

# Posttraumatic stress and alcohol use disorders hit American-Indian and Alaskan-Native men the hardest

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Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can develop after a traumatic event or events. Although it is most often associated with military personnel exposed to the trauma of combat, it can also disproportionately affect vulnerable American Indian and Alaskan-Native (AI/AN) populations. Because alcohol use disorders (AUDs) also have a disproportionate impact on AI/ANs, this study compared both lifetime PTSD and past-year AUD among AI/ANs and non-Hispanic Whites (NHWs).

Researchers analyzed data from the 2012-2013 U.S. National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions III, the fourth national survey conducted by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The researchers estimated the odds of AUD among adults with and without PTSD by race. Of the 19,705 participants, 511 (301 women, 210 men) were AI/AN and 19,194 (10,639 women, 8,555 men) were NHW.

The investigators found that both PTSD and AUD were more common among AI/ANs than NHWs. Although PTSD was significantly associated with AUD in both populations, the association was significantly more prevalent among AI/ANs. Thus, among men the rate of both PTSD and AUD in AI/ANs was more than three times that of NHW men (9.5% vs. 3.1%). The authors suggested that screening and interventions for PTSD in tribal-government programs and in AI/AN health services could help to reduce the greater risk for AUD in AI/ANs.

They also called for studies that measure trauma resulting from cultural losses and their chronic effects, as well as childhood and adolescent traumas that are specific to AI/ANs.

**More information:** Marc A. Emerson et al. Association Between Lifetime Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Past Year Alcohol Use Disorder Among American Indians/Alaska Natives and Non-Hispanic Whites, *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* (2017). DOI: [10.1111/acer.13322](https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.13322)

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