

## 2. THE GEOGRAPHY OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE AREAS

Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) are tabulated for a variety of different geographic areas, including states, counties, cities, towns, census tracts, and block groups, as well as American Indian and Alaska Native legal and statistical areas, such as American Indian Reservations, Alaska Native Village Statistical Areas, or Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Areas.

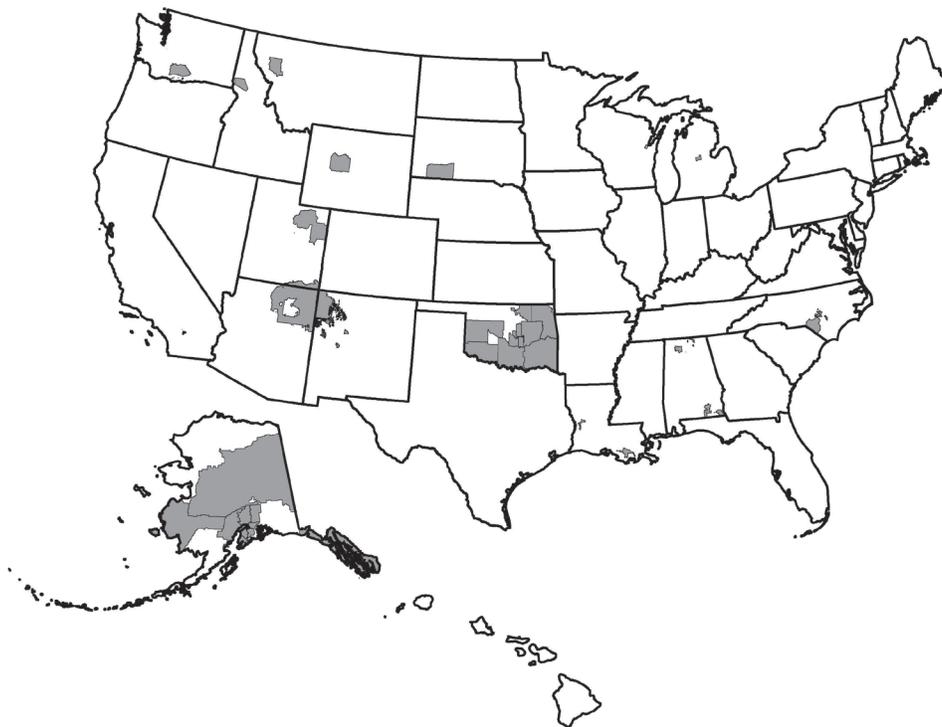
The availability of data for a specific population group will depend on the size of that population group or the population size of the geographic area of interest.

*TIP: Most American Indian and Alaska Native areas have populations of less than 20,000 and therefore receive only 5-year data products. This means that for many topics, 1-year estimates of the American Indian and Alaska Native population are only available at the national- and state-level.*

Table 2.1 lists the American Indian and Alaska Native areas for which 2015 ACS data are available as 1-year estimates (15 areas) or 1-year Supplemental Estimates (38 areas). Alaska Native Regional Corporations—unique corporate entities established to conduct business with Alaska Natives—are included as separate geographic areas on this list. Note that the information in this table is based on current geographic boundaries and is expected to change over time. The ACS uses boundaries as of January 1 of the last year of the estimate period. For example, the 2015 ACS 1-year estimates use boundaries as of January 1, 2015, as reported to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 2.1 shows a map of the 38 American Indian and Alaska Native areas that met the 65,000 population threshold for 2015 ACS 1-year estimates, or the 20,000 population threshold for 1-year Supplemental Estimates. Of these areas, half were located in either Alaska or Oklahoma.

Figure 2.1 American Indian and Alaska Native Areas for Which ACS 1-Year Estimates or ACS 1-Year Supplemental Estimates Were Released



Note: One-year estimates are available for areas with at least 65,000 people, and 1-Year Supplemental Estimates are available for areas with at least 20,000 people.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

Table 2.1. **American Indian and Alaska Native Areas for Which ACS 1-Year Estimates and 1-Year Supplemental Estimates Were Released (2015)**

American Indian Area / Alaska Native Area	1-Year Estimates	1-Year Supplemental Estimates	2015 ACS Population
Calista Alaska Native Regional Corporation, AK		X	25,742
Cook Inlet Alaska Native Regional Corporation, AK	X	X	453,344
Doyon Alaska Native Regional Corporation, AK	X	X	114,037
Sealaska Alaska Native Regional Corporation, AK	X	X	74,901
Agua Caliente Indian Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land, CA		X	23,538
Cher-O-Creek State Designated Tribal Statistical Area, AL	X	X	86,136
Cherokee Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK	X	X	521,037
Cheyenne-Arapaho Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK	X	X	193,816
Chickaloon Alaska Native Village Statistical Area, AK		X	27,588
Chickasaw Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK	X	X	309,249
Choctaw Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK	X	X	232,548
Citizen Potawatomi Nation-Absentee Shawnee Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK	X	X	122,695
Coharie State Designated Tribal Statistical Area, NC		X	64,577
Creek Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK	X	X	784,627
Echota Cherokee State Designated Tribal Statistical Area, AL		X	57,126
Flathead Reservation, MT		X	28,595
Four Winds Cherokee State Designated Tribal Statistical Area, LA		X	33,352
Isabella Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land, MI		X	26,054
Kaw/Ponca joint-use Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK		X	27,774
Kenaitze Alaska Native Village Statistical Area, AK		X	34,586
Kickapoo Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK		X	19,916
Kiowa-Comanche-Apache-Fort Sill Apache Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK	X	X	196,119
Knik Alaska Native Village Statistical Area, AK	X	X	73,379
Lumbee State Designated Tribal Statistical Area, NC	X	X	507,718
MaChis Lower Creek State Designated Tribal Statistical Area, AL		X	23,101
Navajo Nation Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land, AZ--NM--UT	X	X	176,302
Nez Perce Reservation, ID		X	21,181
Oneida (WI) Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land, WI		X	25,478
Osage Reservation, OK		X	47,887
Pine Ridge Reservation, SD--NE		X	20,630
Puyallup Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land, WA		X	51,390
Sac and Fox Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK		X	60,315
Samish Tribal Designated Statistical Area, WA		X	38,539
Seminole Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area, OK		X	23,737
Uintah and Ouray Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land, UT		X	28,386
United Houma Nation State Designated Tribal Statistical Area, LA	X	X	207,487
Wind River Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land, WY		X	25,626
Yakama Nation Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land, WA		X	31,642

Note: One-year estimates are available for areas with at least 65,000 people, and 1-Year Supplemental Estimates are available for areas with at least 20,000 people.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

Some American Indian areas cross state lines, such as the Navajo Nation Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land. The Navajo Nation Reservation spans three states in the Mountain West: Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah (see Figure 2.2).

*TIP: ACS data users also need to understand that many American Indian and Alaska Native areas have substantial populations that are neither American Indian nor Alaska Native.*

Socioeconomic or other characteristics for non-American Indian and non-Alaska Native populations may differ markedly from those for American Indian and Alaska Native populations. When ACS tables are disaggregated by race, differences can be easily noted for these two populations.

For example, the Cherokee Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area (OTSA) has a racially diverse population with different economic characteristics (see Table 2.2).<sup>17</sup> In 2011-2015, the overall poverty rate for people living in the Cherokee OTSA was 19.5 percent, but the rate for whites (15.7 percent) was much lower than the rate for American Indians/Alaska Natives (23.1 percent).

<sup>17</sup> OTSAs include federally recognized American Indian tribes that do not currently have a reservation, but once had a reservation in Oklahoma.

While some ACS tables in the Census Bureau's American FactFinder provide data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, most do not.

*TIP: It would be incorrect to interpret an economic indicator such as poverty rate or a social indicator such as school enrollment rate for an American Indian or Alaska Native area as describing the characteristics of the American Indian or Alaska Native population.*

ACS data products for legal entities, such as reservations and incorporated places, reflect the Census Bureau's information about the legal boundaries for those entities as of January 1 of the year of data collection (or, as of January 1 of the last year of data collection for 5-year estimates). The Census Bureau uses the results from an annual Boundary and Annexation Survey to update information about the legal boundaries and names of all governments, including many American Indian and Alaska Native areas.<sup>18</sup>

Boundaries for statistical areas, such as counties and census tracts, are updated by local participants prior to each decennial census as part of the Census Bureau's

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Boundary and Annexation Survey, <[www.census.gov/programs-surveys/bas.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/bas.html)>.

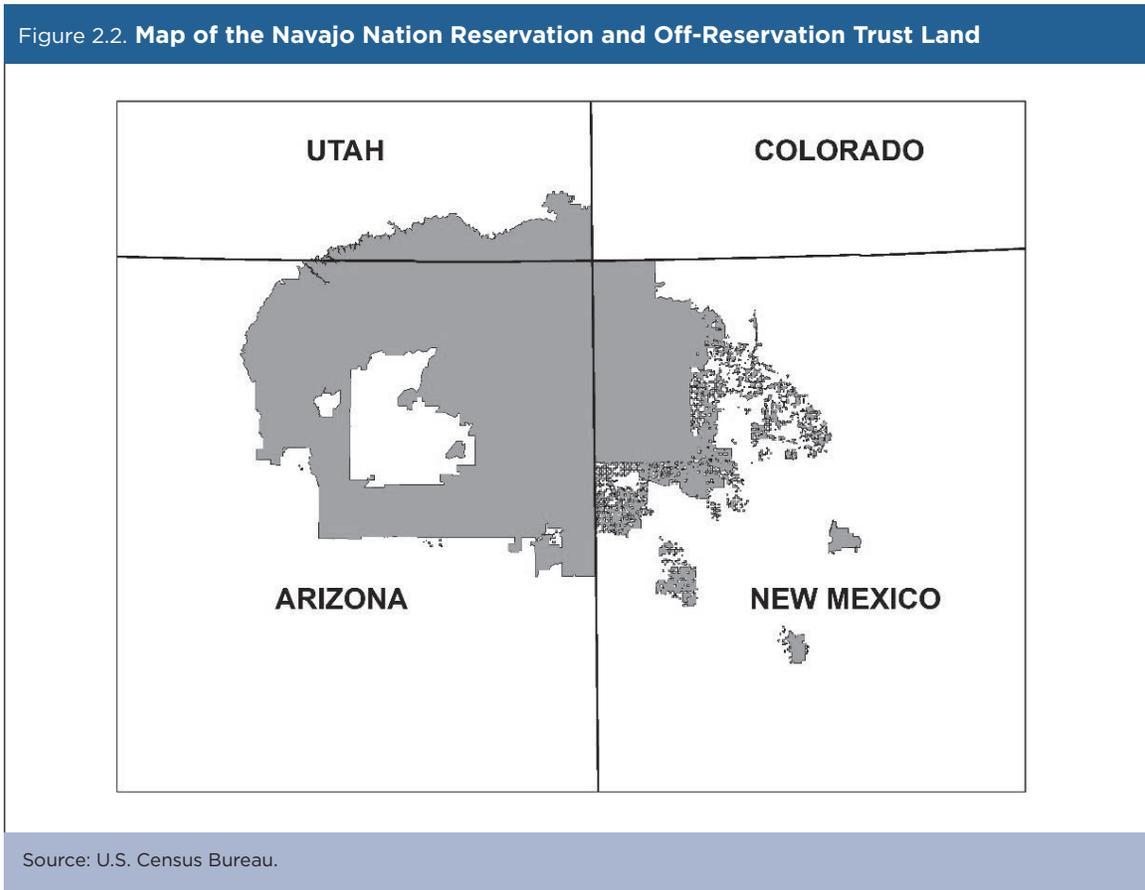


Table 2.2. **Number and Percentage of People in the Cherokee Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area Living Below the Poverty Level by Race: 2011-2015**

	Number below poverty level	Margin of error	Percent below poverty level	Margin of error
<b>Total population for whom poverty is determined</b>	97,679	±2,451	19.5%	±0.5
White alone	50,513	±1,695	15.7%	±0.5
Black or African American alone	11,224	±655	36.4%	±1.7
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	17,730	±1,023	23.1%	±1.2
Asian alone	469	±156	10.0%	±3.5
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	155	±90	26.6%	±12.3
Some other race alone	3,761	±616	31.9%	±4.2
Two or more races	13,827	±1,060	25.3%	±1.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months.

Participant Statistical Areas Program.<sup>19</sup> A comparable program for tribal governments, the Tribal Statistical Areas Program, has provided for the delineation of tribal statistical areas, such as tribal census tracts, by the Census Bureau in conjunction with tribes.<sup>20</sup>

A description of the American Indian and Alaska Native areas included in ACS data products is provided below.

## Legal Entities

**Alaska Native Regional Corporations (ANRCs)** are corporate entities established to conduct both business (for profit) and nonprofit affairs of Alaska Natives pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1972 (Public Law 92-203). Twelve ANRCs cover the entire state of Alaska except for the area within the Annette Island Reserve—a federally recognized American Indian reservation under the governmental authority of the Metlakatla Indian Community. A 13th ANRC represents Alaska Natives who do not live in Alaska and do not identify with any of the 12 corporations.

**American Indian Reservations (AIRs)** are areas that have been set aside by the United States for the use of tribes, the exterior boundaries of which are more particularly defined in tribal treaties, agreements, executive orders, federal statutes, secretarial orders, or judicial determinations. The Bureau of Indian Affairs maintains a list of all federally recognized tribal governments and makes final determination of the inventory of federal AIRs.<sup>21</sup> The Census Bureau recognizes federal reservations (and associated off-reservation

trust lands) as territory over which American Indian tribes have primary governmental authority. American Indian reservations can be legally described as colonies, communities, Indian colonies, Indian communities, Indian rancherias, Indian reservations, Indian villages, pueblos, rancherias, ranches, reservations, reserves, settlements, or villages. Federal reservations may cross state and all other area boundaries.

ACS data are also provided for **State American Indian Reservations (SAIRs)**, which are established by some state governments for tribes recognized by the state. A governor-appointed state liaison provides the names and boundaries for state-recognized American Indian reservations to the Census Bureau. State reservations must be defined within a single state but may cross county and other types of boundaries.

Lands that are administered jointly or claimed by two tribes, whether federally or state recognized, are called “joint-use areas” and are treated as if they were separate American Indian reservations for data presentation purposes.

**American Indian Off-Reservation Trust Lands (ORTLs)** are areas for which the United States holds title in trust for the benefit of a tribe or individual Indian. Trust lands may be located on or off of a reservation. The Census Bureau recognizes and tabulates data for off-reservation trust lands, which are always associated with a specific federally recognized reservation and/or tribal government. Off-reservation trust lands associated with tribes that do not have a reservation appear in ACS data tabulations by tribal area name, interspersed alphabetically among reservation names.

## Statistical Entities

**Alaska Native Village Statistical Areas (ANVSAs)** represent the more densely settled portion of Alaska Native villages (ANVs). The ANVs constitute

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Overview of the 2010 Census Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP), <[www.census.gov/geo/partnerships/psap\\_overview.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/partnerships/psap_overview.html)>.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Overview of the 2010 Census Tribal Statistical Areas Program (TSAP), <[www.census.gov/geo/partnerships/tsap2010\\_overview.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/partnerships/tsap2010_overview.html)>.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, <[www.bia.gov/](http://www.bia.gov/)>.

associations, bands, clans, communities, groups, tribes, or villages recognized in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-203). Because ANVs do not have boundaries that are easy to locate, the Census Bureau does not delimit ANVs. Instead, the Census Bureau presents statistical data for ANVSAs that represent the settled portion of ANVs. In addition, each ANVSA should include only an area where Alaska Natives, especially members of the defining ANV, represent a substantial proportion of the population during at least one season of the year.

**Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Areas (OTSAs)** are statistical entities identified and delineated by the Census Bureau in consultation with federally recognized American Indian tribes in Oklahoma that do not currently have a reservation, but once had a reservation in that state. OTSAs primarily represent the former reservation boundaries and are not required to conform to any other geographic entity for which the Census Bureau tabulates data (although they must be located entirely within the state of Oklahoma). Lands that are administered jointly or claimed by two OTSAs are called “joint use areas” and are treated as if they were separate OTSAs for data presentation purposes.

**Tribal Designated Statistical Areas (TDSAs)** are statistical entities identified and delineated by the Census Bureau in consultation with federally recognized American Indian tribes that do not currently have a federally recognized land base (that is, a reservation or off-reservation trust land). A TDSA generally encompasses a compact and contiguous area that contains a concentration of people who identify with a federally recognized American Indian tribe and in which there is structured or organized tribal activity. A TDSA may be located in more than one state, and it may not include area within an American Indian reservation, off-reservation trust land, Alaska Native Village Statistical Area, state designated American Indian statistical area, or OTSA. The intent of the TDSA program is to collect and tabulate data analogous to the data provided to tribes with a reservation and/or off-reservation trust land.

**State Designated Tribal Statistical Areas (SDTSAs)** are statistical entities for state-recognized American Indian tribes that do not have a state-recognized land base, or reservation. SDTSAs are identified and delineated by the Census Bureau by a state liaison identified by the governor’s office in each state. SDTSAs generally encompass a compact and contiguous area that contains a concentration of people who identify with a state-recognized American Indian tribe and in which there is structured or organized tribal activity. An SDTSA may not be located in more than one state, and it may not include area within an American Indian

reservation, off-reservation trust land, Alaska Native Village Statistical Area, tribal designated statistical area, or OTSA. The intent of the SDTSA program is to collect and tabulate data analogous to the data provided to tribes with a state reservation.

**Tribal Tracts and Tribal Block Groups** are defined by the Census Bureau in cooperation with tribal officials to provide meaningful and relevant data for small geographic areas within the boundaries of federally recognized reservations and off-reservation trust lands. In the past, census tracts and block groups defined by state and county officials have sometimes had the effect of separating American Indian populations located within a single reservation and/or off-reservation trust land such that statistics for these populations were adversely affected. To address this situation, and create a more effective program to provide small-area data for reservations, the Census Bureau provides tribal officials for federal reservations and off-reservation trust lands the opportunity to define tribal tracts and block groups for federal reservations and off-reservation trust lands.

Tribal tracts and tribal block groups are conceptually identical to census tracts and block groups defined within the standard state-county-tract-block group geographic hierarchy used for tabulating and publishing statistical data. Also, just as is the case with standard census tracts, the Census Bureau emphasizes in its guidelines for defining tribal tracts the need for consistent boundaries to enhance the comparisons of ACS and other data across time.

## Additional Background Information

### *Geography & ACS*

<[www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/geography-acs.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/geography-acs.html)>

This Web page includes information about changes in geographic boundaries in the ACS, key concepts and definitions, and reference maps.

### *Geographic Terms and Concepts - American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Areas*

<[www.census.gov/geo/reference/gtc/gtc\\_aiannya.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/gtc/gtc_aiannya.html)>

This Web page summarizes the legal and statistical American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian areas for which the Census Bureau provides data.