

# UNDERSTANDING THE NATIVE AMERICAN LABOR MARKET

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CENTER FOR  
**INDIAN COUNTRY  
DEVELOPMENT**



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# ABOUT THE CENTER FOR INDIAN COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT (CICD)

The Center for Indian Country Development (CICD) at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis is a national research and policy institute focused on economic development in Indian Country.

We work to advance the economic self-determination and prosperity of Native nations and Indigenous communities through actionable data and research that make substantial contributions to public policy. We serve American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities across the United States.

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



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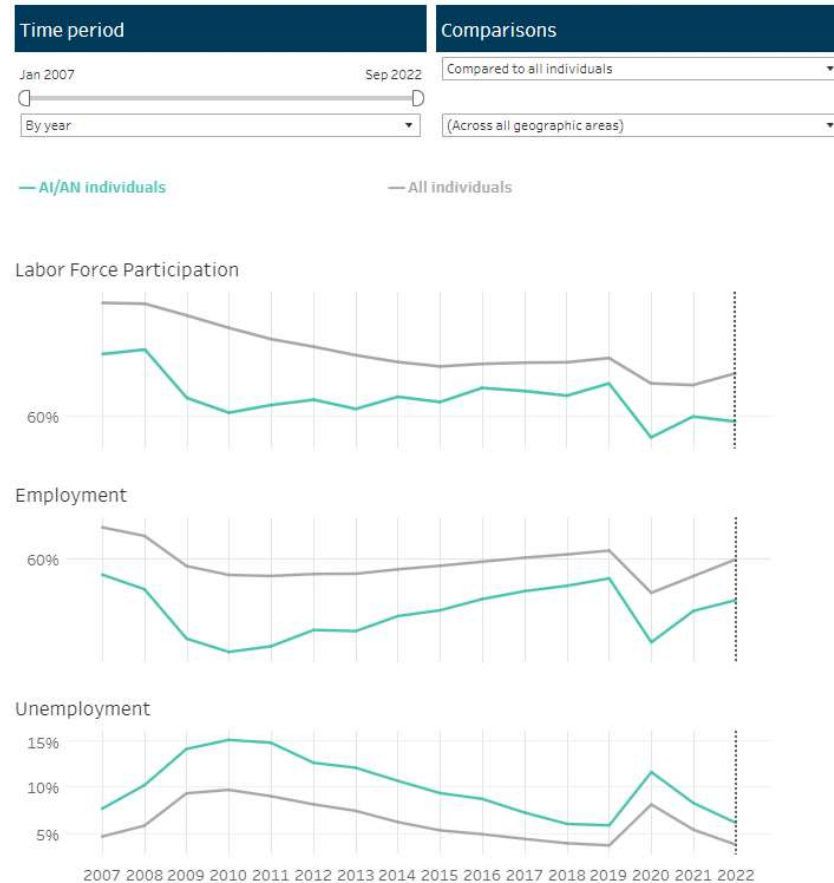
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## In the dark about the Native labor market

- In early 2021, there were no regularly published Native labor market estimates
- Bureau of Labor Statistics published a monthly report that included racial/ethnic breakdowns
  - Nothing on American Indian and Alaska Native workers
  - But the underlying BLS/Census microdata from the Current Population Survey do identify AI/AN workers
- CICD used the microdata to produce an accessible, regularly updated dashboard in mid-2021
- BLS began reporting on AI/AN labor market outcomes in 2022

# The last fifteen years of the Native labor market

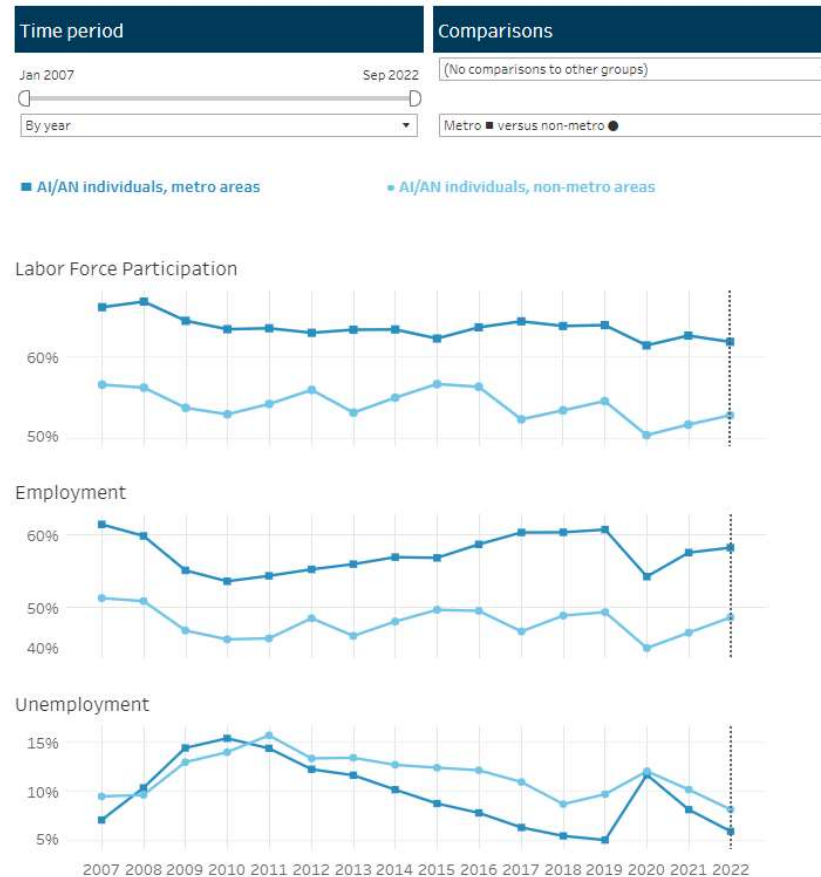
- Start with annual estimates for AI/AN workers and all workers
- Gaps are persistent
- Worse during downturns



Source: Current Population Survey and CICD calculations.

# Comparing metro and non-metro labor markets

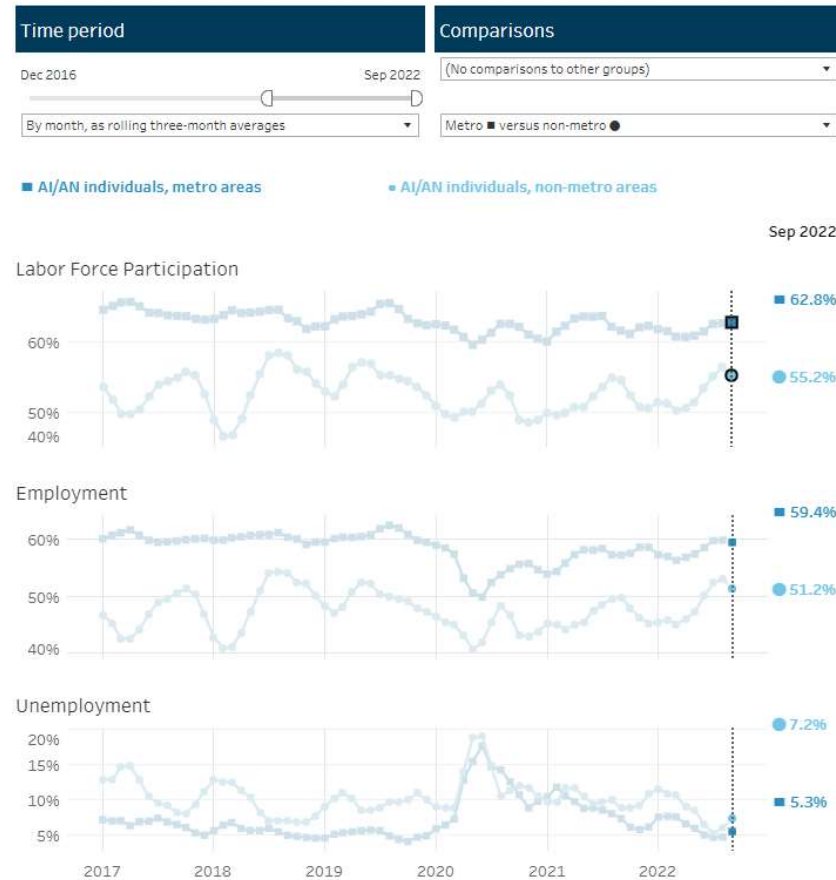
- Dashboard allows for different data views
- Here you can see estimates for metro and non-metro areas
- Consistently more disadvantage in non-metro areas
- Long-run decline in AI/AN unemployment rate in metro areas



Source: Current Population Survey and CICD calculations.

# Zooming in on recent labor market experience

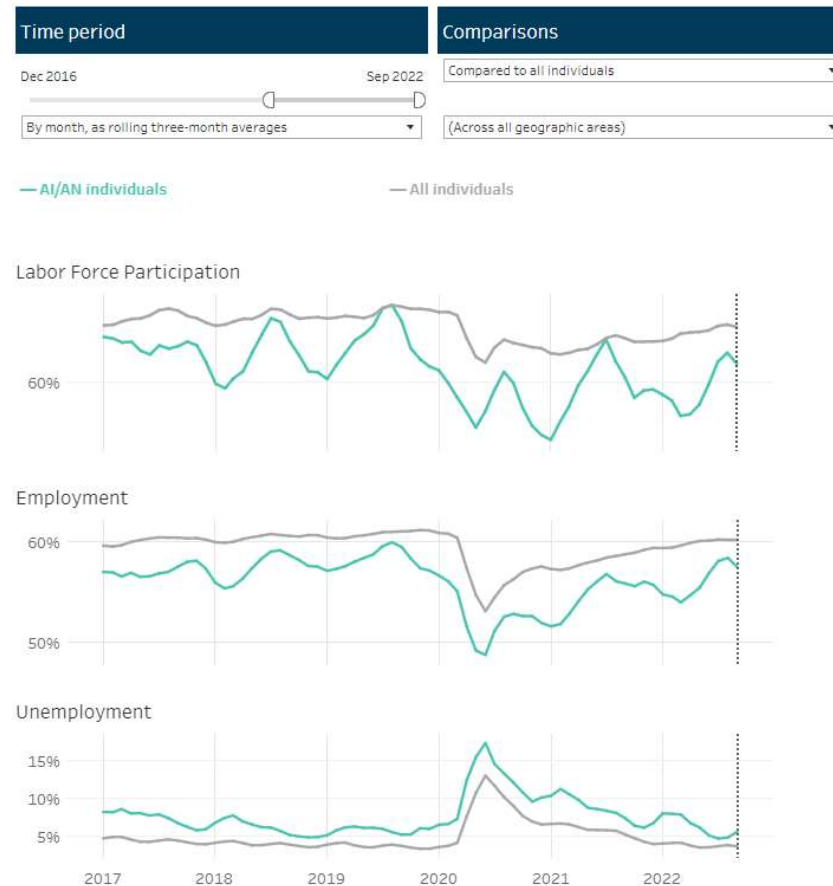
- Switching view to:
  - Last six years
  - Three-month lagging averages
  - Estimates for metro and non-metro areas
- Non-metro estimates are noisy but help show a broad recovery from Pandemic Recession



Source: Current Population Survey and CICD calculations.

# Comparing recent labor market experiences of AI/AN and all workers

- Switching view to:
  - Last six years
  - Three-month lagging averages
  - Estimates for AI/AN workers and all workers
- Initial months of pandemic were very bad
- But recovery was relatively quick and gaps have shrunk



Source: Current Population Survey and CICD calculations.

## How is this data reporting useful?

- We can see a few key trends that otherwise would not be visible:
  - Strictly from a labor market perspective, Great Recession was worse than the Pandemic Recession for AI/AN workers
  - American Indian and Alaska Native workers in non-metro areas participated less in the recovery from the Great Recession
  - By historical standards, relatively quick recovery from Pandemic Recession for AI/AN workers and overall labor market
- These estimates are important for anyone who cares about how AI/AN workers are faring
  - Policymakers need them when they determine fiscal and monetary policy
  - Better data can help show where labor market disadvantage is most severe
- Larger samples would help with month-to-month precision and allow for richer analysis





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