



Indian Health Service **Facts on Indian Health Disparities**

“The elimination of health disparities is an important step in accomplishing the mission of the Indian Health Service – to raise the health status of American Indian and Alaska Native people.”

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Members of more than 560 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and their descendants are eligible for services provided by the Indian Health Service (IHS). The IHS is an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services that provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 1.6 million of the nation’s estimated 2.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. Its annual appropriation is approximately \$2.8 billion. The IHS strives for maximum tribal involvement in meeting the health needs of its service population, who live mainly on or near reservations and in rural communities in 35 states, mostly in the western United States and Alaska.

- ❑ Approximately 60% of American Indians and Alaska Natives living in the United States rely on the IHS to provide access to health care services in 49 hospitals and over 500 other facilities operated by the IHS, by tribes, by Alaska Native corporations, or purchased from private providers.
- ❑ The American Indian and Alaska Native people have long experienced lower health status when compared with other Americans. Lower life expectancy and the disproportionate disease burden exist perhaps because of inadequate education, disproportionate poverty, discrimination in the delivery of health services, and cultural differences. These are broad quality of life issues rooted in economic adversity and poor social conditions.
- ❑ American Indians and Alaska Natives born today have a life expectancy that is almost 6 years less than the U.S. all races population (70.6 years to 76.5 years, respectively; 1996-98 rates). American Indian and Alaska Native infants die at a rate of 8.9 per every 1,000 live births, as compared to 7.2 per 1,000 for the U.S. all races population (1996-98 rates).
- ❑ American Indians and Alaska Natives die at higher rates than other Americans from alcoholism (770%), tuberculosis (750%), diabetes (420%), accidents (280%), suicide (190%), and homicide (210%). (Rates adjusted for miscoding of Indian race on state death certificates; 1997-99 rates.)
- ❑ Safe and adequate water supply and waste disposal facilities are lacking in approximately 7.5% of American Indian and Alaska Native homes, compared to 1% of the homes for the U.S. general population.
- ❑ Given the higher health status enjoyed by most Americans, the lingering health disparities of American Indians and Alaska Natives are troubling. In trying to account for the disparities, health care experts, policymakers, and tribal leaders are looking at many factors that impact upon the health of Indian people, including the adequacy of funding for the Indian health care delivery system.
- ❑ The American Indian and Alaska Native population has several characteristics different from the U.S. all races population that would impact upon assessing the cost for providing similar health services enjoyed by most Americans. The Indian population is younger, because of higher mortality, than the U.S. all races. The IHS service population is predominately rural, which should suggest lower costs; however, the disproportionate incidence of disease and medical conditions experienced by the Indian population raises the costs, which almost obliterates the lower cost offsets.
- ❑ A stakeholder workgroup has developed a model to estimate the costs of providing a package of personal health care services for Indian people based on mainstream health plan benefits enjoyed by many Americans. According to the workgroup’s cost model, the IHS appropriated funding provides only 59% of the necessary federal funding for providing mainstream personal health care services to American Indians and Alaska Natives using the system and only 54% for those living in the IHS service area of 35 States.



MORTALITY RATE DISPARITIES

American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) in the IHS Service Area

1994-96 to 1997-99 and U.S. All Races 1995 and 1998
(Age-adjusted mortality rates per 100,000 population)

	AI/AN Rate 1997-99	US.All Races Rate - 1998	Ratio: AI/AN to U.S. All Races	AI/AN Rate 1994-96	U.S. All Races Rates -1995	Ratio: AI/AN to U.S. All Races
ALL CAUSES	730.1	471.7	1.5	698.4	503.9	1.4
Alcoholism	47.0	6.1	7.7	48.6	6.7	7.3
Tuberculosis	1.5	0.2	7.5	1.9	0.3	6.3
Diabetes	56.8	13.6	4.2	46.3	13.3	3.5
Unintentional Injuries (All Accidents)	95.1	34.5	2.8	92.5	34.0	2.7
Motor Vehicle Crashes	54.2	15.6	3.5	53.9	16.3	3.3
Suicide	20.0	10.4	1.9	19.3	11.2	1.7
Homicide	15.0	7.3	2.1	15.3	9.4	1.6
Infant Deaths ^{1/}	8.8	7.2	1.2	9.3	7.6	1.2
Diseases of the Heart	154.9	126.6	1.2	155.8	138.3	1.1
Cerebrovascular Diseases	29.6	25.1	1.2	30.4	26.7	1.1
Malignant Neoplasms (All)	124.5	123.6	1.0	116.5	129.9	0.9
Breast Cancer	15.4	10.2	1.5	12.1	11.5	1.1
Cervical Cancer	3.7	2.9	1.3	3.3	3.1	1.1
Pneumonia and Influenza	20.1	13.2	1.5	22.0	12.9	1.7
Gastrointestinal Disease	1.9	1.2	1.6	1.7	1.2	1.4

^{1/} Infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

NOTE: American Indian and Alaska Native rates were adjusted to compensate for race misreporting on State death certificates.