

A Community Assessment of Window Rock, Arizona

AIH AHEC Scholars 2025-2027

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Introduction

Window Rock, Arizona is the capital of the Navajo Nation, the largest sovereign Native American nation in the United States. This community reflects strong cultural traditions, language preservation, and multigenerational family structures. Despite strong cultural resilience, social determinants of health (SDOH) such as poverty, transportation barriers, and limited resources contribute to health disparities. Economic and safety concerns within the community also contribute to other barriers to healthcare. Understanding community context is essential to developing culturally appropriate health interventions.

Purpose

This assessment examines SDOH inequities shaping health outcomes in Window Rock by:

- Identify pressing community health needs
- Examine history, culture, environment & demographics
- Highlight strengths & existing resources
- Develop culturally appropriate recommendations



Methods



Primary data collection

Scholars gathered data in October 2025 and January 2026 from informal interviews and conversations with community residents and hospital healthcare providers. Environmental observations and windshield surveys were taken at Community immersion activities visits to Tsehootsoo Medical Center, flea markets, community events, and government facilities.

Secondary data collection

Additional contextual data were obtained from tribal census sources, Navajo Nation health reports, public health datasets, and input from community advisors and orientation sessions.



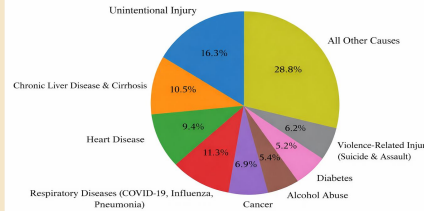
Findings

Community Strengths

- Strong cultural identity and Diné traditions: Family systems are multi-generational and have strong sense of small community. Traditional healing practices and spirituality to support health and wellness.
- Community engagement opportunities through flea markets, sporting events, and cultural spaces
- Public health outreach efforts including education, vaccinations, and health promotion

Health Outcomes

Leading Causes of Death (Navajo Nation, 2021–2024)



Social Determinant	Key Indicator
Economics	24.9% of residents below poverty line and employment is 49% rate; ~70% commute off-reservation
Food, Water and Electricity Access	Extremely limited; USDA food desert. ~30% of homes haul water from wells and lack electricity
Life Expectancy	55.9 yrs (Male) / 62.8 yrs (Female)
Transportation	Limited public options. Auto loan delinquency rate 3x national average
Waste Disposal	Nearest landfill: 65 miles away

Summary & Recommendations

- Address social determinants of health affecting access to care.
- Expand community-based health education and outreach programs.
- Strengthen preventive health initiatives including chronic disease management, substance use prevention and treatment, & mental health availability..
- Partner with community leaders and public health programs to ensure culturally appropriate, sustainable interventions.
- Continue surveillance and transparency of data to guide targeted health initiatives.

Conclusion

Window Rock demonstrates extraordinary cultural resilience, sovereign governance, and social cohesion rooted in Diné traditions. Yet structural barriers: poverty, geographic isolation, inadequate infrastructure, and the lasting wounds of colonial history; generate persistent health disparities.

Collaborative, community-led, culturally grounded efforts centering Hózhó are essential to improving long-term outcomes across the Navajo Nation.

Acknowledgements

The scholars gratefully acknowledge the Window Rock and Navajo Nation community members, the staff of Tsehootsoo Medical Center, the Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Nation community advisors, AzAHEC, AI-AHEC and ASU, NAU, and UoFA for their guidance, hospitality, and partnership, and finally, the Window Rock Scouts.

