

# Nearly 60% of Native Americans Living with Type 2 Diabetes Face Serious, Costly Behavioral Health Challenges

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Podimetrics' survey of 402 Native Americans found that nearly half (45%) believe it's harder to access high-quality healthcare in comparison to other races and ethnicities

SOMERVILLE, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- **Podimetrics**, creator of the SmartMat™ and integrated clinical and patient support services that can help save the limbs and lives of complex patients living with diabetes, today announced the results from a new survey of 402 Native Americans in the United States living with type 2 diabetes. Podimetrics, in collaboration with independent market research firm PureSpectrum, wanted to specifically understand how Native Americans are disproportionately impacted by the challenges associated with type 2 diabetes and what influence this is having on them when it comes to overall health, well-being, and perceptions relating to their healthcare experience.

Based on findings from the Podimetrics survey, type 2 diabetes isn't the only major health issue that many respondents are dealing with, either. For example, 57% of those surveyed report that in addition to type 2 diabetes, they are also living with a chronic behavioral health condition. Of those suffering from a chronic behavioral health condition, 76% reported experiencing depression, and 65% reported high levels of anxiety.

Native Americans living with type 2 diabetes are also facing myriad mounting challenges when it comes to managing and maintaining their personal health and well-being. The survey found that nearly half (45%) of Native Americans living with type 2 diabetes believe it's harder to access high-quality care compared to other races and ethnicities.

“Native Americans have a greater chance of being diagnosed with diabetes compared to any other racial group,” said Janet Simon, Executive Director of the New Mexico Podiatric Medical Association and a podiatric physician who has served Native Americans in New Mexico for nearly 30 years. “Massive challenges related to poor access to care, a growing healthcare provider shortage, and long-standing patient challenges — like lack of transportation or homelessness — only further compound an already dire situation that is leaving far too many Native Americans living with diabetes without the care and support they deserve.”

## Native Americans with type 2 diabetes report poorer health, multiple comorbidities

In addition to behavioral health challenges, many Native Americans living with type 2 diabetes are dealing with a whole host of other comorbidities. The Podimetrics survey found that an astonishing 73% of respondents report living with one or more physical health comorbidities that complicate their condition. Among that group, the most commonly mentioned comorbidities include: 62% report obesity; 49% report arthritis; 41% report asthma; and 24% report heart disease.

It’s worth noting that diabetes is also the single-greatest cause of **kidney failure for Native Americans**. This same population is at a much greater risk of developing **peripheral arterial disease (PAD)** and for experiencing a **lower-extremity amputation (LEA)**. In fact, previous peer-reviewed research has shown that, compared to non-diabetic subjects, the incidence of LEA among Native Americans living with diabetes can be **as high as 160-fold** in people aged 15–44.

While it’s no secret that Native Americans have long experienced lower health status when compared with other ethnicities and races, this study reinforces how this fact is impacting perspectives of their personal healthcare experience. For example, according to the study, less than a third (31%) feel the U.S. healthcare system is designed to improve their health, and a majority (58%) believe societal factors beyond their control are directly contributing to their poor health. And when asked to rate the quality of their healthcare, more than half (51%) rated it as “OK,” “poor,” or “horrible.”

A majority of Native Americans surveyed (85%) also stated that they are well aware that amputations are associated with an unmanaged diabetes condition. And a substantial 41% are still worried they may need an amputation in their lifetime. In fact, 17% of those surveyed said they already have experienced an LEA. Furthermore, 42% of respondents reported visiting the emergency department because of type 2 diabetes complications — with nearly two-thirds of that group (64%) indicating they’ve been three or more times.

“Native Americans continue to be denied access to the type of care that can reduce serious, life-altering complications from diabetes — complications such as amputations, which Native Americans suffer from at a rate two times that of White Americans,” said Jon Bloom, M.D., CEO and Co-founder of Podimetrics. “A person’s ethnicity

should not be a significant contributor to mortality today, but that's precisely what we see when we dig into our latest data and broader industry data."

## Native Americans living with type 2 diabetes lack access to remote monitoring technology

Today, **remote patient monitoring (RPM)** has emerged as a key technology-driven method of improving care for type 2 diabetes. However, among the Native American population with type 2 diabetes, most have never even used RPM.

According to the Podimetrics study, less than half (42%) report ever using any form of RPM that connected them to their doctors. At the same time, 81% believe that RPM should automatically be included as part of routine type 2 diabetes care. In fact, use of RPM was the most commonly cited strategy that respondents believed would improve their health (48%) — even beating more affordable medications (47%). Additionally, of those who were provided RPM, one-third (32%) reported that their RPM technology came with no clinical support services that helped them in between doctor's visits.

The Podimetrics survey found broad support for inclusion of clinical support with RPM technology among Native Americans with type 2 diabetes. When asked what benefits combining RPM with clinical services would unlock, 65% said it would help ensure they took their medications as prescribed, and 54% said it would help keep them informed about their health risks.

To review the full report from Podimetrics, please visit: <https://podimetrics.com/indian-health-services-report/>. Podimetrics conducted this study in collaboration with independent market research firm PureSpectrum, using its platform to survey 402 Native Americans with type 2 diabetes in the U.S. in July 2023. For more information on PureSpectrum's methodology, visit [www.PureSpectrum.com](http://www.PureSpectrum.com).

## About Podimetrics

Podimetrics is the creator of the SmartMat™ and integrated clinical and patient support services that can help save the limbs and lives of complex patients living with diabetes. Through partnerships with regional and national health plans and at-risk providers, such as the Veterans Health Administration, Podimetrics has helped prevent amputations associated with complex diabetes. By combining cutting-edge technology with best-in-class clinical and patient support services, Podimetrics earns high engagement rates from patients and allows clinicians to save limbs, lives, and money — all while keeping vulnerable populations healthy in their own homes. For more information, visit [Podimetrics.com](http://Podimetrics.com) or follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).

[press@Podimetrics.com](mailto:press@Podimetrics.com)

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