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The American Community Survey: Resources for American Indians and Alaska Natives

U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration

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The American Community Survey



Resources for American Indians and Alaska Natives

"ACS is the future...no more having to use 10-year-old-data. ACS provides our native nations, businesses, and institutions current data about where we live, what we do, and how we live. It's a tremendous source for keeping our People united and connected to our past and our collective future. We need to embrace the ACS and help to make the data collection and reporting even richer."

—Leigh Ann McGee, Tribal consultant and former chair
Census Advisory Committee on the American Indian and Alaska Native Population



What is the American Community Survey (ACS)?

The ACS is a part of the U.S. Census Bureau's Decennial Census Program and is designed to provide more current demographic, social, economic, and housing estimates throughout the decade. The questions on the ACS supply the data Tribes may need for a range of programs affecting education, veterans, employment, housing and community development, public health care, services for the elderly and disabled, and assistance programs for low-income families and children. Statistics produced by the ACS can guide Tribes and Tribal organizations as they make important decisions.



Why is Tribal participation in the ACS important?

Responses to the questions on the ACS supply the statistics needed to assess a variety of programs. When American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) complete the ACS, they are helping to ensure that the best statistics are available to their communities to inform future decisions. This need for accurate and complete data is particularly important for Tribes and Tribal organizations.

How do AI/AN complete the ACS?



The Census Bureau samples addresses—not individuals. Most households receive a letter that explains the ACS and provides instructions to access and complete the survey online.



A paper questionnaire is mailed if the online survey is not completed within a few weeks.



If no survey is completed online or returned by mail, an attempt is made to contact the address by phone. Telephone interviewers will give a 1-800 phone number that can be called to confirm that the person calling is with the Census Bureau.



If we are still unable to reach a household, or if the address is in an area that is difficult to reach by mail and phone, such as parts of Alaska, we may conduct interviews by personal visit. In these cases, field representatives will conduct personal interviews using laptop computers. Often, field representatives may be Tribal members.



Is our personal information safe?

Yes. Only authorized persons with a work-related need-to-know may view a respondent's personal information. Title 13 of the U.S. Code prohibits the Census Bureau from revealing your information to anyone, including companies, other federal agencies, and law enforcement agencies. Any Census Bureau employee who violates these provisions is subject to a fine up to \$250,000 or a prison sentence up to 5 years, or both. The final published statistics do not reveal names, addresses, or any other information that would identify an individual respondent or business—these identifiers are deleted from the files.





Will Tribal communities be able to use the ACS?

Tribal planners and administrators, as well as national organizations serving American Indians and Alaska Natives, may find ACS estimates useful in accessing funding for Tribal programs and initiatives or planning for future economic development, housing needs, and access to health and educational services for the people in their communities. In combination with information from Tribal administrative records, ACS estimates complete the portrait of a community and provide an enhanced view of a community's current and future needs. However, to ensure that these estimates are accurate, we need your help to encourage your Tribal community members to respond.



Will the Census Bureau help Tribal communities use the ACS estimates?

All ACS estimates are available at www.factfinder.census.gov. The ACS Web site, www.census.gov/acs, also provides a free series of handbooks, presentations, and data-user guidance that make accessing this important information easier.

Local data dissemination specialists are available through each Census Bureau regional office to give presentations and help people find, use, and understand ACS statistics. You can find contact information for these local specialists on the map below.

You can also find contact information for the many groups that participate in the Census Bureau State Data Center (SDC) and Census Information Center (CIC) programs, including those serving the AI/AN community, at www.census.gov/sdc/index.html.



Who can we contact for additional help?

To complete the survey over the phone or ask additional questions about survey procedures, please call the Telephone Questionnaire Assistance Line at **1-800-354-7271**.

For questions about local representatives and procedures, or to get help using or understanding ACS statistics from a local specialist, please call your Census Bureau regional office. (See map at right for contact numbers.)

To get more information about AI/AN participation in the ACS and other Census Bureau surveys, please call the Tribal Affairs Liaison at **(301) 763-6100**.

For all other questions and concerns, please call the Census Bureau Customer Help Center at **1-800-923-8282**.



- Atlanta:** 1-800-424-6974
- Chicago:** 1-800-865-6384
- Denver:** 1-800-852-6159
- Los Angeles:** 1-800-992-3530
- New York:** 1-800-991-2520
- Philadelphia:** 1-866-238-1374

What questions will the ACS ask?

The topics included on the ACS were chosen because federal and state government require the data to manage or evaluate programs. For example, information on income is required for use by the U.S. Social Security Administration, the National School Lunch Program, the Low Income Energy Assistance Program, and the U.S. Department of Education for grant allocation. The following federal laws and programs affecting American Indians and Alaska Natives also use ACS estimates:

- Civil Rights Act (1964)
- Native American Programs Act (1974)
- Indian Health Care Improvement Act (1976)
- State Children's Health Insurance Program (1997)
- Veterans Benefits Improvement Act (1994)

You can find fact sheets that explain why we ask each question and provide common uses of each question on the ACS Web site at www.census.gov/acs/www/about_the_survey/questions_and_why_we_ask/.

