Overview
In 2011, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the following for American Indian or Alaska Natives (AI/AN):¹

- 459 AI/AN died by suicide in the U.S. (rate of 10.59 per 100,000 compared to the rate of 12.68 per 100,000 of the overall population)
- Of these 459, 352 (76.6%) were males (16.16 per 100,000) and 107 (23.3%) were females. Male-to-female ratio was 3.256 to 1.
- Suffocation and Firearms were the two most common methods (44.0% and 38.5% respectively for AI/AN of all ages). Firearms are most commonly used by those in non-AI/AN populations who die by suicide.

Risk Factors
- Significantly fewer (21%) urban-reared AI/AN youth were found to have suicide ideation (versus 33% among reservation-reared youth). ⁴
- Factors associated with suicide ideation among three tribes studied are culturally dependent. ⁵

Protective Factors
The 1990 National American Indian Adolescent Health Survey found discussing problems with friends or family, emotional health, and connectedness to family were protective against suicide attempts. ⁶

- No Association between beliefs (cognitive aspect of faith; both cultural and Christian) and suicide attempts was found. However, cultural spiritual orientation (what tribal members frequently associate with cultural spirituality) was found to be a protective factor.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Problems
Substance abuse disorder and mental health disorders are also risk factors for suicide.
- The prevalence of AI/AN adults in need of treatment for an alcohol problem (14.8%) and illicit drug use problem (6.0%) was found to be higher than the national averages (8.1% and 2.9%, respectively).²
- More than 60% of those with a lifetime depressive and/or anxiety disorder seek some form of help in the two reservations studied in 2005.³

Sources: