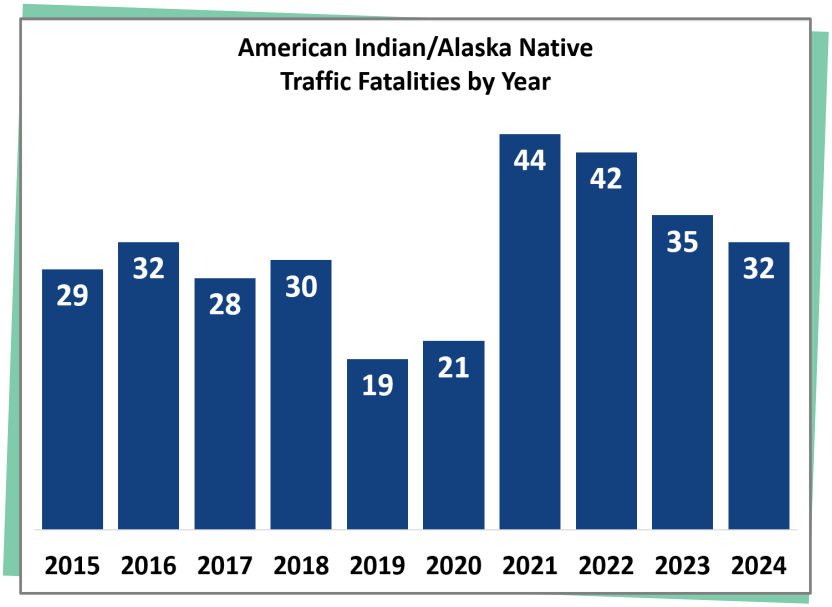
American Indian/Alaska Native Traffic Safety

Since 2015, 312 American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) people have died in traffic crashes in Washington[1]. In 2021, AI/AN traffic fatalities more than doubled and reached a 10-year high of 44 deaths. AI/AN people make up about two percent of Washington's population[2]. However, the traffic fatality rate per 100,000 population among AI/AN people is often three to five times higher compared to people of any other race/ethnic groups[3].

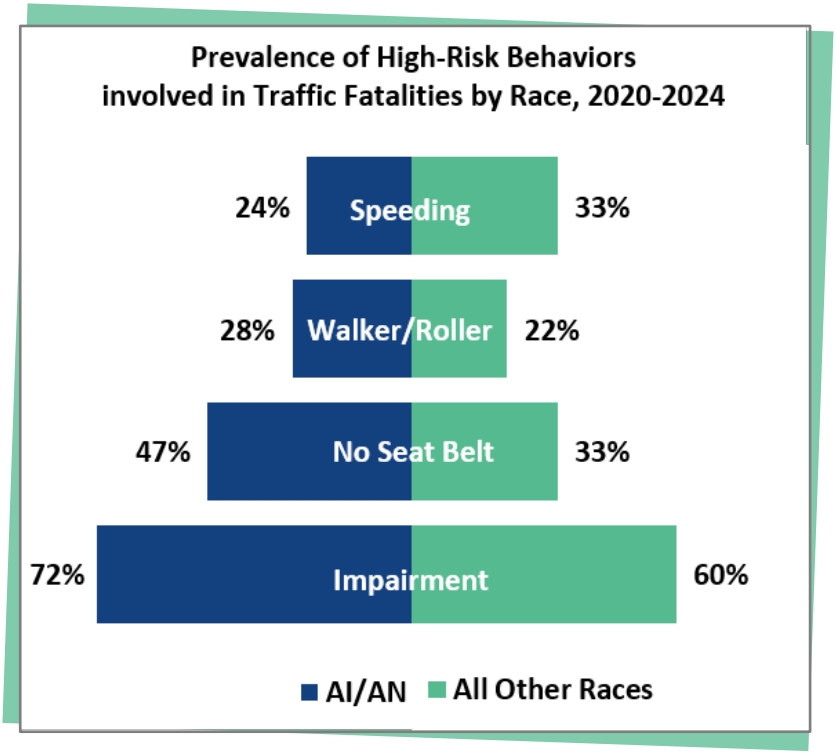
I care, because AI/AN people are disproportionately impacted by traffic fatalities. Although one in fifty Washingtonians are AI/AN, one out of twenty traffic fatalities are AI/AN people.



Did you know?

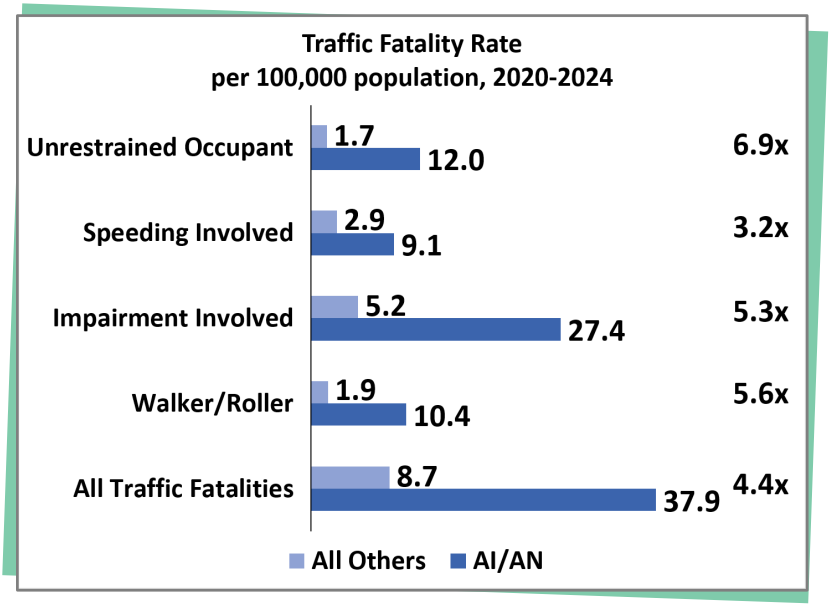
From 2020 through 2024:

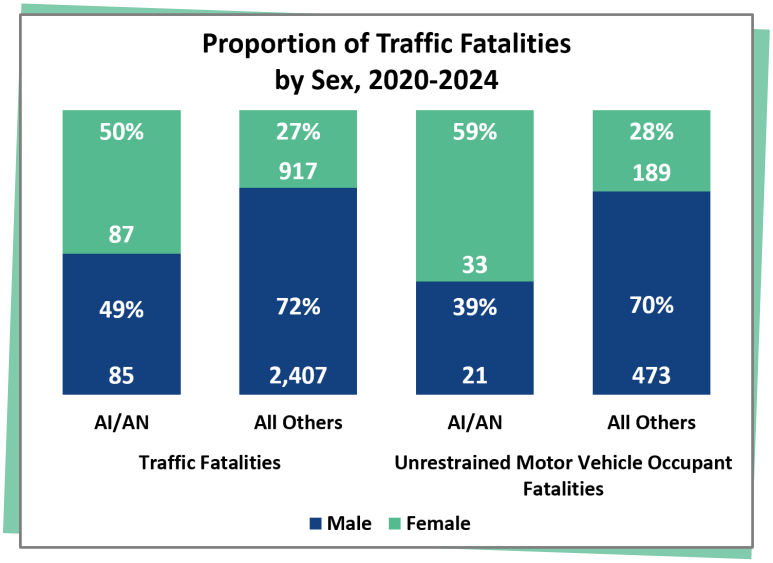
- There were 174 AI/AN traffic fatalities[4].
- Half (or 55%) of AI/AN traffic fatalities involved an impaired driver.
- One in four (or 24%) AI/AN traffic fatalities involved a speeding driver.
- One in four (or 28%) fatally injured AI/AN people were under the age of 25.
- One in four (or 28%) fatally injured AI/AN people were walkers or rollers.
- Half (or 47%) of fatally injured AI/AN motor vehicle occupants were unrestrained.



AI/AN people face higher traffic fatality rates across several key areas. The traffic fatality rate for AI/AN people walking or rolling was 5.6 times higher than the rate for people of other races[1, 2]. The rate of impairment-involved traffic fatalities among AI/AN people was 5.3 times higher than the rate for people of all other races. The rate of unrestrained motor vehicle occupant fatalities among AI/AN people was 6.9 times higher than the rate for people of all other races. Seat belt use on Tribal lands is lower, on average, than seat belt use across the United States[5].

AI/AN females are especially affected. Females account for about 30 percent of all traffic fatalities in Washington[4]. But among AI/AN traffic fatalities, females account for about half[1]. From 2020 through 2024, three out of five (or 59%) unrestrained AI/AN motor vehicle occupant fatalities were female. Among people of all other races, 28 percent were female[4]. Restraint use was also lower among AI/AN female motor vehicle passengers who died in crashes. Only one in five (or 18%) were restrained, compared with 50 percent of female passengers of all other races.





Females account for one in four driver fatalities in Washington[4]. But among AI/AN driver fatalities, females accounted for half (or 52%)[1]. Impairment was common among AI/AN driver fatalities for both males (80%) and females (82%). One in four (or 23%) female AI/AN driver fatalities involved a distracted driver, compared to one in six (or 17%) male AI/AN driver fatalities. A similar proportion of male (31%) and female (28%) AI/AN driver fatalities involved a speeding driver.

In Washington, the traffic fatality rate for males is usually about twice as high as the rate for females. But AI/AN males and females had similar traffic death rates from 2020 through 2024. During that time, the AI/AN female traffic fatality rate was 38 fatalities per 100,000 population[3]. The AI/AN male traffic fatality rate was 37 deaths per 100,000 population.

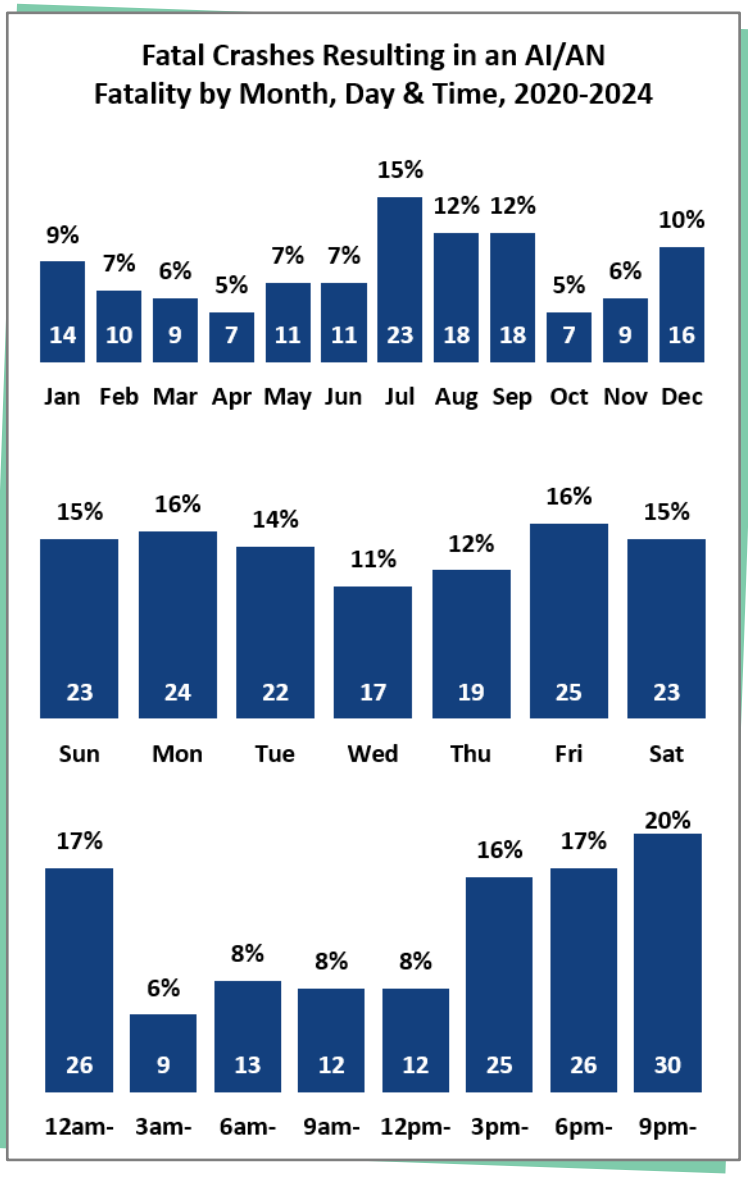
High-risk driving behaviors often overlap in fatal crashes. From 2020 through 2024, 55 unrestrained AI/AN motor vehicle occupants died in fatal crashes. Of those fatalities, half (or 47%) involved a speeding driver and four out of five (or 78%) involved an impaired driver[1]. During the same period, 42 AI/AN traffic fatalities involved a speeding driver. Of those fatalities, four out of five (or 79%) involved an impaired driver.

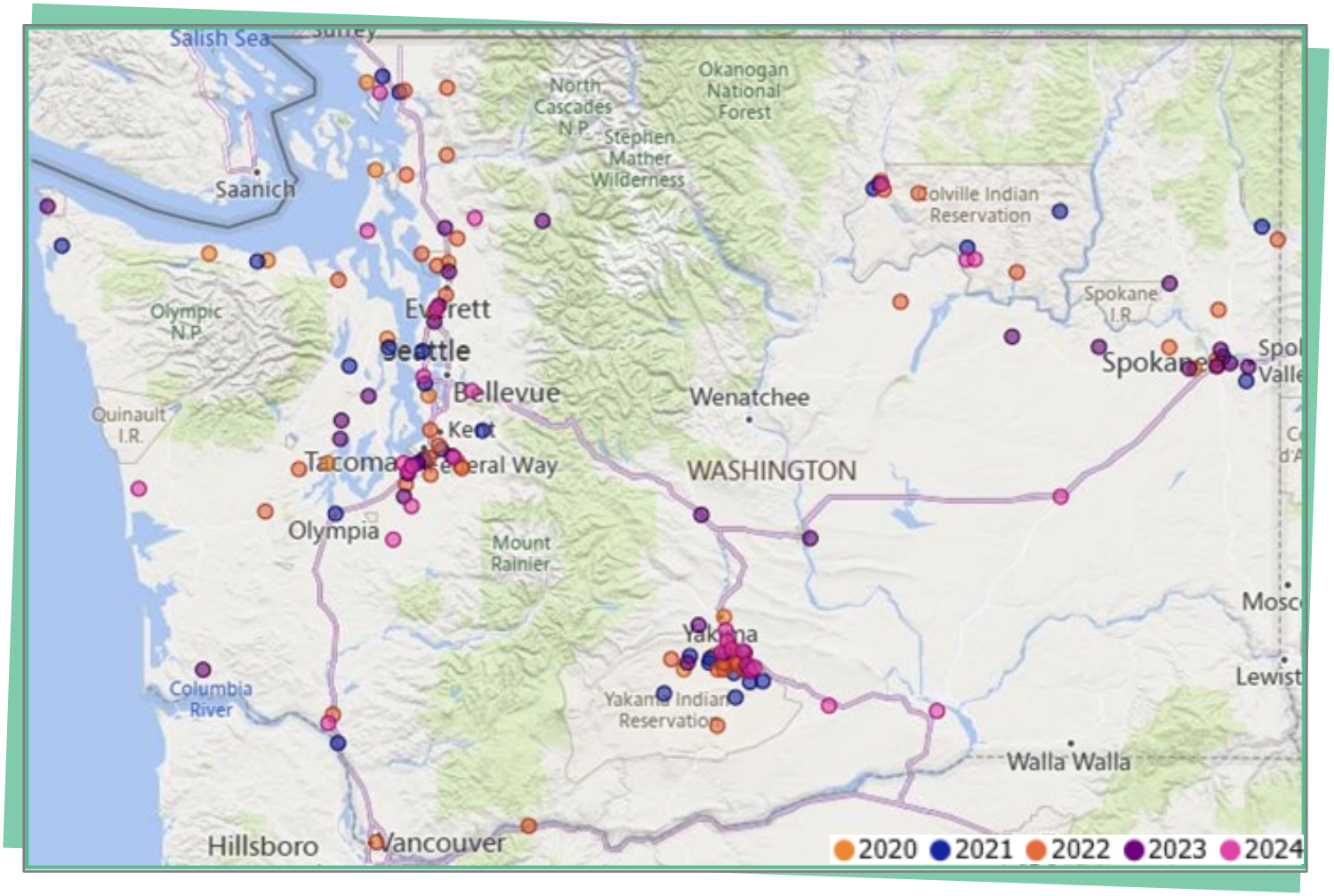
Fatal crashes that resulted in an AI/AN fatality were more common during certain times of the year, and time of day. From 2020 through 2024, two out of five (or 39%) of these fatal crashes occurred in July, August, or September[1]. More than a third (or 37%) occurred between 9pm and 3am, with another third occurring between 3pm and 9pm. These fatal crashes were less concentrated across days of the week and instead spread across Fridays (16%), Mondays (16%), Saturdays (15%) and Sundays (15%).

Did you know?

From 2020 through 2024:

- There were 153 fatal crashes resulting in an AI/AN fatality in Washington[1].
- About one-third (or 36%) of fatal crashes resulting in an AI/AN fatality occurred on Tribal land.
- Half (or 54%) of fatal crashes resulting in an AI/AN fatality occurred in a rural setting.
- One-third (or 33%) of fatal crashes resulting in an AI/AN fatality occurred on county roads followed by about one in four (or 29%) that occurred on state routes.
- The majority (or 63%) of fatal crashes resulting in an AI/AN fatality were single-vehicle crashes.





Data Sources

[1] American Indian/Alaska Native Traffic Fatalities and Traffic Fatalities on Tribal Lands Dashboard

[2] Washington Population Estimates, Washington State Office of Financial Management

[3] Traffic Fatality Rates Dashboard

[4] Traffic Fatalities Dashboard

[5] Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Highway Safety Program FY 2022 Annual Report

For more information, please visit the WTSC Data Dashboards at https://wtsc.wa.gov/ dashboards/, or contact the WTSC Research and Data Division at (360) 725-9860.