

INDIGENOUS VICTIMS OF HOMICIDE AND MISSING PERSONS IN WYOMING

2025 UPDATE

Introduction

Wyoming is home to a little over 16,000 Indigenous residents, who make up nearly 3% of the state's population. However, Indigenous people in Wyoming continue to experience disproportionately high rates of homicide and disappearances compared to White residents. This means they go missing and are killed more often than their population size alone would predict.

The Wyoming Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) Task Force is dedicated to tracking and sharing data on these cases. This fifth-annual publication includes the latest available information on Indigenous homicide victims and missing persons in Wyoming, along with updates on efforts to improve law enforcement protocols for missing person cases.

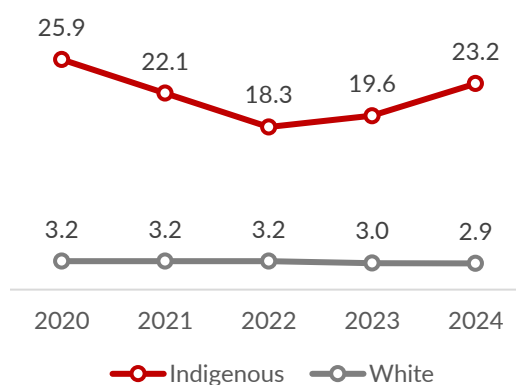
Indigenous Victims of Homicide

We use homicide death data from the Wyoming Department of Health to learn about homicide victims in the state. A death is classified as a homicide when another person causes it. Instead of just counting cases, we compare homicide rates to see how Indigenous people are affected. Because Wyoming has a small population, we use a 5-year moving average to smooth out big yearly changes. We also use the latest data available, so sometimes homicide numbers are compared to a prior year's population. However, Wyoming's racial breakdown remained consistent during this timeframe, with Indigenous people making up 2.8%, so this does not affect the analysis.

The homicide rate for Indigenous people remains much higher than for White people. In 2024, the five-year homicide rate for Indigenous people was 23.2 per 100,000—**eight times higher** than the rate for White people (Figure 1). While the Indigenous 5-year homicide rate somewhat decreased between 2021 and 2023, it remained significantly elevated.

Figure 1: Homicide Rates per 100,000 5-Year Average

All Sexes



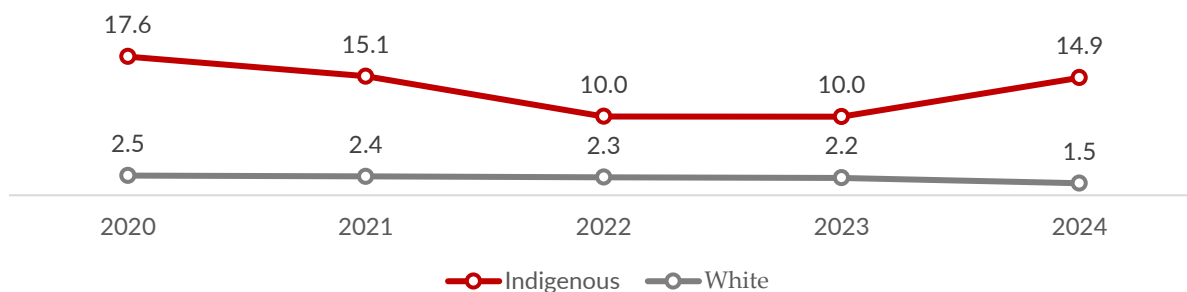
Source: Wyoming Department of Health, Vital Statistics Services

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This trend is consistent for both Indigenous males and females. The 2024 five-year homicide rate for Indigenous females was 14.9 per 100,000 compared to 1.5 per 100,000 for White females (Figure 2). This marks an increase from the previous two years.

Figure 2: Homicide Rates per 100,000, Female

5-Year Average



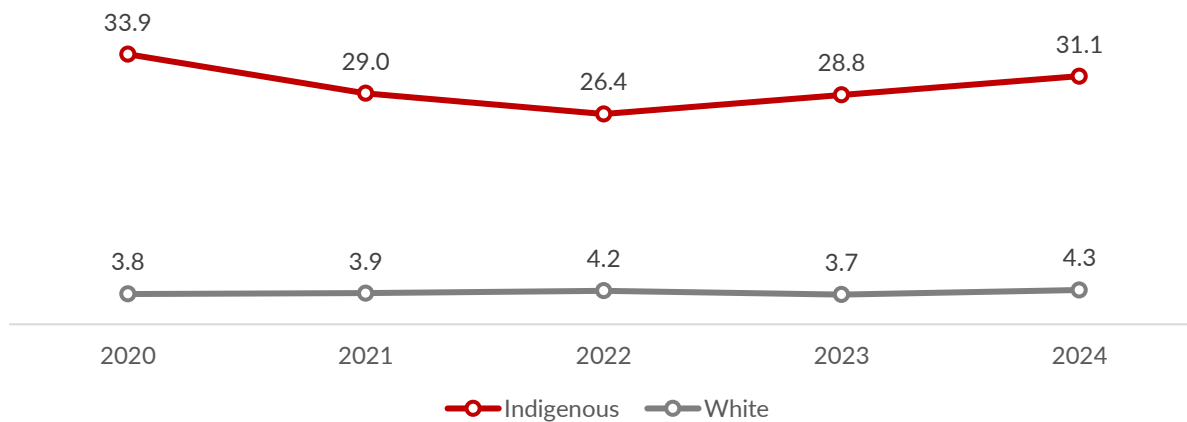
Source: Wyoming Department of Health, Vital Statistics Services

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In 2024, the five-year homicide rate for Indigenous males was 31.1 per 100,000 compared to 4.3 per 100,000 for White males (Figure 3). This continues the elevated 5-year rate trend despite the decrease observed in 2022.

Figure 3: Homicide Rates per 100,000, Male

5-Year Average



Source: Wyoming Department of Health, Vital Statistics Services

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Missing Indigenous People

Progress: Development of Missing Persons Protocols

The [2021 Wyoming Statewide MMIP Report](#) recommended Wyoming create clear, consistent protocols and data systems to handle MMIP cases, providing better guidelines to help law enforcement and families respond to missing person cases. This would allow for better coordination and quicker action when someone goes missing.

In 2024, a [report](#) from the Task Force examined how Wyoming law enforcement approaches missing adult cases compared to other states. The report found that Wyoming does not have laws dictating how law enforcement should handle missing person cases, leading to inconsistencies in reporting and response. Adults who go missing due to accidents, dementia, or foul play may not receive the attention they need because Wyoming does not require law enforcement to report them to national databases like the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). NCIC is a database that helps law enforcement by keeping important records, including information about missing people. When someone is reported missing, police may add a record to the NCIC. If the person is found, the same agency removes the record. A new record can be made each time a person is reported missing.

While Wyoming has a clearinghouse for missing people, managed by the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), there is no legal requirement for missing adults to be entered into this system, resulting in inconsistent reporting.

In response to these issues, Senate File 114 (SF0114) was introduced to the Wyoming State Legislature in January 2025 and was formally adopted as a new law on February 27th, 2025. This legislation creates new laws to improve the handling of cases of missing persons in Wyoming. It requires law enforcement to report missing persons to national and state databases as soon as they are reported missing, helping ensure that those who go missing are tracked and found more quickly. Additionally, the law mandates that law enforcement must report a missing person within eight hours, improving response speed. The passage of this law establishes a more consistent system for reporting missing adults, enhancing recovery efforts, and providing stronger support for families. This new law will take effect on July 1st, 2025.

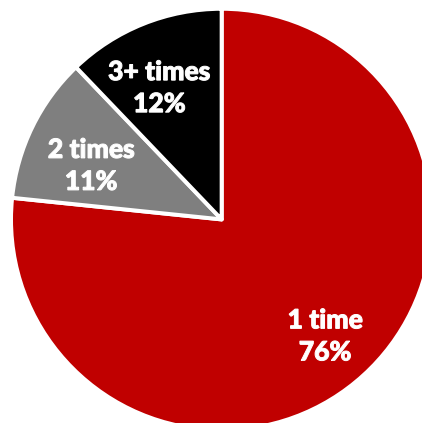
Missing Person Records in NCIC

Indigenous people in Wyoming make up a disproportionate number of the missing people entered into NCIC. In 2024, law enforcement added 151 missing person records for 105 unique Indigenous people into NCIC. This means 19% of all missing person cases entered into NCIC are Indigenous, despite Indigenous people only accounting for about three percent of the state's population. White people make up 92% of the state's population but made up only 76% of all missing person records in 2024. There were more records than individual people because one person can be reported missing multiple times in the same year. Of the 105 Indigenous individuals with records in NCIC, 76% (n=80) had one record, 11% (n=12) had two records, and 12% (n=13) had three or more records (Figure 4).

In 2024, Indigenous people were reported missing from six counties across the state: Albany, Fremont, Laramie, Natrona, Sheridan, and Sweetwater. Most Indigenous missing person cases (85%) originated in Fremont County, half of which were from the Wind River Indian Reservation. The Bureau of Indian Affairs entered 65 missing person records into NCIC in 2024.

The majority (66%) of missing Indigenous people were female (Figure 5). Most (89%) were between the ages of 5 and 17 when they were reported missing.

Figure 4: Most Indigenous missing people were only reported missing one time

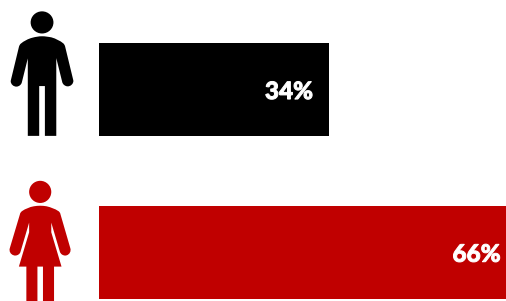


Note: Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation

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Figure 5: Most Indigenous people reported missing in 2024 were female



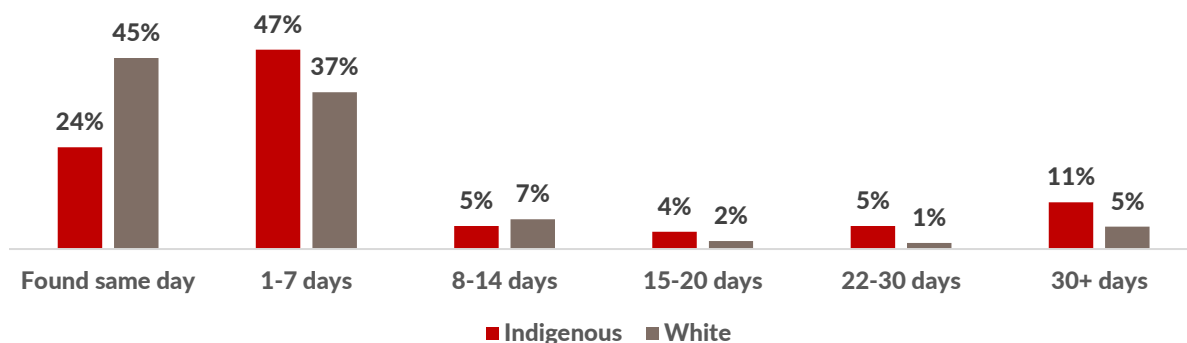
Source: Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation

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Days Missing

Indigenous people in Wyoming stay missing for longer than White people. The longer a person is missing, the higher the risk of danger. The days between when a person is reported missing and when they are found vary. Of all cases entered in 2024, 42% were cleared on the same day they were entered into NCIC, and 38% were cleared between one and seven days after being entered.

Figure 6: Most missing person cases are cleared the same day, but White people are more often found the same day they are reported missing than Indigenous people



Note: 19 White and 5 Indigenous cases were excluded either because of missing data in NCIC, or because the cases had not yet been cleared. As a result, percentages do not equal 100.

Source: Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation

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There is a difference in the average number of days an Indigenous person stays missing and the average number of days a White person stays missing. Of cases entered into NCIC in 2024, Indigenous people were missing for an average of 11 days, while White people were missing for an average of 6 days.

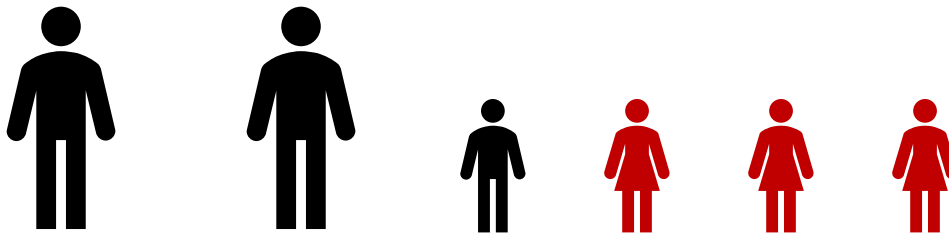
On average, Indigenous people are missing for twice as long as White people.

2X

Actively Missing Indigenous People

There were 81 actively missing people listed in NCIC records at the time of this report. Of these, 6 were Indigenous people (Figure 7). The shortest duration an actively missing Indigenous person has been missing is 14 days.¹ The Indigenous person who has been missing for the longest in NCIC records was reported missing in July 2019 and has been missing for 2,012 days.

Figure 7: Three Indigenous females and three Indigenous males are actively missing in Wyoming



Note: The smaller figure size represents individuals who were juveniles at the time they were recorded as missing.

Source: Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation

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The U.S. Department of Justice runs the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), a free, secure database for missing persons, unidentified remains, and unclaimed decedents. Law enforcement, medical examiners, coroners, and families can upload and access information to help resolve these cases. However, NamUs remains underutilized. As of February 5, 2025, only two missing Indigenous individuals—both adult males—are recorded in the database for Wyoming.

Conclusion

The Wyoming MMIP Task Force remains dedicated to addressing this crisis through policy changes, education, and public awareness. By analyzing the data, we can better identify priority areas, allocate resources effectively, and measure the impact of our efforts to support the safety and well-being of Indigenous communities in Wyoming.

¹ As of January 10, 2025.