



UIHI Communication Broadcast

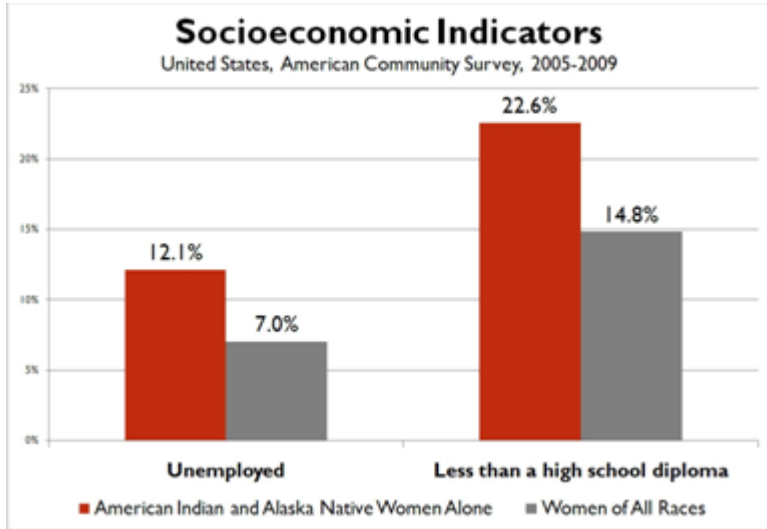
MARCH 2011

Women's History Month

In honor of Women's History Month, we would like to bring into sharper focus the socioeconomic challenges facing American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women in this country. For centuries, AI/AN women have served an integral role in Native culture, as educators, caretakers, and family leaders. Unfortunately, today many AI/AN women face deeply rooted socioeconomic oppression, creating challenges to achieving health for themselves and their families. Many of these challenges are structural in their nature, limiting opportunities for gainful employment and quality education.

The American Community Survey reported that the unemployment rate among (AI/AN) women is 5.1% higher than for women of all other races, and that nearly a quarter of all AI/AN women have attained less than a high school diploma.¹

The relationship between health and poverty is among the strongest of findings in social epidemiology.² Persistent disadvantage contributes to increased morbidity and mortality, where those in a lower socioeconomic position are less likely to have access to health information, health services, and healthcare.³ Chronic unemployment and limited educational attainment among AI/AN women are key contributors to poor health. These factors must be examined more closely as public health agencies develop strategies to promote health and reduce disparities.



- 1. American Community Survey, 2005-2009
- 2. Adler, NA, Boyce, T, Chesney, MA, et al. Socioeconomic status and health: the challenge of the gradient. *AM Psychol.* 1994; 49: 15-24
- 3. Link BG, Northridge M, Phelan, JC, Ganze, M. Social epidemiology and the fundamental cause concept: on the structuring of effective cancer screens by socioeconomic status. *Mulbank Q.* 1998; 76: 304-305, 375-402.

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