



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Office of the Director  
Washington, DC 20233-0001

Dear Honorable Tribal Leader:

As we prepare for the 2020 Census in Indian Country and Native Alaska, I respectfully request your tribe's participation in one of our upcoming consultations and/or national webinar to discuss our proposed 2020 Census data products and the 2020 Disclosure Avoidance System. We are seeking your assistance in passing this invitation to your tribal staff that uses census data for planning and grant writing to give us examples of specific census data tables and geographies they use. Background information and specific questions for which we would like your tribe's input are enclosed. These consultation meetings scheduled for this fall are our continued consultation efforts in updating and informing the tribes about the 2020 census. We will continue to seek input and plan to have tribal consultation meetings about these topics in 2020. If your tribe would like to host a meeting, we would welcome this opportunity to work with you and your staff to coordinate this.

The U.S. Census Bureau is transitioning to a new Disclosure Avoidance System to protect information provided by respondents on the 2020 Census. The Disclosure Avoidance System is a new, advanced, and far more powerful confidentiality protection system than previously used that employs a rigorous mathematical process to protect respondents' information and identity.

The Census Bureau is fully committed to publishing detailed race and ethnicity data from the 2020 Census, including detailed data on the American Indian and Alaska Native populations. These products will be available in a format that includes the option to report as many race categories as applicable. The geographic specificity will be limited to areas that meet certain, still to be determined, minimum population standards as they have in the past. All of these products will be protected using the new 2020 Census Disclosure Avoidance System. In recognition of tribal sovereignty, the Census Bureau consults with federally recognized tribes and provides opportunities for them to provide input on the data products from the 2020 Census. Details for the national webinar and tribal consultations, background information, and questions for your consideration are enclosed.

If you have any questions prior to the webinar or consultations, please contact Dee Alexander, Tribal Affairs Coordinator, at 301-763-9335 or [OCIA.TAO@census.gov](mailto:OCIA.TAO@census.gov).

Sincerely,

Steven D. Dillingham  
Director

Enclosures

## **National Webinar**

Date	Time	Call-in Information
Wednesday, September 25, 2019	4:00 – 6:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time	Call-in Number: 1-800-857-8887  Audience Passcode: 5484613

WebEx Login Link:

<https://censusevent.webex.com/censusevent/onstage/g.php?MTID=e0e21564092e8928ab763dd02ba6e40f7>

## **Tribal Consultations**

Date	Time	Location
Wednesday, October 16, 2019	TBD (Alaska Daylight Time)	2019 Alaska Tribal Leaders Conference Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
Monday, October 21, 2019	9:00 – 11:00 am (Mountain Daylight Time)	National Congress of American Indians 76th Annual Convention and Marketplace, Albuquerque Convention Center 401 Second Street, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The U.S. Census Bureau's mission is to provide quality statistical information about the nation's people, places, and economy. It is the Census Bureau's goal and legal duty to protect all of the information you provide. That is why it is critical that we use the most up-to-date privacy protections available.

To keep pace with quickly evolving technology and the risks it brings, the 2020 Census and future data products will use new privacy protection methods designed specifically for the digital age. These methods are based on a relatively new concept called "differential privacy." The switch to these new methods is the most significant modernization of our privacy protection methods in decades.

A new Disclosure Avoidance System is needed to defend against new threats posed by today's technology: growing computing power, advances in mathematics, and easy access to large, public databases. Combined, these changes could allow sophisticated users to identify common data points between our published statistics, or between our statistics and outside databases. They could use these common threads to potentially identify the people or businesses behind the statistics. Our research shows that the risk of successful re-identifications is unacceptably large. We are committed to applying better and stronger protections with each advance in data science.

The traditional disclosure avoidance techniques that we used in the 2010 Census relied on "swapping" characteristics in the underlying data for a subset of households in different geographic areas. In this era of Big Data, these methods are insufficient. The amount of noise required using traditional disclosure avoidance techniques would make our published data unfit for most uses.

With the new method, the noise is added to the statistics in the tables themselves. This allows us to precisely control the amount of noise that we add according to privacy requirements. And, by documenting the properties of this noise, we can help data users determine if published estimates are suitable, or accurate enough, for their specific applications. We call this assuring "fitness for use."

Documenting the impact of this privacy-protecting noise is similar to the way we provide margins of error for our current statistical products. Because we avoid swapping and carefully control the way that noise is added, a differentially private 2020 dataset can be significantly more accurate than datasets produced using traditional disclosure avoidance methods.

For more information, please see: Protecting the Confidentiality of America's Statistics: Adopting Modern Disclosure Avoidance Methods at the Census Bureau at [https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/research-matters/2018/08/protecting\\_the\\_conf.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/research-matters/2018/08/protecting_the_conf.html) and Ensuring Confidentiality and Fitness-for-Use at [https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/research-matters/2018/08/protecting\\_the\\_conf0.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/research-matters/2018/08/protecting_the_conf0.html).

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONTINUED

### Overview of 2010 Census Data Products

2010 Census Data Product	2010 Census Product Overview	2020 Status
Redistricting Summary File (PL94-171)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population counts available for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) alone and AIAN alone or in combination down to the census block level</li> </ul>	The current disclosure avoidance system either supports or is being expanded to support these 2020 Census data products.
Demographic Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population counts available for AIAN alone and AIAN alone or in combination available down to the census tract level</li> </ul>	
Summary File 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population counts available for AIAN alone and AIAN alone or in combination</li> <li>• Data for selected characteristics iterated for AIAN alone – available at various levels of geography, some characteristics available down to the census block level</li> <li>• Population counts available for tribal groupings down to the census tract level</li> </ul>	For 2020, we are proposing to move tables that provide population counts for tribal groupings to a later product.
Summary File 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population counts and characteristics available for AIAN alone and AIAN alone or in combination down the census tract level</li> <li>• Population counts and characteristics available for tribal groupings down to the census tract level</li> </ul>	A team is being formed to research challenges and develop solutions to produce tabulations for tribal groupings and detailed tribes.
American Indian and Alaska Native Summary File	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population counts and characteristics available for AIAN alone and AIAN alone or in combination the census tract and tribal tract levels</li> <li>• Population counts and characteristics available for tribal groupings the census tract and tribal tract levels</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Population counts and characteristics available for 1,570 detailed tribes that meet a population threshold of 100 nationally the census tract and tribal tract levels</li> </ul>	
CPH-T-6: American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes in the United States, Regions, Divisions, States, and Puerto Rico: 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Population counts available for all AIAN detailed tribes alone and alone or in combination (no threshold for a group to be included) for every state</li> </ul>	
Census Brief: The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Population counts available for AIAN alone, AIAN alone or in combination, and tribal groupings down to the place level</li> <li>● This product was derived from the Redistricting Summary File and Summary File 1</li> </ul>	Data in this product will be primarily dependent on the production of the files listed above.

## Discussion Questions | Input Requested

- 1) How important is Summary File data that was produced from the 2010 Census? Do you use the tract and county-level tables in the AIAN summary file? If so, how?**
- 2) Which is more important for your data uses: Detailed tribal and demographic information at higher levels of geography (e.g., national or state level)? Or less detailed information but at lower levels of geography (e.g., tract or county)?**
- 3) Have you ever worried about the effects of confidentiality protections of the data that the Census Bureau provides?**
- 4) How would your communities react if the Census Bureau didn't protect the confidentiality of their information?**
- 5) Do you use decennial census data as inputs for other statistics, estimates, or models? If so, can you tell us what specific programs you use these for?**
- 6) Are there statistics that the Census Bureau has not traditionally published about your communities that would be useful to have?**
- 7) What other demographic characteristics besides tribal information (e.g., age, household structure, etc.) and at what levels of geography are most important to you?**
- 8) Do you use decennial census statistics as inputs to receive grants, federal funding, or for other programmatic reasons? If so, which census data are used for these purposes?**

*This document was created as a tool to help tribal leaders prepare for the U.S. Census Bureau's consultations on the Census Bureau's plans to modernize its disclosure avoidance system for the 2020 Census and potential changes to the 2020 Census data products. Your input on these discussion questions or other issues is requested both before and during the consultation meetings. Tribal governments are encouraged to share insights, make recommendations, and discuss issues or concerns about the proposed consultation topics.*

## How to Submit your Input and Comments

Tribal leaders are encouraged to submit comments and feedback about the discussion questions listed in this document using one or more of the four options below:

1. **Submit your comments by mail.** Send comments to:

Dee Alexander, Tribal Affairs Coordinator  
Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, Intergovernmental Affairs Office  
U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233

2. **Submit your comments by email.** Send comments to:

[Dee.A.Alexander@census.gov](mailto:Dee.A.Alexander@census.gov) or [OCIA.TAO@census.gov](mailto:OCIA.TAO@census.gov)

3. **Submit your comments by fax.** Send comments to:

(301) 763-3780

4. **Bring your comments** to the consultation meeting.