



INDIAN COUNTRY SNAPSHOT:

Osage Nation

The Osage Nation has long engaged in strategic planning, but until recently it had “limited information about its citizens, making it difficult to assess” their needs.¹ Committed to using all available tools “to distill the needs of our Osage people and...respond accordingly,”² in 2022 the Osage Nation Congress established the Osage Nation Census, to be conducted every five years.³ After consulting more than 50 Osage department directors and all three governmental branches about the data needed to better serve Osage members, Osage’s Self-Governance and Strategic Planning Department launched the Census in 2023.⁴ Deployed for two months to Osage members across the country and around the world through community meetings, an “aggressive social media campaign,” and gift card and raffle incentives, the Census generated more than 3,900 responses.⁵ Containing more than 80 questions, the Census included questions critical to understanding the Osage people’s workforce development needs and priorities, such as educational attainment level, employment status and field, barriers to continuing education, and job training interests.⁶ While Osage leaders entered the Census process believing Osage members were predominantly “needs-based,” results showed more of an “assets-based”⁷ population, with 58 percent of Osages employed full-time, 15 percent owning their own businesses, nearly half with a bachelor’s or advanced degree, and an unemployment rate under seven percent.⁸ Using this comprehensive data, Osage is now working to: (1) efficiently geotarget the delivery of workforce development services to particular locations showing heightened needs, (2) refine the policies and procedures governing those services, (3) channel additional resources into higher education initiatives “to build an independent, competitive workforce,” (4) develop financial literacy and other educational resources for local schools to preempt the emergence of “needs-based dynamics,” and (5) launch new workforce training initiatives in high-growth fields such as aerospace.⁹ To elevate the impact of its Census data, Osage recently signed an MOA with the U.S. Census Bureau, becoming the first Tribal Nation to have its data recognized and accepted by the Bureau, “ensuring Osages are fully represented on a federal level.”¹⁰

CONNECT: Susan Bayro, Secretary of Administration, Osage Nation Executive Branch,
sbayro@osagenation-nsn.gov

RELATED RESOURCES

[Osage Nation 2023 Census Report](#)

[Osage Nation 2023 Census Flyer](#)

[Osage Nation 2023 Census Form](#)

[Osage Nation Code 22-102: Census to be conducted](#)

[Osage Nation Congress Bill Number ONCA 22-30](#)

[Osage Nation Press Release: Osage Nation to Launch First-Ever Census to Improve Services, Strengthen Sovereignty](#)

[Osage Nation Press Release: Osage Nation Makes History with the Completion of its First-Ever Census](#)

[Osage Nation Press Release: Osage Nation Launches PathFinder Program to Empower Next-Generation Youth and Continue Osage Legacy in Aviation and Aerospace](#)

[Census Bureau and Osage Nation Announce Historic Data Sharing Agreement](#)

[Osage Nation Strategic Update: The Next 5 Years: 2020-2025](#)



- ¹ Osage Nation Congress, *An Act: To require the Osage Nation to conduct a census of the people of the Osage Nation*, Bill Number ONCA 22-30, April 6, 2022 ([https://www.dropbox.com/s/nl7ew2p8ii2gjl5/ONCA 22-30 ENACTED.pdf?dl=1](https://www.dropbox.com/s/nl7ew2p8ii2gjl5/ONCA%2022-30%20ENACTED.pdf?dl=1), accessed December 4, 2024).
- ² Osage Nation Principal Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear (Osage Nation, “Osage Nation Makes History with the Completion of its First-Ever Census,” Press Release, July 15, 2024 (<https://www.osagenation-nsn.gov/news-events/news/osage-nation-launch-first-ever-census-improve-services-strengthen-sovereignty>, accessed November 26, 2024)).
- ³ Osage Nation Congress, *An Act: To require the Osage Nation to conduct a census of the people of the Osage Nation*, April 6, 2022.
- ⁴ The Census design process took over a year to complete (Susan Bayro, Secretary of Administration, Osage Nation Executive Branch, “Osage Nation 2023 Census: Development, Deployment, and the Future,” PowerPoint presentation, December 9, 2024, slide 3).
- ⁵ Census Report, p. 2. All respondents were entered into raffle drawings for limited edition Pendleton blankets, and the first 1,800 to respond received \$100 gift cards (Susan Bayro, “Osage Nation 2023 Census: Development, Deployment, and the Future,” December 9, 2024, slide 6). In addition to the five community dinners the Self-Governance and Strategic Planning Department hosted to educate Osage members about the Census, its purpose, and how the data would be used, Osage promoted the Census through “the combined efforts of Osage News, Wahzhazhe Communications, and Osage Nation Associations’ regular updates and reminders” (Osage Nation, *Osage Nation 2023 Census Report*, 2023, p. 2 (<https://www.osagenation-nsn.gov/media/1153/download?attachment>, accessed December 4, 2024)). Of the 3,922 total Census responses, nearly 2,000 were from Osage members in Oklahoma, with more than 100 each from the states of Texas, California, Kansas, Missouri, and Colorado; 20 were received from Osage members living outside of the U.S. (Ibid., pp. 4-5).
- ⁶ Key Census questions included: *What is your education level of each adult(s)? What is your current employment status? If interested in further education, what are the three biggest barriers you face in continuing your education? What types of job training would you be interested in receiving? Do you currently own a business? Are you interested in starting a new business or expanding a current business?* (Osage Nation, *Osage Nation 2023 Census*, Form, May 2023). For the barriers to continuing education question, respondents identified (1) cost is too high (2) lack of time due to work schedule, and (3) family commitments/lack of child care as the top three barriers (Osage Nation, *Osage Nation 2023 Census Report*, 2023, p. 24).
- ⁷ Susan Bayro, Secretary of Administration, Osage Nation Executive Branch, Conversation with NCAI, November 20, 2024.
- ⁸ Osage Nation, *Osage Nation 2023 Census Report*, 2023, pp. 13 and 21. Among respondents, 28.2 percent of respondents had a bachelor’s degree, 14.6 percent had a graduate or professional degree, and 3.5 percent had a doctorate (Ibid., p. 21). In the area of entrepreneurship, 22.1 percent of respondents expressed interest in starting a new business or expanding a current business, with a lack of capital cited as the primary reason for not being able to do so (Ibid., p. 32). This aligns with Osage’s 2020-2025 Strategic Plan Update, a community-driven plan that placed the provision of start-up funding for Osage member-owned businesses as the top economic development priority (Osage Nation, *Osage Nation Strategic Update: The Next 5 Years: 2020-2025*, December 2020, p. 11 (https://s3.amazonaws.com/osagenation-nsn.gov/files/departments/Office-Self-Governance-Planning-Grants-Management/2021-0330_Strategic-Planning_Strategic-Update-2020-2025-FINAL.pdf, accessed November 26, 2024)).
- ⁹ Bayro, Conversation with NCAI, November 20, 2024. As of late 2024, Osage was commencing with Phase 2 of its Census data analysis process, which will involve isolating particular zip codes with high concentrations of needs-based Osage members and concentrating related services to those areas to address those needs (Ibid.). Meanwhile, in early 2024, responding in part to the Census results, the Nation launched the Osage PathFinders Development program targeting younger Osages that seeks to “empower a new generation of aviation pilots and engineering pioneers to rise as leaders in aerospace, equipped with the application of hands-on STEM experience” (Osage Nation, “Empower Next-Generation Youth and Continue Osage Legacy in Aviation and Aerospace,” Press Release, March 14, 2024 (<https://www.osagenation-nsn.gov/news-events/news/osage-nation-launches-pathfinder-program-empower-next-generation-youth-and>, accessed December 4, 2024)).
- ¹⁰ Osage Nation Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear. The MOA, which lasts five years, “establishes a framework for the Osage Nation to share administrative data directly with the Census Bureau. Data include education, military service, household information, employment, housing, income and expenses at the aggregate level” (Robert Santos, Director, U.S. Census Bureau, “Announcing a Historic Data Sharing Agreement,” Blog, September 24, 2024 (<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/director/2024/09/announcing-historic-data-sharing-agreement.html>, accessed December 4, 2024)). As Osage explains, it pursued the MOA to close federal data “gaps and improve data coverage with Osage Nation data” (Susan Bayro, “Osage Nation 2023 Census: Development, Deployment, and the Future,” December 9, 2024, slide 8). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, “This agreement allows us to better serve the Osage Nation by creating more accurate and relevant statistical data products for their use in governance, resource management and planning” (Santos, September 24, 2024).