

# United States

## STD Fact Sheet: American Indians/Alaska Natives

*According to Census 2000, 4.1 million American Indians and Alaska Natives live in the United States, representing 1.5% of the total population.*

### **Chlamydia:**

When comparing rates by ethnicity, American Indians have the second highest chlamydia rate in the United States, accounting for nearly 2% of all reported chlamydia cases. In 2003, the reported chlamydia rate among AI/ANs was about 2.5 times greater than the rate reported among all persons (667 AI/AN cases per 100,000 vs. 302 total cases per 100,000). Chlamydia rates have increased in the United States since 1996.

**Gender Distribution:** AI/AN males are diagnosed with chlamydia at nearly twice the rate reported among all males. And AI/AN females are diagnosed with chlamydial infection at nearly three times the rate found among all females. As is observed among all racial/ethnic populations, STD rates among AI/AN females are typically higher than rates reported among males due to targeted screening initiatives.

**Age Distribution:** In 2003, chlamydia rates produced similar age distribution patterns for both "All Races" and AI/ANs, with the highest rates occurring among 15-24 year olds.

Throughout the U.S., American Indians and Alaska Natives are disproportionately impacted by chlamydia infection.

### **Gonorrhea:**

When comparing rates by ethnicity, American Indians have the second highest gonorrhea rate in the United States, accounting for nearly 1.3% of all cases reported. In 2003, the reported gonorrhea rate among AI/ANs was slightly less than the rate reported among all persons (101 AI/AN cases per 100,000 vs. 115 total cases per 100,000). Since 1981, the total number of gonorrhea cases in the U.S. has decreased a dramatic 64%.

**Gender Distribution:** AI/AN males are diagnosed with gonorrhea at nearly half the rate reported among all males. This is not the case among women however, where gonorrhea rates among AI/AN females are higher than rates reported among "all females." Among all races, gonorrhea rates for males and females have become very similar in recent years. Among AI/ANs, however, gonorrhea rates are nearly two times higher among females than males.

**Age Distribution:** In 2003, gonorrhea rates produced similar age distribution patterns for both "All Races" and "AI/ANs," with the highest rates occurring among 20-24 year olds. While cases were similarly distributed, gonorrhea rates among AI/AN teens and young adults clearly exceed rates observed among all races.

*Provided by Project Red Talon, a project of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board*

*For more information, call toll free 877-955-5519 or visit us on the web: [www.npaihb.org](http://www.npaihb.org). Funded by CDC grant U183/CCU024369-01*

**Data Source:** US States and federal territories are required to report new cases of Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis, and HIV/AIDS to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on a weekly basis, allowing regional and national trends to be identified and monitored. The data contained in this Fact Sheet was obtained from the CDC in February 2005.

## Syphilis:

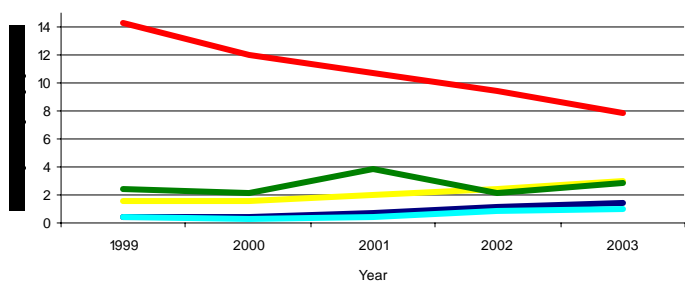
In 2003, American Indians had the third highest syphilis rate of all ethnic groups, accounting for >1% of all cases. At 2.3 cases per 100,000, the AI/AN syphilis rate was two times higher than the rate reported among Whites (1.1 cases per 100,000) in 2002.

**Gender Distribution:** Nationally, syphilis was 5 times more common among males than among females in 2003. Male AI/AN syphilis rates peaked several times between 1981 and 2003. Overall, male AI/AN syphilis rates decreased from 1981 to 1996, and have gradually increased since that time. Typically, P&S syphilis rates are slightly lower among AI/AN males than the total population.

While female syphilis rates have also varied over time, AI/AN rates have been consistently higher than rates reported among all U.S. women since 1998.

**Age Distribution:** Nationally, AI/AN syphilis rates are greatest among 30-39 year olds.

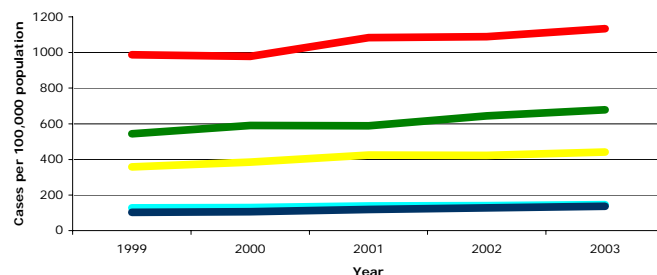
P&S Syphilis Rates by Race/Ethnicity U.S.  
1999-2003



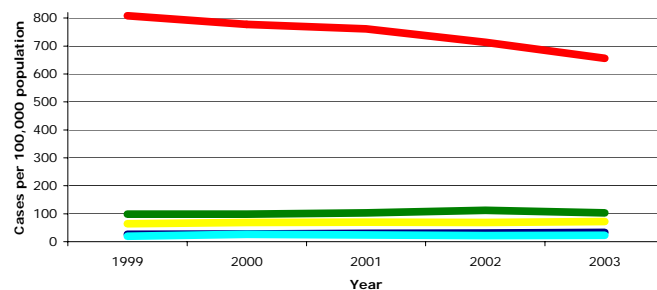
### Key:

African American — White, Not Hispanic —  
 American Indian/Alaska Native — Asian/PI —  
 Hispanic —

Chlamydia Rates by Race/Ethnicity  
United States, 1999-2003



Gonorrhea Rates by Race/Ethnicity  
United States, 1999-2003



## HIV/AIDS:

At 10.4 cases per 100,000, AI/ANs had the 3rd highest AIDS rate in 2003, in relation to other ethnic groups. More than half (53%) of AI/ANs with AIDS resided in five states at the time of their AIDS diagnosis: California (25%), Oklahoma (11%), Washington (7%), Arizona (6%), and Alaska (4%).

## Data Limitations

**Case Reporting** – In a survey of tribally-operated and urban Indian healthcare facilities, only 85% of respondents indicated that HIV/AIDS case reports are sent to a state or county health department. A smaller percentages of respondents indicated that their facility reports chlamydia and gonorrhea cases (71%), hepatitis C (67%), hepatitis B (65%), or hepatitis A (62%).

**Racial Misclassification** - Errors in racial/ethnic classification and population estimates significantly impair the accuracy of state and national data. Racial misclassification occurs when AI/AN STD cases are reported to the CDC in a different racial/ethnic category, and cause an underestimation of the true burden of disease. Linkage studies have found AI/AN misclassification rates of 22%-55% in State STD Registries.

**Screening** – Because STDs often produce no discernable symptoms, many AI/AN infections remain undiagnosed. Consistent screening protocols at tribal clinics are needed to improve accurate case identification and treatment.