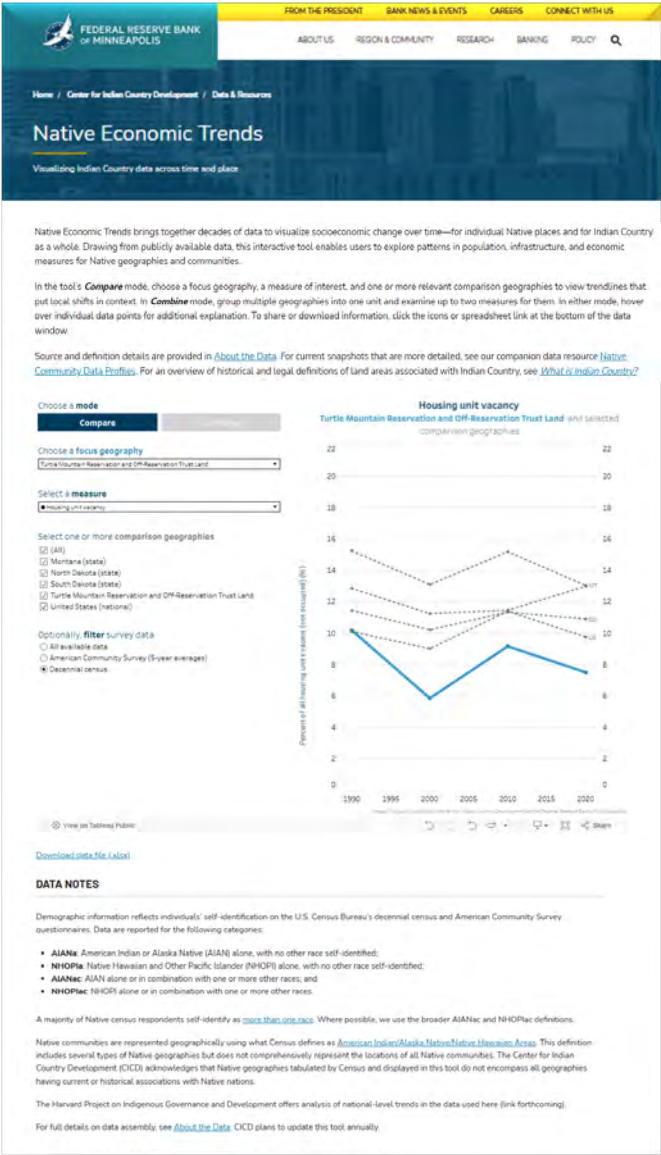
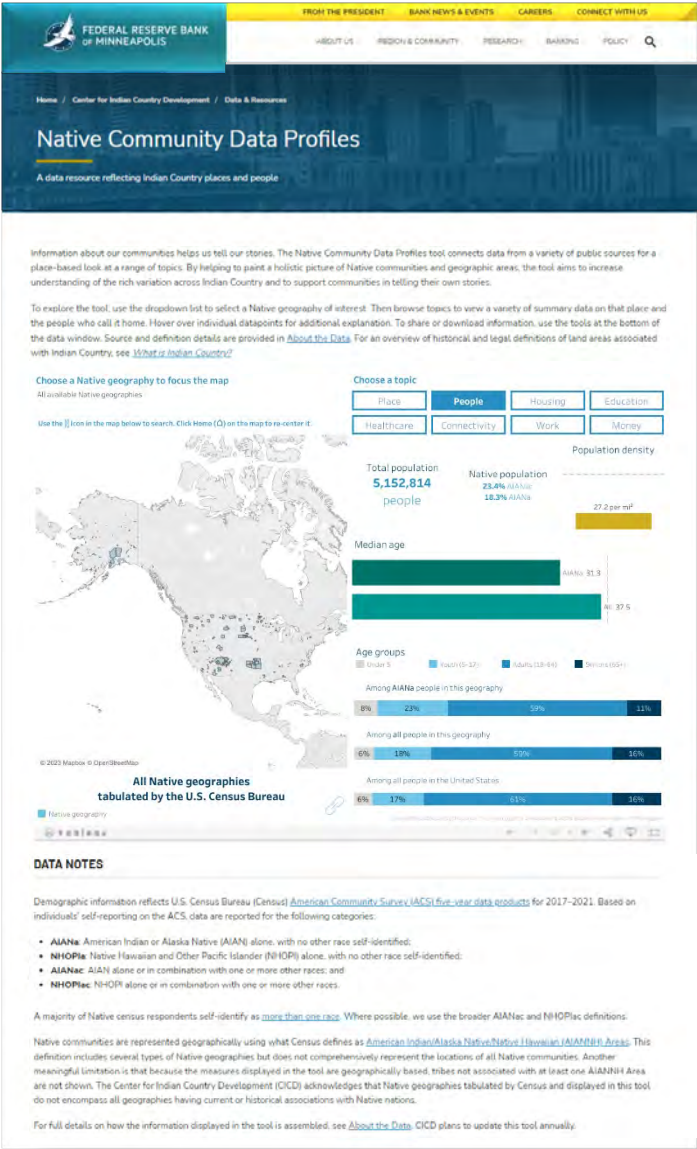
Data note: The U.S. Census Bureau applied new privacy protection measures in this data year. This may affect the comparability of this datapoint to previous years.



23

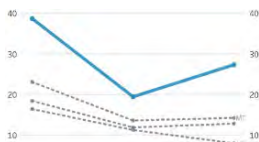


Sibling products

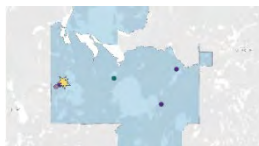


Where to find public CI/CD Data Initiative data products

Addressing chronic data gaps to empower Native individuals and communities to shape their economic futures and tell their stories



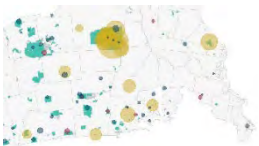
Native Economic Trends



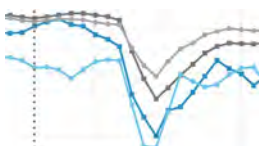
Native Community Data Profiles



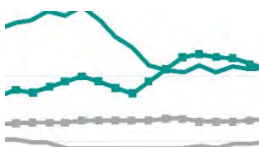
Native American Funding and Finance Atlas



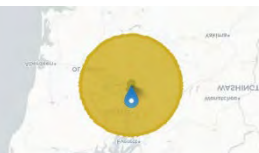
Native American Financial Institutions Map



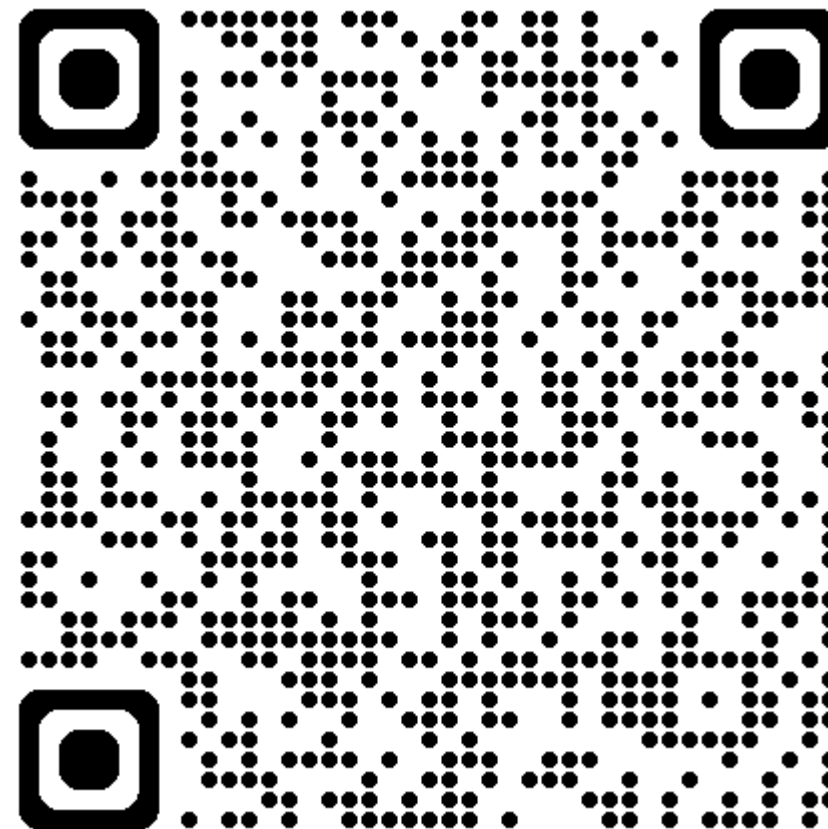
Native American Labor Market Dashboard



Native Entrepreneurship Dashboard



Tribal Economic Zones



<https://www.minneapolisfed.org/indiancountry/resources/>

Thank you!

Amalea Jubara

Research Assistant

amalea.jubara@mpls.fed.org

minneapolisfed.org/indiancountry



Photo by Jaida Grey Eagle



Thank you!