



Health Status of American Indians in California

In 2000 a total of 2.5 million persons (0.9% of the U.S. population) classified themselves as American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) alone and 4.1 million (1.5%) classified themselves as AI/AN alone or in combination with another race. Approximately 26 percent of AI/AN lived in poverty, which was twice the national rate and the highest poverty rate of all racial/ethnic populations.

AI/AN experience persistent socioeconomic burdens and significant health disparities in their rates of diabetes, cancer, injuries, and pulmonary diseases.

Statistics that reflect the overall low health status of American Indians in California include:

- 16 percent of American Indian births in 2002 were to teen moms compared to 10 percent for Whites.
- There were 8.1 deaths per 1000 American Indian live births in 2001 compared to 4.7 for Whites. This rate discrepancy was probably even higher though as it does not include the finding of an IHP study that showed misclassification on death certificates for American Indian children under age 15 was three to four times greater than reported in state mortality data.
- 74 percent of American Indian mothers in 2001 received first trimester prenatal care as compared to 90 percent for Whites.
- Diabetes prevalence for ages 50-64 is consistently higher among AI/AN (19.6%) as compared to Whites (8%).
- AI/AN with diabetes have a high incidence of diabetes complications such as eye, kidney, lower extremity amputations, and cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease was the leading cause of death in AI/AN and diabetes is a high contributing risk factor for cardiovascular disease.
- Diabetes mellitus is one of the most serious health challenges facing AI/AN in the United States today. Diabetes contributes to several of the leading causes of death in American Indians - heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, pneumonia, and influenza. On average, AI/AN are 2.6 times as likely to have diabetes as non-Hispanic whites of a similar age.
- From 1999 through 2001, AI/AN had significantly higher average death rates due to chronic liver disease and cirrhosis.
- From 1999 through 2001, AI/AN females in California had the highest average death rate from accidents. Injuries cause 75% of all deaths among Native Americans age 19 and younger. The overall death rate from preventable injuries remains nearly twice as high for native people as for the general population.