American Indian and Alaska Native Population Growing Faster than the Total US Population

The American Indian and Alaska Native population increased more in percentage terms between 2010 and 2016 than the US population as a whole. This news came with the release last month of the latest population estimates from the Census Bureau.

The percentage increase in the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) only population over the six years since the last decennial census was estimated to be 8.4%. For the total US population of all races, the increase was just 4.7%.

In 2010 the Census counted a total of over 2.9 million persons who identified as AI/AN only. The estimate for 2016 was nearly 3.2 million.

The AI/AN only population retained its distinction as the youngest of any of the major racial groups. The new population estimates calculated the median age of the AI/AN only population at 31.0 years. It was tied with the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population, which has the same median age, and was younger than the median age of the White population by almost nine years.

The Census Bureau publishes estimates of the US population annually. The estimates are provided by race for the nation as a whole, for states and for each of the 3,142 counties or county equivalent areas in the country.

All the numbers shown in this newsletter have been adjusted to make them comparable to the data in the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey (ACS). The estimates from the Population Estimates Program, "PEP" in Bureau terminology, use a set of five major racial categories. The decennial census and ACS use six categories. The adjustment in this analysis is based on the relationship between the two data sets for Census day 2010.

Not all of the segments of the AI/AN population advanced at the same pace.

* Persons responding to the Census question on race that identify only with the AI/AN racial group are reported in this newsletter as AI/AN "only." The Census Bureau labels them AI/AN "alone." Those identifying as AI/AN and also a member of another racial group are reported in this newsletter as AI/AN "multi-racial." The Census Bureau calls them "in combination with one or more of the other major race groups."
These are some of the significant differences.

- 8.4% - the rate of increase for the total AI/AN only population at the national level.

- 0.1% - the rate of increase for the AI/AN only youth population (persons under 18 years of age) nationally, with the total number remaining relatively unchanged over the six year period at between roughly 888,000 and 889,000. During that time period the total youth population of all races nationally declined by 0.7%.

- 10.3% - the rate of increase for the AI/AN multi-racial population nationally.

The Census Bureau does not provide population estimates at the individual reservation level. This analysis looked at 10 of the 20 counties in the nation where the AI/AN only population counted in the 2010 Census was at least 1,000 and where that population represented at least 50% of the county total.

The AI/AN only population grew in 8 of the 10 counties, but for 7 of these 8 at a considerably slower pace than the rate for the AI/AN only population nationally. In 2 of the 10, the estimates showed a slight decline. This indicates the continuation of a longer term trend, with the on-reservation population generally growing, but at a slower rate than that of the off-reservation population.

The Bureau's annual population estimates are considered the official US population figures, down to the county level. They are used for a variety of purposes, including the allocation of federal funds for certain programs serving the general population.

The national numbers for the AI/AN only population in the Bureau's ACS data, also released annually, have been far below those in the PEP series, calling into question the accuracy of the ACS data. The next annual ACS estimates are due out in September. A future issue of this newsletter will compare the two data sets for 2016.

**Census Director John Thompson Resigns on June 30th**

The Director of the Census Bureau since August of 2013, John Thompson left the agency on June 30th. He will be missed by many that know the Bureau well.

In a farewell blog, Thompson noted that among the accomplishments during his tenure was the completion of an extensive series of consultations with tribal leaders on the 2020 Census. These were held from October of 2015 through November of 2016 in all regions of the country. The leaders and senior staff from many tribes will remember
him from his active participation in most of those sessions, listening attentively to their views and concerns about past Census counts in their areas.

Thompson led the 2000 decennial census during a prior stint with the Bureau as Associate Director for Decennial Programs.

At this point there is no successor in sight. The President has not yet nominated a replacement. Whoever that person might be must be confirmed by the Senate. In the meantime the Secretary of Commerce has appointed two senior and long-serving Bureau managers as Director and Deputy Director on an interim basis.

**"End-to-End" Test of Census Procedures Gets Underway**

One part of the Census Bureau's dress rehearsal test for the 2020 Census is now underway. Known in agency jargon as the 2018 "End-to-End" test, address canvassing is about to take place in Pierce County, WA (where Tacoma is located), in a relatively rural portion of West Virginia and in Providence County, RI.

However, the full test will take place next year only at the Providence County site.

Tests that were to have been held this spring on the Standing Rock and Colville reservations were both cancelled for budget reasons, as was a test in Puerto Rico.

The cutback in field testing of various Census operations caused by funding shortfalls means that the agency will go into the 2020 Census with considerably less experience with its updated procedures than has been the case in previous decennials.

One significant test of planned procedures for the 2020 Census has now concluded. This one involved a canvass of 80,000 households nationally to analyze the response options planned for the next decennial. The choices include replying to the census questionnaire on-line, replying by phone or replying on paper.

The Census Bureau has yet to release the complete results of that test. It was to have included households in reservation areas.

**Norm DeWeaver**

*norm_deweaver@rocketmail.com*

July 17, 2017

Redistribution of this information is encouraged.