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Housing of American Indians on Reservations — An Overview

In 1990, nearly 1 in every 4 American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts lived on a reservation. These reservation residents faced much different housing conditions than other Americans. And conditions differed tremendously among the individual reservations.

One of a series, this Brief uses data collected in the 1990 Census of Population and Housing to examine housing characteristics of American Indian households on reservations and their associated trust lands. The term "American Indian households" includes all housing units where the household-er has identified himself or herself as American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut.

This Brief looks at various occupancy characteristics of these households, such as householder's age and tenure, the number of persons, the chances of their being crowded, and mobility. They are compared to all households, as well as to American Indian households *not* living on reservations.

There are 314 reservations and trust lands in the United States. Trust lands are property associated with a particular American Indian reservation or tribe, held in trust by the Federal Government. In this Brief, the term "reservation" also includes trust lands.

Most live in the Rocky Mountain States.

The Mountain Division is comprised of eight Rocky Mountain States — New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. Although these States contained only 5 percent of all households in the United States, they were home to 63 percent of all American Indian households on reservations. A major reason was the presence of the Navajo Reservation and Trust

Lands, which spans portions of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. This reservation alone accounted for over one-quarter of all American Indian households on reservations. California, by comparison, was home to a relatively paltry one-ninth of all U.S. households.

As the table on page 2 shows, there were 48 large reservations (500 or more American Indian households).

American Indian households made up less than half of all households on reservations.

There were about 250,000 households of all race groups living on reservations and trust lands. Surprisingly, the majority of them (128,000) were White. Only 112,000 (45 percent) had an American Indian householder. Yet

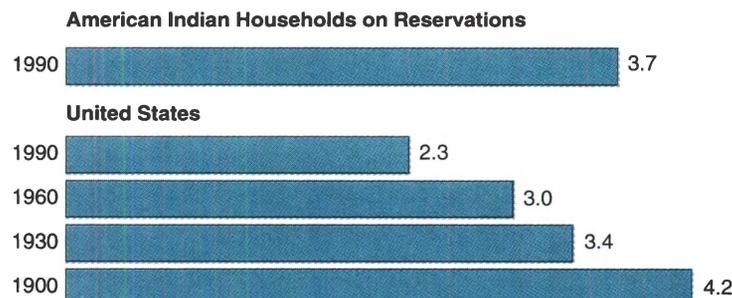


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BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

In 1990, American Indian Reservation Households Were as Large as Those in the United States in the Early Part of This Century

Median number of persons per household



Reservation Recap — Occupancy Characteristics

Selected occupancy characteristics of American Indian households on reservations, by reservation with 500 or more American Indian households: 1990

	Number of American Indian households	Percent of all households on reservation	Percent who owned their home	Percent with householder who was elderly	Percent with householder under age 35	Median number of persons in household	Median number of rooms in housing unit	Percent who lived in crowded homes
All reservations and trust lands	112,209	44.9	67.3	15.6	29.6	3.65	4.4	32.5
Acoma Pueblo and Trust Lands, NM	586	96.5	91.6	20.1	20.5	4.19	4.6	31.1
Blackfeet Reservation, MT	1,872	80.2	51.8	13.6	32.3	3.52	4.7	19.8
Cattaraugus Reservation, NY	677	95.6	70.5	20.4	28.8	2.77	4.9	10.8
Cheyenne River Reservation, SD	1,293	55.0	33.6	13.3	35.4	3.63	4.4	30.5
Colorado River Reservation, AZ-CA	652	24.5	64.3	14.7	29.1	3.55	4.3	26.4
Colville Reservation, WA	1,196	49.9	58.1	16.6	30.6	2.89	5.1	8.2
Crow Reservation and Trust Lands, MT	1,077	64.3	60.6	10.6	25.6	4.25	4.9	30.9
Devils Lake Sioux Reservation, ND	627	64.5	40.0	10.7	36.8	4.09	4.7	31.7
Eastern Cherokee Reservation, NC	1,786	84.9	80.9	16.3	28.7	2.89	5.1	8.8
Flathead Reservation, MT	1,732	22.0	60.3	13.0	31.7	2.81	5.0	9.2
Fort Apache Reservation, AZ	2,232	90.0	70.7	9.4	37.8	4.17	4.3	43.2
Fort Belknap Reservation and Trust Lands, MT	656	91.6	54.4	16.8	31.7	3.48	5.0	13.6
Fort Berthold Reservation, ND	848	48.2	44.8	12.0	30.5	3.28	4.8	18.8
Fort Hall Reservation and Trust Lands, ID	832	55.5	76.0	14.2	28.0	3.42	4.8	19.7
Fort Peck Reservation, MT	1,591	46.2	48.8	10.1	37.3	3.43	5.2	13.8
Gila River Reservation, AZ	2,295	94.5	67.1	12.8	33.5	3.70	4.0	36.5
Hoop Valley Reservation, CA	535	77.5	63.4	17.0	33.3	3.01	4.7	13.8
Hopi Reservation and Trust Lands, AZ	1,724	92.4	80.0	21.6	22.4	3.89	3.8	44.4
Isleta Pueblo, NM	831	93.6	91.7	20.8	22.9	3.07	4.8	17.4
Jicarilla Apache Reservation, NM	607	86.5	59.8	9.2	36.4	3.68	4.5	26.4
Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation and Trust Lands, WI	523	65.7	38.0	14.9	35.8	3.30	5.0	9.9
Laguna Pueblo and Trust Lands, NM	1,007	95.7	76.2	24.9	19.0	3.36	4.7	20.7
Lake Traverse (Sisseton) Reservation, ND-SD	739	19.2	28.8	15.8	28.1	3.42	5.0	16.2
Leech Lake Reservation, MN	999	32.4	61.4	16.8	31.4	3.16	4.8	12.3
Menominee Reservation, WI	824	91.5	57.6	15.2	35.1	3.68	5.1	17.2
Mescalero Apache Reservation, NM	595	91.1	29.4	8.4	42.4	4.14	5.3	21.3
Mississippi Choctaw Reservation and Trust Lands, MS	892	95.0	64.9	10.0	30.4	4.26	4.8	30.7
Navajo Reservation and Trust Lands, AZ-NM-UT	34,086	94.0	78.3	17.6	27.0	4.01	3.1	54.3
Nez Perce Reservation, ID	581	9.5	68.3	12.7	28.9	3.09	5.3	7.7
Northern Cheyenne Reservation and Trust Lands, MT-SD	880	84.2	63.0	10.1	34.9	3.75	4.6	30.1
Oneida (West) Reservation, WI	707	12.3	63.5	18.1	29.8	3.18	5.1	9.2
Osage Reservation, OK	1,931	12.6	76.3	22.5	25.1	2.49	5.2	4.8
Papago Reservation, AZ	2,086	95.4	74.4	16.5	25.5	3.83	3.7	43.0
Pascua Yaqui Reservation, AZ	525	96.2	51.2	4.6	44.6	4.29	5.2	23.8
Pine Ridge Reservation and Trust Lands, NE-SD	2,352	85.5	44.6	15.2	26.5	4.36	4.0	47.5
Red Lake Reservation, MN	928	96.7	63.0	12.8	33.2	3.72	4.8	24.5
Rosebud Reservation and Trust Lands, SD	1,924	75.7	42.7	13.1	33.9	3.86	4.5	30.0
St. Regis Mohawk Reservation, NY	625	98.6	89.8	21.0	26.7	2.97	5.1	7.4
Salt River Reservation, AZ	855	54.0	69.9	11.2	34.7	3.81	4.0	39.2
San Carlos Reservation, AZ	1,634	95.8	67.3	10.2	32.6	4.17	4.2	42.5
Standing Rock Reservation, ND-SD	1,133	48.7	28.2	13.0	30.5	3.89	4.6	31.0
Turtle Mountain Reservation and Trust Lands, ND-SD	1,982	95.0	58.6	13.8	36.8	3.21	4.8	13.5
Uintah and Ouray Reservation, UT	651	13.2	63.9	12.7	33.2	3.71	4.8	23.5
Warm Springs Reservation and Trust Lands, OR	675	89.9	60.9	8.9	34.5	3.95	5.0	22.7
White Earth Reservation, MN	816	27.2	61.0	18.6	27.9	3.06	4.8	14.6
Wind River Reservation, WY	1,474	19.7	57.9	11.6	31.3	3.72	4.7	22.7
Yakima Reservation and Trust Lands, WA	1,571	19.8	53.2	14.1	30.5	3.72	5.0	23.1
Zuni Pueblo, AZ-NM	1,465	88.9	79.1	15.3	28.6	4.47	5.2	28.9

American Indians made up *more than half* (437,000, or 54 percent) of all 808,000 *persons* on reservations. This is due to the fact American Indian reservation households were relatively large (see graph on page 1 and discussion of household size later in this Brief).

Homeownership rates on reservations were generally high

Two in three (67 percent) of all American Indian households on reservations owned their homes. This was slightly higher than the 64 percent for all race groups nationally and much higher than the 51 percent recorded by American Indian households *not* on reservations.

It's worth noting that some large reservations had much higher rates than others. The highest rates were generally found in the Southwest. For example, the Isleta Pueblo and Acoma Pueblo and Trust Lands, both in New Mexico, had American Indian homeownership rates of over 90 percent. The lowest rates, by and large, were found in the Dakotas. The Standing Rock Reservation and the Lake Traverse (Sisseton) Reservation, which both occupy parts of North and South Dakota, had rates under 30 percent. (See table.)

.... and rose with age.

Interestingly, homeownership rates for American Indian householders on reservations rose steadily with age, from 41 percent for those under 25 years to 82 percent for those 75 years and over. For householders nationally, on the other hand, the rate started at only 17 percent, peaked at 80 percent (for those aged 55-64), then dropped off to 70 percent (for persons aged 75 or older).

Elderly households were less common

Only 16 percent of American Indian householders on reservations were 65 years of age or older. For the United States as a whole, the corresponding figure was 22 percent. Incidentally, an even smaller proportion (12 percent) of American Indian householders *not* on reservations were elderly.

Again, there were large variations among the bigger individual reservations. On one hand, only 5 percent of the Pascua Yaqui, AZ, American Indian householders were elderly. At the other extreme was the Laguna Pueblo and Trust Lands, NM, where one-quarter were 65 or older. In fact, this was

the only larger reservation where elderly American Indian householders outnumbered young ones (under age 35). The Osage Reservation, OK, by the way, was the only other where the percentage of elderly American Indian householders (23 percent) exceeded the national average (22 percent). (See table.)

.... while younger householders were more prevalent.

At the other end of the age continuum, almost 30 percent of American Indian householders on reservations were under 35 years of age. For the United States as a whole, 27 percent were in this age group. An even higher proportion of American Indian householders *off* reservations (34 percent) were under age 35. This may be a sign that many younger American Indians are leaving reservations. Better employment and educational opportunities off reservations, as well as the lack of housing on reservations, are possible reasons.

The table shows the percentages of elderly and young American Indian householders on each of the larger reservations.

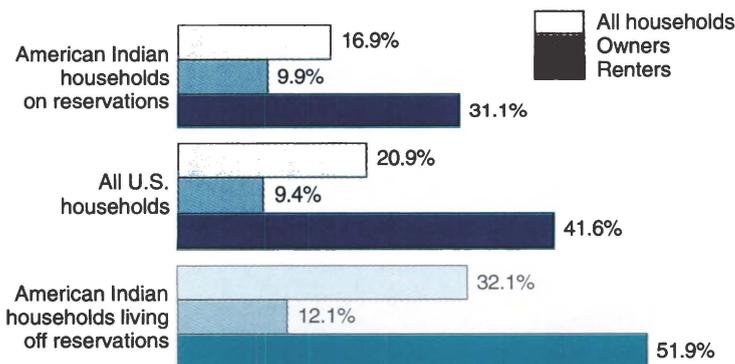
American Indian households on reservations were large

American Indian households on reservations contained a median of 3.65 persons. This was considerably higher than the 2.29 for all households nationally and the 2.62 for American Indian households off reservations. It's also similar to the U.S. median in the early part of this century (see graph on the first page.)

When we examine household size by tenure, we see that American Indians on reservations were very much unlike other households. American Indian reservation households who owned their homes had a median of 3.63 persons; but renters had 3.71. For households in the United States as a whole, the opposite was true (2.40 for owners and 2.04 for

Were American Indian Households on Reservations More Mobile Than the Norm?

No. But American Indian households who did not live on reservations were very mobile. Why? Renters and young householders move frequently. American Indians on reservations tend to own their homes, while those off reservations were frequently renters and were younger.
Percent of all households who moved in the 15 months prior to the 1990 census



renters). American Indian households not living on reservations had sizes intermediate between the two (2.78 for owners and 2.47 for renters).

Once more, we see sharp differences when looking at the large individual reservations. Although none had household sizes as low as the 2.29 persons nationally, the Osage Reservation, at 2.49, came closest. The Zuni Pueblo, AZ-NM, on the other hand, had the largest median household size — 4.47 persons. (See table.)

.... but lived in small homes.

The typical American Indian home on a reservation had only 4.4 rooms, nearly a whole room less than the national median (5.3).

On the larger reservations, home sizes varied from a mere 3.1 rooms (Navajo, AZ-NM-UT) to the national median of 5.3 (Mescalero Apache, NM, and Nez Perce, ID). Unlike the case nationally, American Indian owners and renters on reservations had the same median number of rooms (see graph below). By reservation, owner-occupied homes varied from only 2.8 rooms (Navajo) to 5.6 (Lake Traverse, ND-SD). Renter-occupied homes differed from 3.0 rooms (Hopi, AZ) to 5.3 (Mescalero Apache, NM); two

others (Menominee, WI, and Pascua Yaqui, AZ) were right behind at 5.2 rooms.

Large households plus small homes equals crowding.

Homes are generally considered crowded if they contain more than one person per room. Nationally, 5 percent of all households were crowded in 1990. This percentage was much lower than the approximately 20 percent back in 1940 — the year of the first housing census. But the national conditions of a half-century ago were nothing compared to what American Indian households on reservations face today. In 1990, an astounding one-third of them were crowded!

When it came to “severe” crowding (more than 1.5 persons per room), American Indian households on reservations were also way above the 1990 national average (18 percent compared with 2 percent).

American Indian owner households were somewhat worse off than those with renters (34 percent were crowded and 20 percent were severely crowded versus 30 percent and 13 percent for renters).

Arizona reservations had the worst crowding.

Of the eight reservations where more than one-third of American

Indian households lived in crowded conditions, seven were wholly or partly in Arizona. The Navajo Reservation and Trust Lands, AZ-NM-UT, at an incredible 54 percent, had the highest rate of crowding (see table). Severely crowded housing followed the same basic pattern; here, the Navajo stood at 38 percent.

Most Americans would be very surprised to learn that such housing conditions exist in the United States in this day and age. Yet, on many reservations, crowded and severely crowded housing is a fact of life.

More information:

- *General Housing Characteristics, American Indian and Alaska Native Areas, Series 1990 CH-1-1A.* For sale by U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). Stock No. 003-024-07566-1. \$35.
- *Detailed Housing Characteristics, American Indian and Alaska Native Areas, Series 1990 CH-2-1A.* For sale by GPO. Stock No. 003-024-07623-3. \$44.

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This Brief is one of a series that presents information of current interest. It examines data from the 1990 census. A complete description of statistical quality and limitations is included in the above-mentioned reports.

Data for Smaller Reservations

Due to space constraints, the table on page 2 has data only for the 48 reservations with 500 or more American Indian households. To obtain data for reservations not shown, call Robert Bonnette (301-763-8553).

