

# Suicide Among Native Populations

National American Indian &  
Alaska Native School Mental  
Health Program

*September is known around the nation as Suicide Prevention Month. What is not as well known are the specific statistics within suicide data showing us that Native individuals are dying from suicide at a much higher rate when compared to other populations. This fact sheet hopes to bring light to this data and raise awareness.*

## CDC's "Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Data"

- Rates of suicide in the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) population have been increasing since 2003
- National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) found that in the 18 participating states, AI/AN suicide rates were 21.5 per 100,000 which was more than 3.5 times higher than those among racial/ethnic groups with the lowest rates

## Indian Health Service's "Trends in Indian Health: 2014 Edition"

- For 2007-2009, American Indian and Alaska Natives had a 60% higher rate of suicide when compared to the death rates for U.S. all races in 2008
- AI/AN males had higher rates of suicide deaths across all age groups for the 2007-2009 data

## United States, High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019

Of the AI/AN youth who partook in this Youth Risk Behavior Survey...

- 45.5% reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row which was the highest positive response rate across all other races.
- 34.7% reported seriously having considered attempting suicide within the 12 months before the survey, also the highest rate
- 24.2% made a plan (highest rate)
- 25.5 % actually attempted one or more times in the 12 months leading up to the survey (highest rate)
- 32.1% said they were bullied on school property (highest rate)

This data very clearly shows us the disproportionate effect suicide has on Native populations. It's important to continue to raise awareness and reduce risk to help prevent suicide among Native Americans and Alaska Natives. Below are a list of programs and organizations doing just that, along with various resources on Native Suicide Prevention:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/programs/tribal/index.html>
- <https://www.sprc.org/settings/aian>
- <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/To-Live-To-See-the-Great-Day-That-Dawns-Preventing-Suicide-by-American-Indian-and-Alaska-Native-Youth-and-Young-Adults/SMA10-4480>
- <https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/transforming-tribal-communities-indigenous-perspectives-suicide-prevention>

## References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 1991-2019 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data. Available at <http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/>.
- Indian Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014). Trends in Indian Health: 2014 Edition. Trends in Indian Health 1-254. [https://www.ihs.gov/sites/dps/themes/responsive2017/display\\_objects/documents/Trends2014Book508.pdf](https://www.ihs.gov/sites/dps/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/Trends2014Book508.pdf)
- Leavitt RA, Ertl A, Sheats K, Petrosky E, Ivey-Stephenson A, Fowler KA. Suicides Among American Indian/Alaska Natives — National Violent Death Reporting System, 18 States, 2003–2014. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2018 (67)237–242. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6708a1>