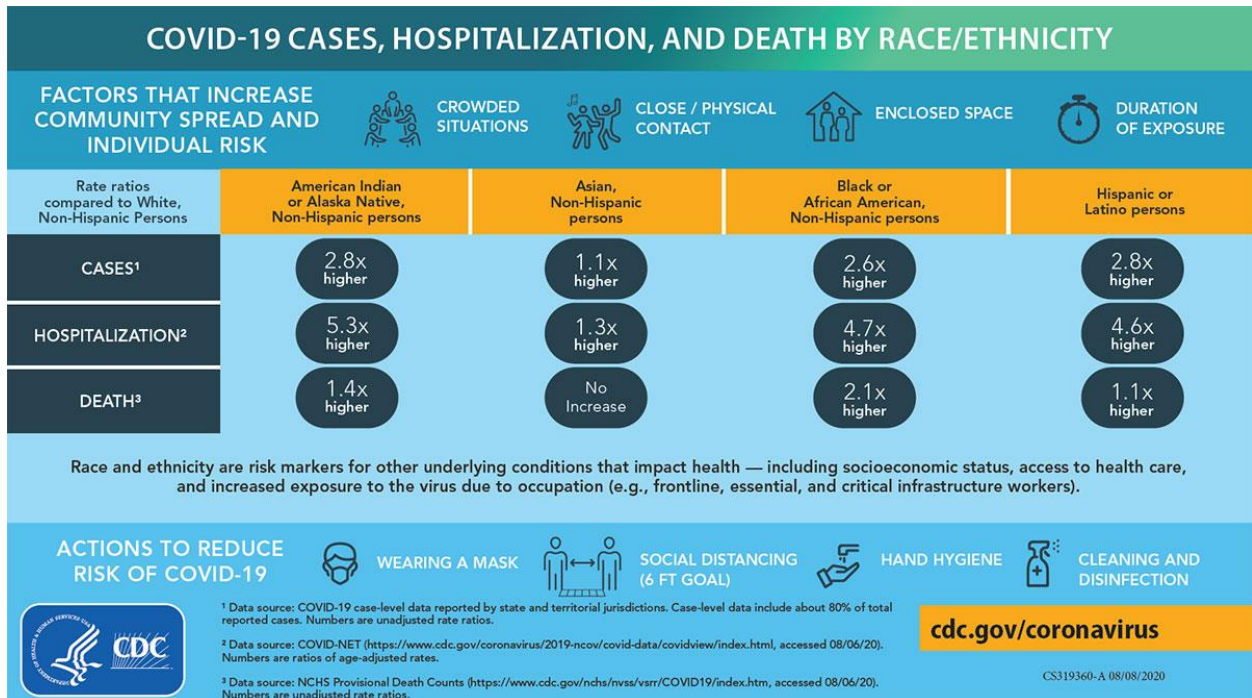


# COVID-19 And Native Californians

With 109 federally recognized and several un-recognized tribes, California has the highest population of Native Americans. As the residents of one of the worst COVID-hit states, California Natives are under immense distress and wildfires only add to their misery.



A chart published by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov) shows Native Populations at higher risk of COVID-19.

## Factors and Effects

The coronavirus disproportionately impacts the First Peoples of California and tribes living in other states.

### Limited health services

As per the treaties, it is the federal government's responsibility to provide healthcare services to the Native populations in the US. In 1955, the government formed The Federal Indian Health Service (IHS), an operating division under the Department of Health and Human Services to provide ambulatory and comprehensive inpatient care services to the Native Americans. Sadly, due to complicated eligibility criteria and limited funding, a significant percentage of Native Americans can't avail IHS services.

### Broken or limited infrastructure

A majority of Indian reservations are built away from civilization, so naturally, the people living there suffer from poverty and malnutrition. Natives living on these reservations also have a lower rate of economic development and standards of living; as a result, they are predisposed to calamities.

## Higher rates of immunocompromising diseases

Cirrhosis and other chronic liver diseases, diabetes, homicide, assault, unintentional injuries, and chronic lower respiratory diseases are fairly common in Native populations, making them more susceptible to COVID-19.

## Job losses

Native employment rate has always been lower than other demographics in the United States and a vast majority of employed Natives belong to the leisure and hospitality industry. Due to the pandemic's protective measures and travel restrictions, people working in this industry (and others) are left without work, increasing the overall unemployment rate of the Native Californians.



*Two healthcare personnel attending to a COVID-19 patient.*

## Initiatives to Support Native Populations

The following initiatives are designed to provide support to the Native populations.

Congress passed [The Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) in March 2020 to provide aid to individuals, families, and businesses affected by the pandemic. The act allocated \$8 billion and promised to provide the fund within 30 days; however, the funds weren't released on time due to red tape and other complications. The [CDC also established](#) a fund to provide assistance to First Nations.

The [Urban Indian Health Institute established a resource center](#) to provide guidance and information to the Native populations. Similarly, [the National Indian Child Welfare Center](#) lists funding opportunities and provides valuable resources for families to strengthen their fight against the coronavirus.

Native populations in the US are suffering greatly due to the coronavirus, but California Indian Tribes are feeling the brunt of it due to additional disasters, including wildfires. Hopefully, things will take a turn for the better, alleviating the miseries of the First Nations.