

Federal Data and Tribal Data about Native People and Tribal Lands

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American Indian / Alaska Native federal race category

Troubles with federal data, especially 2020 Census

- Race/ethnicity coding changes, -2019 vs. 2020+
- 2020 Census data differential privacy debacle

Gathering and improving tribal data about enrolled members, in preparation for future needs

- Enrollment office data as a potential resource
- Academic partnerships as a potential resource

American Indian / Alaska Native (AIAN) federal race category

AIAN: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition. Single race required.

1977 first federal standards
for race and ethnicity data

1997 federal standards
for race and ethnicity data

AIAN: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition. Multiple races allowed.

AIAN: Individuals with origins in any of the original peoples of North, Central, and South America Multiple races allowed.

- No community affiliation required (was never req for other groups)
- Collect as much detail as possible, release as feasible

2024 brand new standards have
not been implemented yet

Troubles with federal data

Race/ethnicity coding changes, -2019 vs. 2020+

Census Bureau says*:

“We increased the number of characters captured from 30 to 200, which allowed us to capture and fully recognize longer write-in responses.”

“Instead of prioritizing multiple responses into only two codes, we coded up to six detailed codes for each write-in area.”

“We used a single code list for coding data from the Hispanic origin question and the race question.”

* Excerpts from: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2021/08/improvements-to-2020-census-race-hispanic-origin-question-designs.html>

2020 Census race question

9. What is Person 1's race?

Mark ☒ one or more boxes **AND** print origins.

☐ White – Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.

☐ Black or African Am. – Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native – Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow (Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.

☐ Chinese ☒ Vietnamese ☐ Native Hawaiian

☒ Filipino ☐ Korean ☐ Samoan

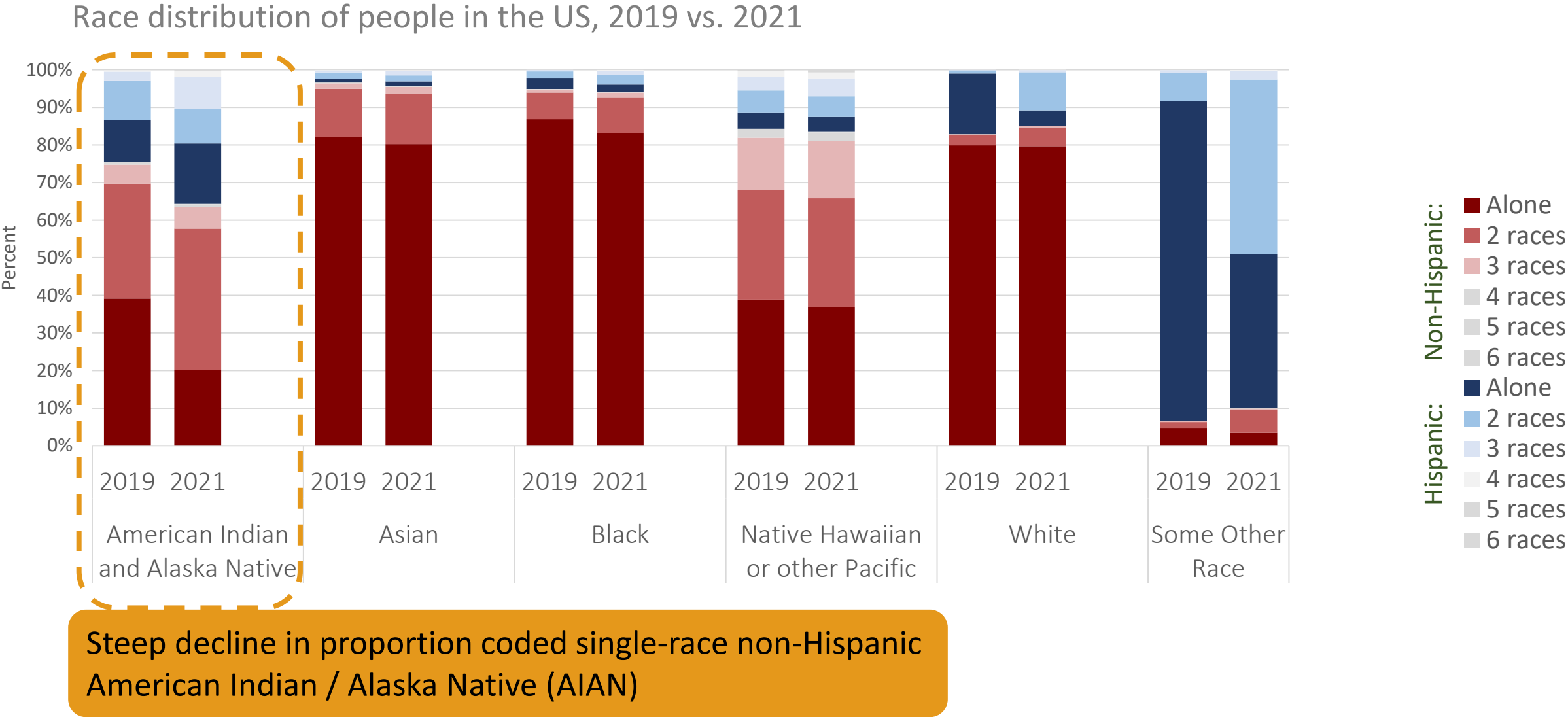
☐ Asian Indian ☐ Japanese ☐ Chamorro

☒ Other Asian – Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.

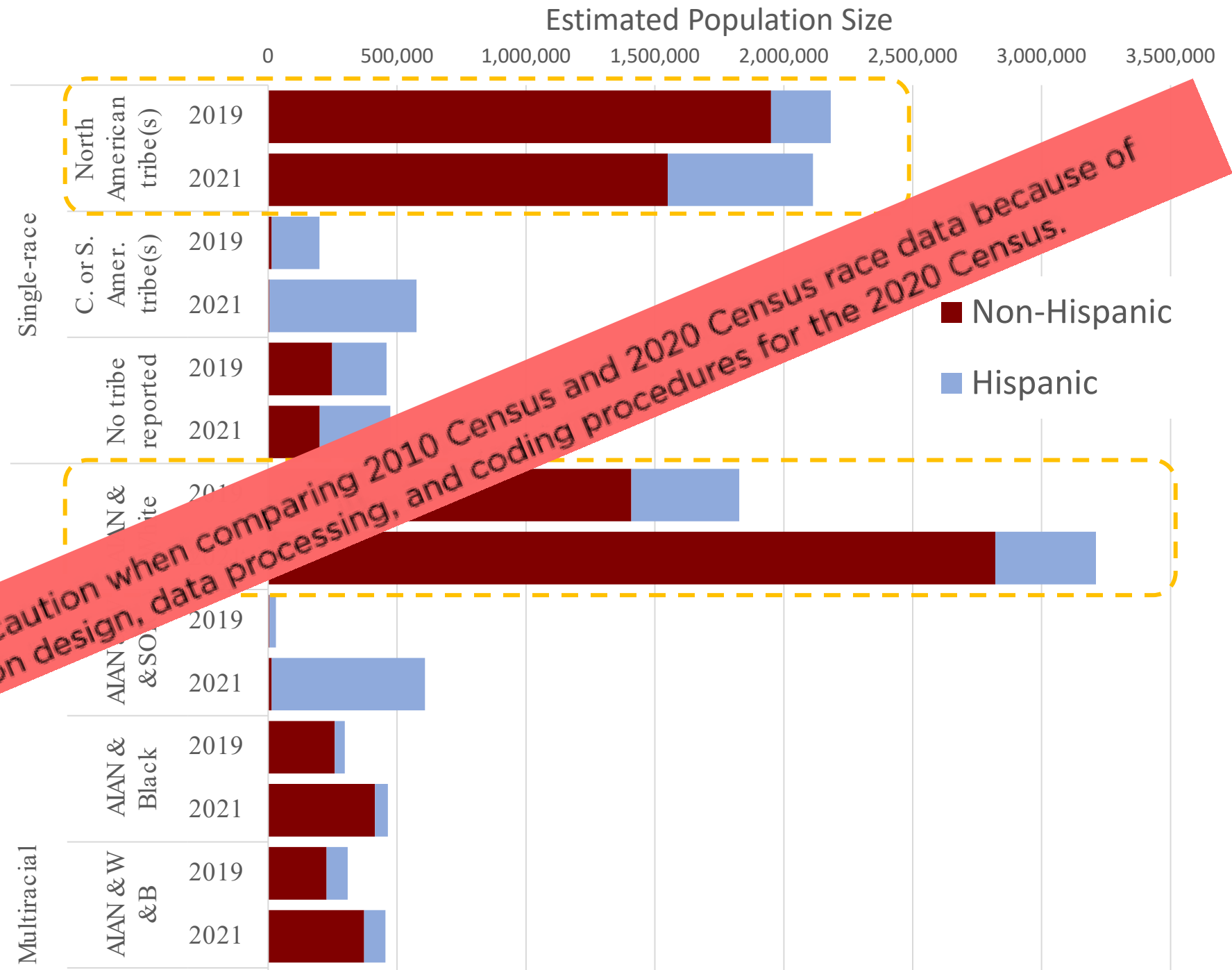
☐ Other Pacific Islander – Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.

☐ Some other race – Print race or origin.

Every race group's composition was impacted by the change in the way race and ethnicity are coded, as of 2020



The size and composition of AIAN subpopulations in were heavily impacted by the race/ethnicity coding changes.



Troubles with federal data

2020 Census data differential privacy debacle

“Differential privacy” is the Census Bureau’s way of protecting the 2020 Census data.

It is a mathematical algorithm applied by a computer program.

Differential privacy was used on the population totals from the 2020 Census.

Simplified Example of Differential Privacy

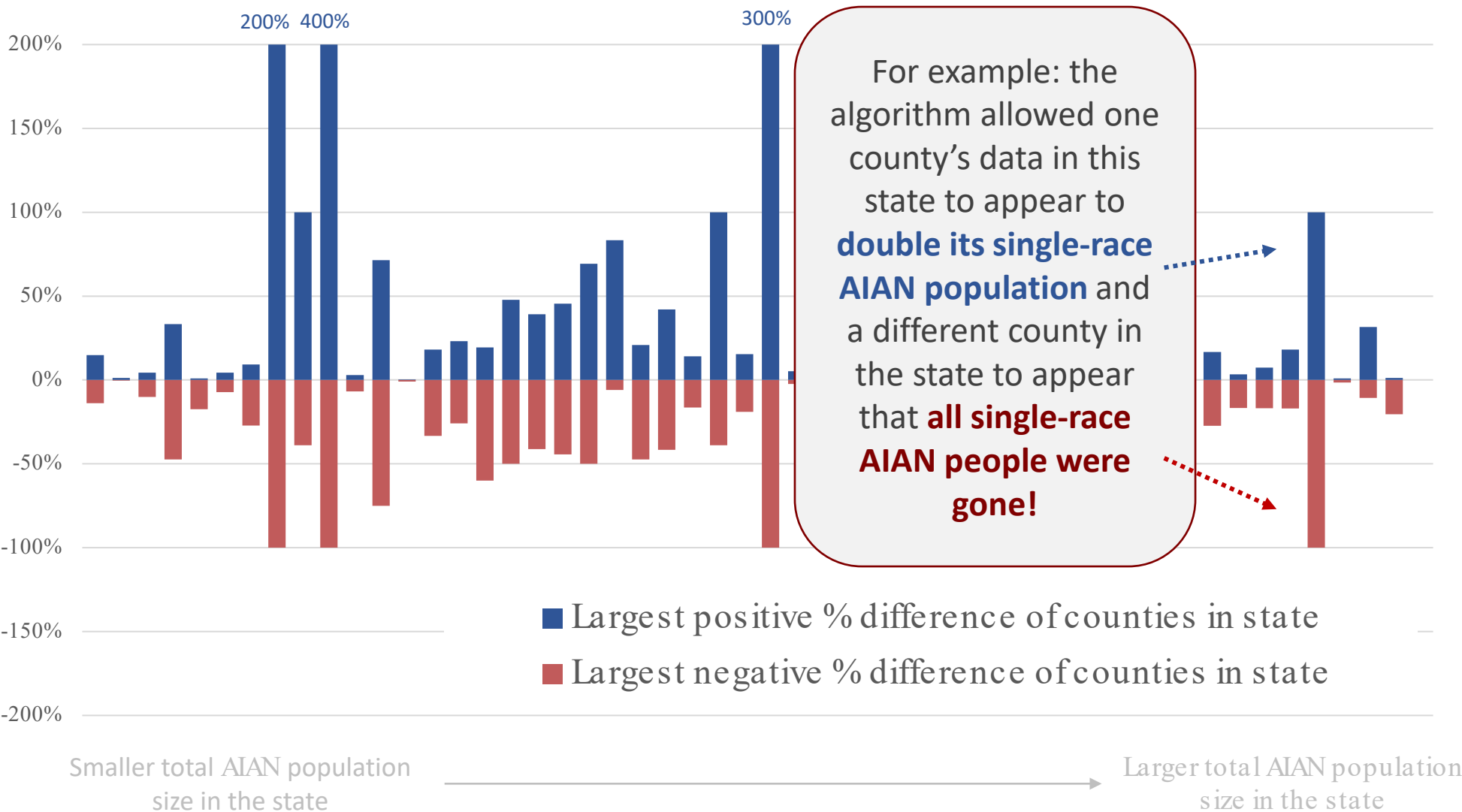
County	Real # of AIAN counted	DP adds/sub	# AIAN in the public data	% difference
Ada County	550	+38	588	7%
Barhe County	1,234	-148	1,086	-12%



- The differential privacy algorithm adds or subtracts a number that's drawn at random from a distribution of numbers.
- This is done to every number; the results do not always make sense.

How different can the census numbers be while still being useful?

The DP example data show: The differential privacy algorithm causes some 2020 Census American Indian / Alaska Native population sizes to be very mis-reported at the county level.



The DP example data show: The differential privacy algorithm causes 2020 Census population sizes in Tribal Land Areas to be mis-reported (sometimes wildly mis-reported).

Total Population of Tribal Land Area	# of Tribal Land Areas of this size	AIAN single race		AIAN AOIC	
		Largest negative % difference	Largest positive % difference	Largest negative % difference	Largest positive % difference
10 to 199 people	381	-100%	300%	-100%	900%
200 to 999 people	352	-100%	400%	-100%	600%
1,000 to 1,999 people	245	-60%	300%	-39%	136%
2,000 to 2,999 people	310	-43%	35%	-45%	46%
3,000 to 3,999 people	254	-60%	27%	-34%	21%
4,000 or more people	471	-22%	50%	-24%	56%

- In some Tribal Land Areas (even large ones), the DP algorithm makes it seem like there are **no AIAN people!** Or that there are 4x as many as were actually counted in the 2020 Census.

Gathering and improving tribal data about enrolled members

Some ideas based on my experiences as a university professor
and as the executive director of Pika Insights

Things to consider while brainstorming ...

- Tribal data sovereignty must not be compromised.
- Tribal offices are often under-funded and under-staffed, so solutions need to be cost-effective.
- Existing datasets can be improved, augmented, or combined to make them more powerful.
- Colleges and universities train thousands of people who need real-world examples and experiences as part of their training.

Gathering and improving tribal data about enrolled members

Idea: Partner with a local college or university

Collaborate with a professor to design a course, internship program, or grant that would allow the professor and students to work with tribal staff to do things like:

- Update contact information for tribal members,
- Develop and launch a tribal survey that would help with preparedness,
- Clean data after it has been gathered.

- Airtight MOU making it clear that the data belong to the tribe.
- Ethics training required & data privacy training required.

These would be amazing opportunities for the students!

Resources & Citations

- Definition of American Indian / Alaska Native in federal data collection

- 1977: <https://wonder.cdc.gov/wonder/help/populations/bridged-race/directive15.html>
 - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.
- 1997: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/1997/07/09/97-17664/recommendations-from-the-interagency-committee-for-the-review-of-the-racial-and-ethnic-standards-to>
 - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.
- 2024: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/03/29/2024-06469/revisions-to-ombs-statistical-policy-directive-no-15-standards-for-maintaining-collecting-and>
 - Individuals with origins in any of the original peoples of North, Central, and South America, including, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, Aztec, and Maya.

- Changing race/ethnicity coding as of 2020 Census

- “Data Impacts of Changes in Census Bureau Procedures for Race and Ethnicity Data.” 2024. Elizabeth Arias, Carolyn Liebler, Marc A. Garcia, and Rogelio Sáenz. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Population Association of America
- <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2021/08/improvements-to-2020-census-race-hispanic-origin-question-designs.html>

- Differential privacy

- <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/dec/2020-census-dhc.html#data-confidentiality>
- Impact on data about American Indian and Alaska Native people and tribal lands: Center for Indian Country Development presentation (starts at 2:46:00) - <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/events/2022/2022-center-for-indian-country-development-research-summit> ap