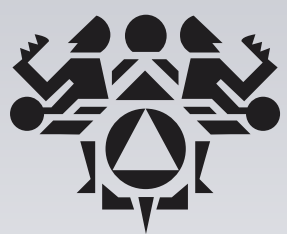




**Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) among
American Indian/Alaska Native
(AI/AN) People Living in Oregon**

STI data from 2007-2018



**NORTHWEST PORTLAND AREA
INDIAN HEALTH BOARD**
Indian Leadership for Indian Health



NPАIHB

This data brief summarizes sexually transmitted infection (STI) diagnoses (gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis) among American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) people living in Oregon State. Comparisons are made to Non-AI/AN people in Oregon and the US to understand the extent of disease burden experienced by AI/AN communities in Oregon.

Sexually transmitted infections are typically transmitted from person to person through sexual contact, though some can be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy/birth. Cases of gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis are reported nationally because of their public health importance and impact on an individual's health and wellbeing. These infections may have few to no symptoms (asymptomatic) and thus routine screening for sexually active persons is a vital part of sexual health to treat and stop the spread of the infection. All three conditions are treatable, but if left untreated, can cause serious complications to a person's health and some, such as gonorrhea and syphilis, can increase risk of the transmission and acquisition of HIV.ⁱ It is important to address the spread and prevention of these conditions to improve the overall health of communities.

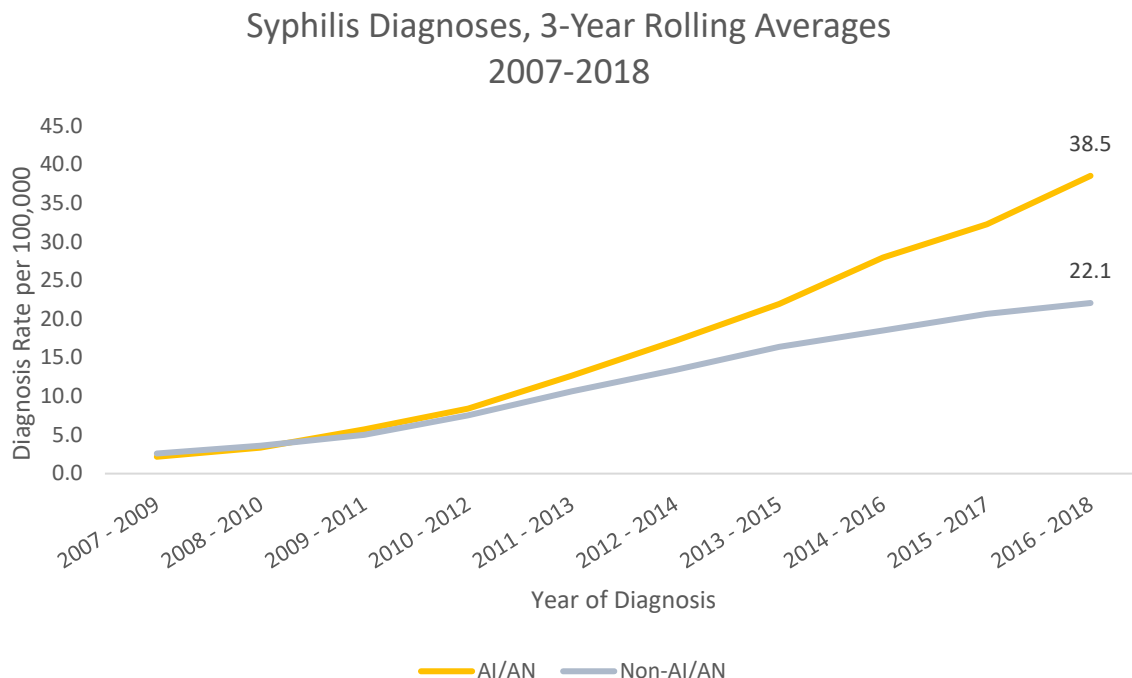
Due to the increase in diagnosed STIs over the past several yearsⁱⁱ, several national initiatives are underway to support prevention efforts at the state and local levels. One of these initiatives, Strengthening STD Prevention and Control for Health Departments (STD PCHD) is the CDC's funding for cooperative agreements that began in 2019 with state and local health departments to improve surveillance and prevention efforts for gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis. Some activities supported under this five-year grant include enhanced surveillance and prevention of antibiotic resistant gonorrhea; improving STI screening practices; reducing adult syphilis and eliminating cases of congenital syphilis; expedited partner therapy for chlamydia and gonorrhea; and reducing overall STD-related health disparities.ⁱⁱⁱ

Syphilis

Syphilis is caused by the bacteria *treponemal pallidum* (or *T. pallidum* for short) and can have a myriad of symptoms, spanning from painless chancres (genital ulcers) for those with primary syphilis to neuro and ocular syphilis that can occur at any stage of syphilis infection. It's important to note that while there are many symptoms associated with syphilis, symptoms often get missed by individuals or misdiagnosed, and therefore, the infection can go unnoticed for many months or even years without proper screening. Syphilis infections are separated into different clinical stages for morbidity and treatment purposes and is based on symptoms, last exposure to syphilis, and/or supportive testing results.^{vii} If left untreated, syphilis can cause severe long-term health consequences in both adults and children, such as neurosyphilis, blindness, pre-term birth, syphilitic stillbirth, congenital syphilis, early infant death, and even adult death. For women, it is especially important to receive adequate treatment for syphilis prior to delivery so as not to transmit syphilis to her infant (known as congenital syphilis).

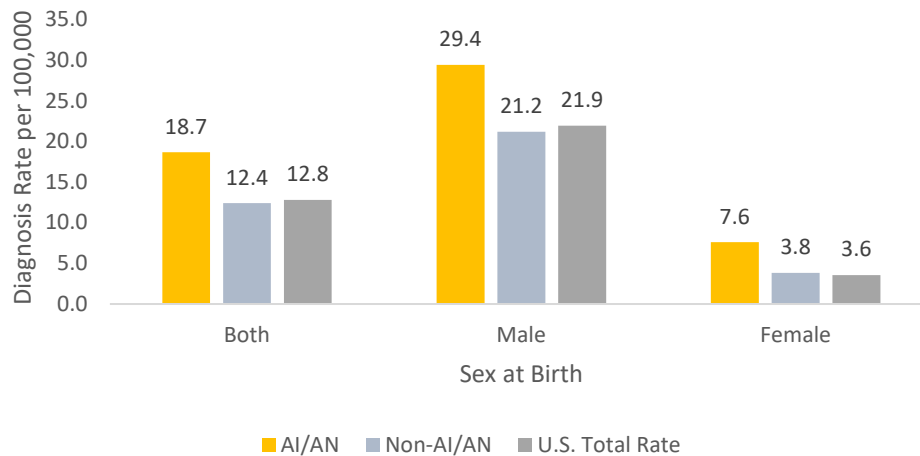
Note: The rates below include all stages of syphilis diagnoses (primary, secondary, early non-primary/non-secondary, and congenital syphilis).

While American Indians and Alaska Natives in Oregon have had a low number of syphilis diagnoses, case rates have been on the rise since the 2007-2009 time frame, mirroring those of their Non-AI/AN counterparts. However, while both AI/AN persons and Non-AI/AN persons experienced increasing rates of syphilis, the AI/AN diagnosis surpassed Non-AI/AN persons by the 2016-2018 time frame, the diagnosis rate for AI/AN persons in Oregon was 1.7 times higher than Non-AI/AN persons in Oregon.



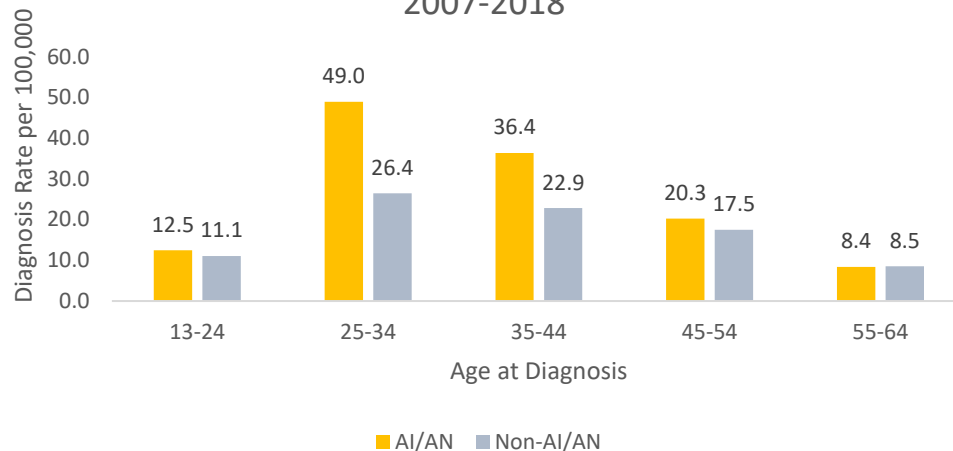
While the diagnosis rate for Non-AI/AN persons in Oregon were similar to the total U.S. diagnosis rate for syphilis between 2007 and 2018, the AI/AN diagnosis rate was 1.5 times higher than Non-AI/ANs in Oregon. When examining rates specific to sex at birth, AI/AN males had a rate 1.4 times higher than Non-AI/AN males and AI/AN females had a rate two times the rate of their Non-AI/AN counterparts.

Syphilis Diagnoses by Sex at Birth
2007-2018



While diagnosis rates were higher for AI/ANs in every age group, the greatest gaps in disease burden were seen between ages 25 and 34 and 35 and 44—AI/ANs had diagnosis rates of 1.9 and 1.6 that of their Non-AI/AN peers, respectively.

Syphilis Diagnoses by Age
2007-2018



**Diagnosis rates for persons under the age of 13 and over the age of 64 have been suppressed due to the small amount of diagnoses for these age groups (cases <5).*



NPAIHB

Oregon Tribal STI Resources

Project Red Talon

The goal of Project Red Talon is to promote sexual health and wellness and prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) for AI/AN people of the Pacific Northwest, including improved screening and treatment and community awareness.

<http://www.npaihb.org/project-red-talon/>

We R Native and Healthy Native Youth

We R Native is a multimedia health resource for Native teens and young adults with a goal to expose AI/AN youth to age-appropriate, culturally tailored sex education across the lifespan and support tribal health educators to access and delivery evidence-based programming. The Healthy Native Youth website has culturally-appropriate sexual health curricula that is geared toward AI/AN youth.

www.weRnative.org

<https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/curriculum/>

About the Data

- Counts less than five have been suppressed to maintain patient privacy.
- Crudes rates were used for comparison between AI/ANs and Non-AI/ANs.
- **Oregon Data Sources:** Oregon Health Authority Orpheus data system, corrected for AI/AN racial misclassification by NPAIHB's IDEA-NW project.
- **National Data Sources:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) WONDER, National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention (NCHHSTP) AtlasPlus, CDC Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance Report 2018
- The data presented in this brief may not be comparable to information published by state or federal agencies due to differences in how we identify AI/AN individuals.

About this Report

IDEA-NW

The Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board's IDEA-NW Project aims to address racial misclassification of AI/AN people by identifying incorrect race information in health datasets such as state surveillance systems. The race information is corrected and used to create more accurate health reports for AI/AN communities in order to improve targeted prevention efforts. This report was made using race-corrected sexually transmitted infection surveillance data.

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ⁱ Fleming DT, Wasserheit JN. From epidemiological synergy to public health policy and practice: the contribution of other sexually transmitted diseases to sexual transmission of HIV infection. *Sexually transmitted infections* 1999;75:3-17.

ⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance 2018*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2019. DOI: 10.15620/cdc.79370.

ⁱⁱⁱ NOFO: PS19-1901 Strengthening STD Prevention and Control for Health Departments (STD PCHD). <https://www.cdc.gov/std/funding/pchd/default.htm>. Date accessed September 9, 2020.

^{iv} Gonorrhea – STD information from the CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/default.htm>. Date accessed August 3, 2020.

^v Chlamydia – STD information from the CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/std/chlamydia/default.htm>. Date accessed August 3, 2020.

^{vi} Syphilis – STD information from the CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/default.htm>. Date accessed August 3, 2020.

^{vii} Syphilis Treatment and Care. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/treatment.htm. Date accessed August 3, 2020.



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