



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

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Research Policy Brief *Native Youth Data*

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), in partnership with the National Indian Child Welfare Association, the National Indian Education Association, and the National Indian Health Board, created the *First Kids 1st* initiative in 2015 to help create and strengthen systems of support for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth to help them thrive. As a part of this work, the NCAI Policy Research Center published the [*First Kids 1st Data Resource Book: Helping Native Youth Thrive Through Research and Data*](#) in June 2019.

The purpose of the data resource book was to publish the latest research and examples of data that illustrate the factors that help Native youth thrive in four areas: healthy lifestyles; successful students; supportive environments; and vibrant communities. A full discussion of the components of each of these areas is included in the original data resource book, which includes a summary of a literature review and examples of data indicators in each of the four areas. The purpose of this data brief is to create an easy-to-read summary of some of the data in the resource book. Please refer to the original resource book for details. The research and data included in this brief are intended to provide a snapshot of relevant data and are not intended to be a comprehensive summary of all data available on Native youth. In infographics that show comparisons, the red color represents Native youth data.

Healthy Lifestyles



Obesity: According to Indian Health Service Data in 2015 (Bullock, 2017), the prevalence (percent) of American Indian and Alaska Native children with obesity was 29.7 percent, which is higher than 17.4 percent of U.S. children with obesity as reported in the NHANES study (Skinner, 2016).



Normal birth weight by age: An analysis of the 2014 – 2016 U.S. Birth File found that with increasing age, American Indian/Alaska Native mothers had lower prevalence of normal birth weight for their children compared to Non-Hispanic White mothers (Dennis, 2019).



Suicide: From 1999 to 2017, American Indians and Alaska Natives had the highest age-adjusted suicide rates compared to other racial and ethnic groups, and age-adjusted suicide rates increased by 139 percent for AI/AN females and 71 percent for AI/AN males during the same time period (Curtin, 2019).

15.8%

Alcohol use: In a survey published in 2018, rates of substance use were greater for reservation-based American Indian adolescents compared to national rates among U.S. youths (Swaim, 2018). For example, in the last 30 days, the prevalence of alcohol use among American Indian students in the 8th grade was 15.8 percent, compared to 7.3 percent for the national sample in the same grade.

77%

Food access: In a USDA analysis of access to healthy food, the percent of individuals and households more than one mile from a supermarket was about two times greater for individuals who lived in American Indian and Alaska Native tribal lands compared to all U.S. individuals (Kaufman, 2014). For American Indian tribal lands, 77 percent lived more than one mile from a supermarket.

Successful Students



School performance: In 2017, Grade 8 reading and mathematics scores for American Indian and Alaska Native students were lower than the national average and most other racial and ethnic groups (de Brey 2019).

17%

High school non-completion: The percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives who have not completed high school by the age of 25 years is higher than the overall U.S. rate and most other racial and ethnic groups (de Bray, 2019). In 2016, 17 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives had not completed high school by age 25 years, compared to 13 percent for the overall U.S. rate.

39%

College graduation rates: In a study of graduation rates for students pursuing a bachelor's degree at a four-year degree granting institution for the first time who entered in 2010, American Indian and Alaska Native students had the lowest overall graduation rates for graduation within four, five, and six years combined (de Brey 2019).

Supportive Environments

2.1%

Foster care: American Indians and Alaska Native children are overrepresented in foster care and are 2.1 percent of all children who are placed outside their homes in foster care, despite being just 0.9 percent of the U.S. population. In some states, the percent of children in foster care who are American Indian and Alaska Native is many times their percent in the state population (NICWA, 2017).

60.2%

Child care deserts: American Indian and Alaska Native children are more likely to live in states that are considered “child care deserts,” and in one study in 2016, American Indians and Alaska Natives had the highest percent of their population living in child care deserts (60.2 percent) compared to the overall population (50.5 percent) and other racial and ethnic groups (Malik, 2018)

54%

Single parent families: The percent of American Indian and Alaska Native children under 18 in single parent families (54 percent) is higher than all racial and ethnic groups except for Black or African American children (65 percent) (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2019), although the evidence of impact on outcomes is mixed, and other factors, including circumstances, likely have more impact related to outcomes (Schmuck, 2013).

Vibrant Communities



Poverty: The percent of American Indian and Alaska Native children under age 18 living in poverty is high (33 percent) compared to other racial and ethnic groups and the national average of 18 percent (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2019).

54%

Home ownership: The percent of Native American households that are homeowners in 2017 was 54 percent, compared to 64 percent for the overall U.S. rate (Prosperity Now, 2019).

37%

No internet access: The percent of American Indian and Alaska Native children ages 3 to 18 years with no internet access at home in 2017 was 37 percent, compared to 12 percent of non-Hispanic White children (McFarland, 2019).

Disclaimer: While more recent data may exist for a few of the data indicators above, this brief uses the research and data in the original 2019 data resource book for consistency. Some data were produced by regularly published sources, and some data were compiled in a single analysis of data sources. The authors recommend a review and update of this data in five or more years from the original data to follow and document trends.

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