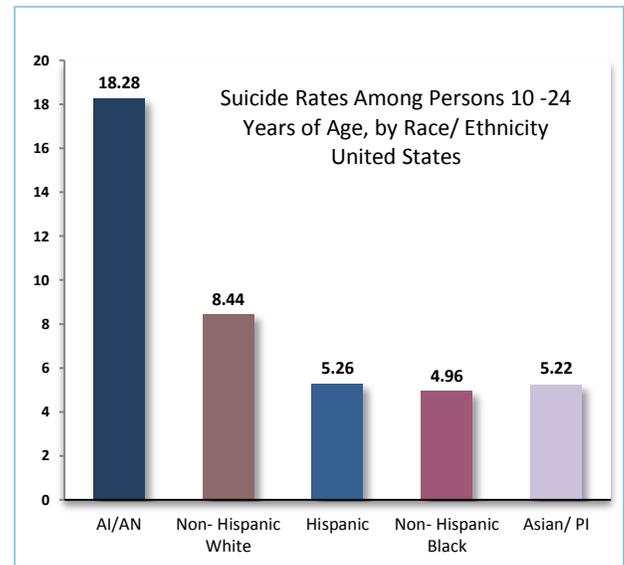




Although suicide rates are extremely high among all segments of the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) population, youth are most heavily impacted by this public health crisis as 40% of all AI/AN suicides occur among those ages 15-24 years old. In the AI/AN communities, suicide contagion is a major compounding factor that perpetuates suicide. Contagion occurs when a suicide within the community triggers others to attempt or complete suicide, resulting in multiple suicides or attempts within a short period of time. This is a problem which youth are highly vulnerable to, but AI/AN youth even more so. Among all ages of (AI/AN), suicide is the 8th leading cause of death.



The reasons why suicide rates are high among the AI/AN population, and especially among youth, are multifaceted and complex. In particular, those in AI/AN communities tend to have more serious mental health disorders that are related to suicide, including anxiety, substance abuse, and depression. For AI/AN youth, studies suggest that those who died by suicide were frequently responding to external stimuli such as significant family or interpersonal problems, had been using alcohol, drugs, or both, and tended not to have been seen previously in any behavioral health clinical setting.

Understanding that input by the AI/AN population is key to developing successful suicide prevention programs for this population, Representative Raul Grijalva, along with Representatives Napolitano and Cole, introduced the Native American Suicide Prevention Act of 2015.

The bill would allow each Federally recognized Indian tribe, tribal organization, and urban Indian organization in the State the ability to provide this input by amending section 520E of the Public Health Service Act to require States and their designees receiving grants for development or implementation of statewide suicide early intervention and prevention strategies.

