

Social and Economic Change on American Indian Reservations: A Databook of the US Censuses and the American Community Survey, 1990–2010

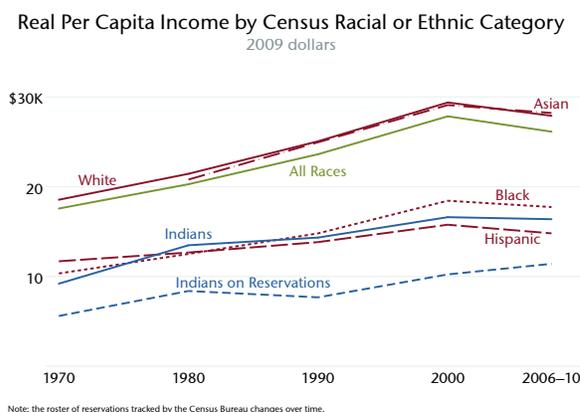
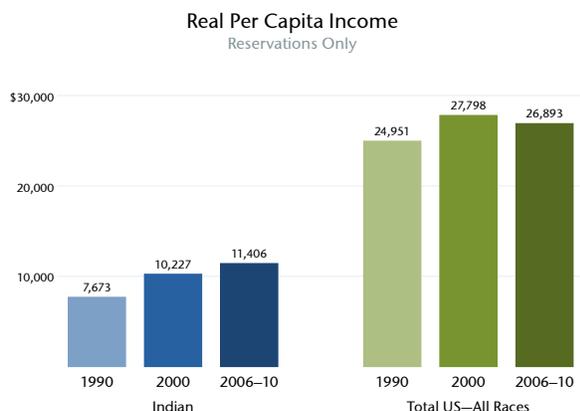
Randall K.Q. Akee & Jonathan B. Taylor

Available: taylorpolicy.com/us-databook.

The fortunes of Indians on reservations continue to lag those of other racial and ethnic groups tracked by the census in the United States. The per capita income of Indians on reservations, for example, has been less than half the US average, consistently falling far below that of Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Indians living elsewhere. Nonetheless, in recent decades, tribes have made progress in income growth and other measures. This databook—research made possible with funding from the Sycuan Institute on Tribal Gaming—documents how and where change has taken place.

Key Findings

By 2010, the vast majority of American Indian tribes could be considered gaming tribes. We estimate that more than 92% of the reservation-based population of American Indians resided on reservations with gaming operations. Given revenue-sharing, intertribal gaming-device leasing (which transfers gaming revenues to non-gaming tribes) and intertribal philanthropy, virtually every American Indian reservation may be affected to some degree by gaming operations.

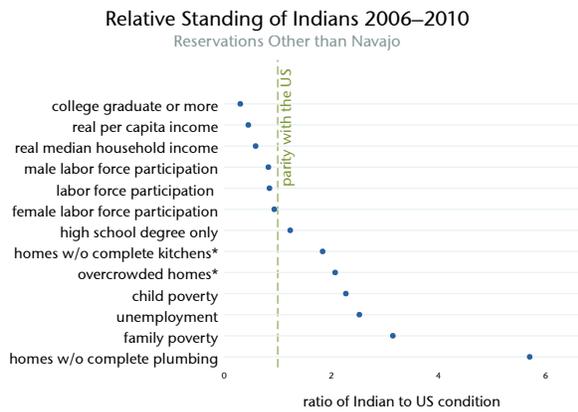


Significant gains were made in real per capita income on American Indian reservations from 1990 to 2000. In the ten years following, however, income gains were much smaller.

The median household income of American Indians living on reservations increased during the 1990s, but those gains did not continue through the 2000s. Improvements in family and child poverty made during the 1990s slowed in the 2000s. While there were not large positive gains in the 2000s on these measures, there was, at least, no further erosion of the gains made in the 1990s.

The unemployment rate for American Indians residing on reservations fell in the 1990s and barely declined in the 2000s. The labor force participation rate remained more or less constant over time. We observe a steady increase in female labor force participation over that same period.

Improvements in infrastructure have continued on reservations over the past 20 years. Crowded homes and homes lacking complete kitchens and plumbing have at least improved in relative terms, though they remain worse than average US conditions.



Education levels have increased over time on reservations, with more college and high school graduates since the 1990s. The Indian population has not reached parity with the rest of the United States on these measures of education, however.

Method

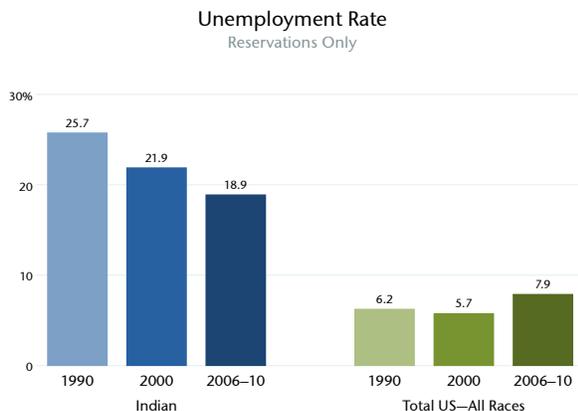
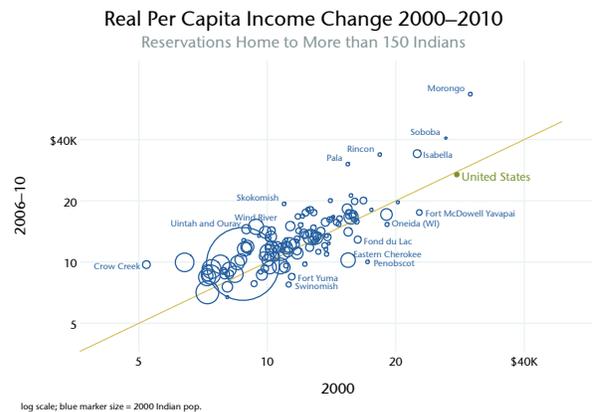
The graph of real per capita income above compares Indians living on reservations in the lower 48 states with the United States’ all-races average in 1990, 2000, and over the 2006–2010 period. The bulk of the analysis in the databook performs similar difference-in-differences comparisons across 13 indicators of social condition. While changes in the collection of data by the US Census have necessitated comparisons between single-year decennial censuses for 1990 and 2000 to five-year averages (for 2006–2010) in the American Community Survey, the overall conclusions are reliable for most purposes. Relative differences over time and across groups

should be reliable on average. Conclusions about absolute rates of change, however, should be made with caution.

The full databook, additional graphs and tables for different geographies of tribes, and the full dataset can be found at taylorpolicy.com/us-databook.

Randall K.Q. Akee is an Assistant Professor of Public Policy at the Luskin School of Public Affairs at the University of California and a Research Fellow with the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Jonathan B. Taylor is the President of the Taylor Policy Group, Inc., a Research Affiliate of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development at the Harvard Kennedy School, and a Policy Associate of the Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Policy and Management at the University of Arizona.



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