



The Children's Partnership

A Child is a Child: Examining California's Children's Health Inequities Native American Children's Health Fact Sheet November 2021 Citations

The First Peoples of California

Over 300,000 early indigenous peoples lived across uncolonized lands in what is now known as California in the late 18th century.¹ These diverse Native communities spoke around 300 dialects of 100 distinct languages,² and included, among other tribes; the Chumash, Serrano, Tongva, Cahuilla, Yoruk, Maidu, Mojave, Pomo, Miwok, and Modoc.³ Despite the atrocities of colonization and genocide, Native communities persist in California today. California is home to 732,225 Native Americans—more than any other state in the country, with urban, rural and suburban populations.⁴ There are currently close to 200 tribes in California, 110 that are recognized by the U.S. federal government.⁵

Terminology

American Indian/Alaska Native: We use the term “American Indian/Alaska Native” (AI/AN) in the snapshot/fact sheet because this is the federal term used in Census data and other data sets used to inform this fact sheet.

Children and youth: Most of the data in this fact sheet is specific to children and youth under the age of 18. Check sources for exact age range of each indicator.

Sources

1) Masked Health Inequities

The perpetual practice of racial misclassification of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people in the United States presents stark challenges to accurately highlighting health inequities, particularly in healthcare and educational settings. Because AI/AN communities have been greatly undercounted and uncounted in data collection efforts across state, county, and federal

¹Chris Clarke, “Untold History: The Survival of California's Indians”

<https://www.kcet.org/shows/tending-the-wild/untold-history-the-survival-of-californias-indians>

² Ibid.

³ University of California, “Before 1768: Pre-Columbian California,”

<https://calisphere.org/exhibitions/essay/1/pre-columbian/>

⁴ “California Tribal Communities,” <https://www.courts.ca.gov/3066.htm>; “Frequently Asked Questions: Indian Tribes and Tribal Communities in California,”

<https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/TribalFAQs.pdf>

⁵ Ibid.

agencies—including in the federal census—data that reveals disparities is highly limited.⁶ Racial misclassification drastically underestimates the burden of disease that AI/AN communities face and mask disparities compared to the general population or other groups.⁷

2) Protective Factors

AI/NA communities face a legacy of historical trauma from government-sponsored violence and discrimination, as well as dispossession at the hands of state and federal policies and practices intentionally designed to break apart culture, communities, family, and identity. Yet despite this history, AI/AN children and youth are resilient with protective factors that supports their healthy development. Protective factors can help prevent and address health inequities impacting AI/AN communities. A recent systematic review of protective factors for AI/AN youth health identified: positive opportunities, connectedness to families and peers, and connection to culture as most supportive.⁸

3) Population

California, 2019: There are at least 199,642⁹ children and youth under 18 who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN), including those who also identify with another race or ethnicity, making up just over 2% of the state’s nearly 9 million children. Of these children at least --

- 28,268 identify as AIAN alone¹⁰
- 125,532 identify as AIAN and Latinx¹¹
- 2,906 identify as AIAN and Black¹²
- 29,604 identify as AIAN and white¹³
- 11,584 identify AIAN and two or more races, not including Latinx¹⁴

⁶ Jim, Melissa A et al. “Racial misclassification of American Indians and Alaska Natives by Indian Health Service Contract Health Service Delivery Area.” *American Journal of Public Health* vol. 104 Suppl 3, Suppl 3 (2014): S295-302. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.301933

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4035863/>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸Henson, Michele. “American Indian and Alaska Native Adolescent Protective Factors: A Literature Review,” 2015. http://www.aihec.org/our-stories/docs/BehavioralHealth/2015/9_AIHEC-AIAN-ProtectiveFactors-MHenson.pdf.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, “American Indian and Alaska Native by Age and Race/ Ethnicity – Estimates” American Community Survey 2019 1-year Estimates. Provided by the CA Department of Finance, on file with The Children’s Partnership.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

California, 2010: Nearly 90% of the Native American population in California resides in urban areas.¹⁵

4) Mental Health

Depression

- **California, 2017-19:** On average, 34% of AI/AN youth in 7th, 9th, and 11th grades reported feeling depressed.¹⁶ Across all race and ethnicity groups in 7, 9th, and 11th grade, on average, 33% of youth reported experiencing chronic sadness and hopelessness.¹⁷

Suicide

- **National, 2014:** Overall, the highest teenage suicide rates are among American Indian and Alaska Native teenagers.¹⁸ Nationally, there has been a 60% increase in the suicide rate of American Indian/Alaska Native girls between data collected between 1999-2001 and 2012-2014.¹⁹ That is the fastest growing rate among girls in any racial/ethnic category in the US.²⁰
- **California, 2017-19:** 25% of AIAN teens in 11th grade considered suicide in the past 12 months.²¹

Health Coverage and Access

- **California, 2019:** Of 77,001 total AI/AN children under 18 – 71,650 have health insurance, 5,351 have no health insurance.²²

¹⁵ California Consortium for Urban Indian Health “Health Equity” Presentation by Virginia Hedrick, Insured the Uninsured Project Conference February 2020. Data from 2010 US Census.

<http://www.itup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/4.-Virginia-Hedrick.pdf>

¹⁶ California Healthy Kids Survey 2017-2019 “Secondary Student Substance Use and Mental Health, by Race/Ethnicity” California Department of Education. Accessed October 2021.

[“https://calschls.org/reports-data/public-dashboards/secondary-student/](https://calschls.org/reports-data/public-dashboards/secondary-student/)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ VanOrman, Alicia, and Beth Jarosz. “Suicide Replaces Homicide as Second-Leading Cause of Death among U.S. Teenagers.” PRB, 2016. <https://www.prb.org/resources/suicide-replaces-homicide-as-second-leading-cause-of-death-among-u-s-teenagers/>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ California Healthy Kids Survey 2017-2019 “Secondary Student Substance Use and Mental Health, by Race/Ethnicity” California Department of Education. Accessed October 2021.

[“https://calschls.org/reports-data/public-dashboards/secondary-student/](https://calschls.org/reports-data/public-dashboards/secondary-student/)

²² U.S. Census Bureau, “Table B27001C Health Insurance Coverage Status by Age (American Indian and Alaska Native Alone)”, American Community Survey 2019 1-Year Estimates <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0400000US06&y=2019&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B27001C&hidePreview=true>

- **California, 2021:** 17,381 AI/NA children and youth under 21 are enrolled in Medi-Cal.²³ Data source from 2021. 48.7% of all children in CA are enrolled in Medi-Cal.²⁴
- **California, 2020:** 38% of AI/NA youth under 21 are enrolled in Medi-Cal.²⁵

COVID-19

- **National, 2020:** In 23 states with sufficient COVID-19 patient race/ethnicity data, the overall COVID-19 incidence among AI/AN persons was 3.5 times that among white persons. Although this disparity is mostly influenced by the elevated RR in New Mexico, variability in the RR among states is reflected in the wide confidence interval (95% CI = 1.2, 10.1).²⁶
- **National, 2021:** According to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data, the age-adjusted COVID-19 mortality rate is now higher for AIAN people than for any other group; it is almost two and a half times the death rate for white people and Asian Americans.²⁷
- **California, 2021:** In California, there about 2,400 AIAN children and 12,594 AIAN adults who have COVID-19.²⁸

Economic Wellbeing

- **California, 2019:** 16,576 AI/AN total children under 18 who live in households under federal poverty line.²⁹ 16,576/28,268 (denominator is 2019 ACS # of AI/AN alone children under 18) - 59% of AI/AN children live under federal poverty line.

²³ California Dept. of Health Care Services, “Eligible Individuals Under Age 21 Enrolled in Medi-Cal” (June 2021). <https://data.chhs.ca.gov/dataset/eligible-individuals-under-age-21-enrolled-in-medi-cal-by-county/resource/c3bd3780-f419-4369-9f65-9b08cf54cb84>

²⁴ KidsData PRB, “American Indian/Alaska Native Children in California” <https://www.kidsdata.org/export/pdf?dem=19>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ COVID-19 Among American Indian and Alaska Native Persons — 23 States, January 31–July 3, 2020 <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6934e1-H.pdf>

²⁷ Akee, Randall, and Sarah Reber. “American Indians and Alaska Natives Are Dying of Covid-19 at Shocking Rates.” Brookings. Brookings, February 18, 2021.

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/american-indians-and-alaska-natives-are-dying-of-covid-19-at-shocking-rates/>

²⁸ California Department of Public Health, “COVID-19 Race and Ethnicity Data” accessed October 2021. <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Race-Ethnicity.aspx>

²⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, “Table B17001C Poverty Status in the past 12 months by sex by Age (American Indian and Alaska Native Alone)”, American Community Survey 2019 1-Year Estimates, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B17001C&g=0400000US06&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B17001C&hidePreview=true>

- **California, 2019:** All children in California: 1,363,574³⁰/ 8,865,747³¹ - 15.4% of all children in California live under federal poverty level.³²
- **California, 2018-19:** 35% of AI/AN children are burdened by housing and utility costs.³³

Food Access

- **National, 2017:** 28.0% of AI/AN households with children live in food-insecure households in the U.S. versus 15.7% of general households with children.³⁴
- **National:** Research shows that across the US, many reservations and counties with the highest numbers of indigenous community members are food deserts, meaning communities have to travel 100 miles or more to purchase food.³⁵

Child Welfare

- **California, 2018:** 20.7 per 1,000 AI/NA children aged 0-20 are in foster care, compared to 5.3 per 1,000 children for all race/ethnic group, and compared to 4.4 per 1,000 white children in foster care.³⁶

Oral Health

- **National, 2018-2019:** More than half of AI/AN children between 1-5 years of age have early childhood caries (ECC). AI/AN preschool children 3-5 years of age have the highest prevalence of ECC of any population group in the United States, almost three times higher than white non-Latinx children.³⁷ Slightly more than 43% of AI/AN children

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, “Table B17001 Poverty Status in the past 12 months by sex by Age” American Community Survey 2019 1-Year Estimates, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B17001%3A%20POVERTY%20STATUS%20IN%20THE%20PAST%2012%20MONTHS%20BY%20SEX%20BY%20AGE&g=0400000US06&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B17001&hidePreview=true>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ The Urban Institute. Data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2018 and 2019 American Community Survey.

³⁴ Bread for the World, “Hunger and Poverty in the Indigenous Community,” citing data from Household Food Security in the U.S. in 2017. US Department of Agriculture. September 2018 <https://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/hunger-poverty-indigenous-communities-september-2018.pdf>

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “American Indian/Alaska Native Children in California.” Kidsdata.org <https://www.kidsdata.org/export/pdf?dem=19>

³⁷ Phipps KR, Ricks TL, Mork NP, and Lozon TL. The oral health of American Indian and Alaska Native children aged 1-5 years: results of the 2018-19 IHS oral health survey. Indian Health Service data brief. Rockville, MD: Indian Health Service. 2019. <https://www.ihs.gov/doh/documents/surveillance/2018-19%20Data%20Brief%20of%201-5%20Year-Old%20AI-AN%20Preschool%20Children.pdf>

between 3-5 years of age have untreated decay compared to only 10% of white non-Latinx children - 4-fold difference.³⁸

Maternal and Infant Health

- **National, 2014-17: Maternal mortality:** During 2014–2017, the pregnancy-related mortality ratios were:³⁹
 - 41.7 deaths per 100,000 live births for non-Latinx Black women.
 - 28.3 deaths per 100,000 live births for non-Latinx American Indian or Alaska Native women.
 - 13.8 deaths per 100,000 live births for non-Latinx Asian or Pacific Islander women.
 - 13.4 deaths per 100,000 live births for non-Latinx White women.
 - 11.6 deaths per 100,000 live births for Latinx or Latina women.
- **California, 2015-17: Infant Mortality:** According to CDPH data from 2015-2017, the rate of infant deaths per 1,000 births was 4.5 for American Indian/Alaska Native populations. The average across all populations was 4.3 deaths per 1,000 births, and the rate for white individuals was 3.4 per 1,000 births.⁴⁰

Digital Connectedness

- **National, 2020:** 34 percent of AI/AN households had no high-speed internet access at home, and almost 16 percent had no computer.⁴¹
- **California, 2018:** 91% of AI/AN children in CA live in a household with a broadband connected device—compared to 96% of white children and Asian American children in CA.⁴²

School Success & Safety

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/pregnancy-mortality-surveillance-system.htm>

⁴⁰ “Infant Mortality – Deaths per 1,000 Live Births.” Let’s Get Healthy California: Healthy Beginnings/Reducing Infant Mortality. <https://letsgethealthy.ca.gov/goals/healthy-beginnings/reducing-infant-mortality/>

⁴¹ “The Condition of Native American Students.” December 2020

<https://www.nsba.org/ASBJ/2020/December/condition-native-american-students>

⁴² “Children Living in Households with a Broadband-Connected Device, by Race/Ethnicity.”

Kidsdata.org. [https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/2221/broadband-race/table#fmt=2771&loc=2,127,1657,331,1761,171,2168,345,357,324,369,362,360,2076,364,356,217,354,1663,339,2169,365,343,367,344,366,368,265,349,361,4,273,59,370,326,341,338,350,2145,359,363,340&tf=108&ch=7,11,](https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/2221/broadband-race/table#fmt=2771&loc=2,127,1657,331,1761,171,2168,345,357,324,369,362,360,2076,364,356,217,354,1663,339,2169,365,343,367,344,366,368,265,349,361,4,273,59,370,326,341,338,350,2145,359,363,340&tf=108&ch=7,11)

- **California, 2019-20: Suspensions:** 5.4% of AI/AN students were suspended, 2.5% of all students were suspended (2.5%).⁴³
- **California, 2018-19: Chronic Absenteeism:** 22% AI/NA students, 12.1% all students.⁴⁴
- **California, 2013-2014:** Native American students are two times, and Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students were one—and—a—half times more likely than white students to be arrested at California schools.⁴⁵

⁴³ California Department of Education (CDE), “Suspension Rate California Public Schools” 2019-2020 school-year. Accessed October 2021 at <https://www.ed-data.org/state/CA>. ⁴³ Data collected by the CDE through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). Aggregate data files are provided by the CDE – Data Reporting Office at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesd.asp>

⁴⁴ California Department of Education (CDE), “Chronic Absenteeism Rate California Public Schools” 2018-2019 school-year. Accessed October 2021 at <https://www.ed-data.org/state/CA>. ⁴⁴ Data collected by the CDE through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). Aggregate data files are provided by the CDE – Data Reporting Office

⁴⁵ Whitaker, Amir, Jessica Cobb, Victor Leung, and Linnea Nelson. “No Police in Schools .” https://www.aclusocal.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/no_police_in_schools_-_report_-_aclu_-_082421.pdf, August 2021.