Native American Demographics

In the U.S. 5.2 million people identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, alone or in combination with one or more other races. The combination population increased by 39% since 2000. The total Native population makes up 1.6% of the total U.S. population at 5.1 million.

There are 567 federally recognized tribes with 318 reservations—more than half this population lives off the reservations.

Number of states with more than 100,000 American Indian and Alaska Natives as of the 2011 American Community Survey: California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Washington, North Carolina, New York, Florida, Michigan, Alaska, Colorado, Oregon, and Minnesota.

Changing Health Points:
- Significant increase in end-stage renal disease (ESRD). National survey incidence rate 3 times higher among Native American than among whites and 6 times higher in those with diabetes.
- Prevalence rate for diabetes among Native Americans 11% for men and 13% for women, more than twice the rates for the total U.S. population.
- Dramatic decline in mortality for two infectious diseases: tuberculosis and gastroenteritis.

**Table 3.1: Leading causes of death and mortality rates by sex, 2006-2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150.1</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart disease</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Dependence Syndromes</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
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**Mortality Rate**

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**Unique advantages of working on a Native American Reservation**
- Warmth and acceptance by Native Americans
- Beauty of the landscape
- Communion with nature
- Travel & professional developments
- Exposure to heritage of our first Americans
- Special opportunity to learn and serve

Aboriginal and Other Indigenous Peoples

“Indigenous peoples” is a term used to refer to the original inhabitants of a given region. There are approximately 370 million Indigenous Peoples worldwide, in over 90 countries. [http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples)

Problems Faced by Indigenous Peoples

Poverty
- Lack of Basic Health Services
- Gap in Life Expectancy
- Low level of education
- Lack of protection of intellectual and cultural property rights
- Unemployment
- Human Rights
- Land and Resources
- Self Determination

Supportive Factors of Native American and Indigenous Peoples:

**Traditional Health Beliefs and Practices:**
- Enduring spirit: Durability, identity, adaptability, perseverance, and tenaciousness
- Holistic approach to life: A desire to promote well-being of the group
- Communal ceremonies: To promote well-being of entire tribal group
- Role of elders as advisers: Important to lives of individual members

**Religion, Philosophy, and Spirituality:**
- Spiritual belief: Interconnectedness of man, Creator/God, fellow man, and nature
- Healing is considered sacred work: Consideration for spiritual aspects of the individual
- Often use “white man’s medicine” to treat “white man’s diseases” (e.g., diabetes, cancer, etc.)
- Indian medicine to treat Indian problems (pain, disturbed relationships, sickness of the spirit)
- Spirituality permeates all aspects of life: Holistic worldview influences both the physical & emotional well-being
- Duality: May be Christian and also follow traditional spiritual practices and beliefs
- Illness means imbalance: Illness involves imbalance, not just symptoms, and is holistic in approach

**Shared beliefs:**
- All healing begins with the Great Spirit with an opportunity to purify one’s soul
- Illness affects body, mind, and spirit; health is maintained by preserving harmony among all parts.
- Plants, animals, and humans are all part of the spirit world intermingled with the physical world
- Death is a natural phenomenon of life. The spirit existed before and will exist after the body dies
- One’s relationship with others and the earth are essential components of health and are felt by the individual and the family

**Overall Strengths and Protective Factors:**
- Adaptability
- Community Strength
- Connection with the Past
- Family and Elders: Traditional kinship and extended-family structures
- Holistic Thinking

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