

CONFRONTING THE CRISIS:

**Addressing Missing and
Murdered Indigenous Women
and People in Washington**



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Artwork by Madison Judkins



INTRODUCTION

The crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP)ⁱ is deeply rooted in a long history of violence that began with colonization. While Indigenousⁱⁱ communities have documented these tragedies for generations, official records in Washington date back only to 1855. Despite this painful history, American Indian/Alaska Native peopleⁱⁱⁱ continue to show incredible strength as they fight for justice, recognition, and change.

Addressing this crisis requires understanding Native people's deep connection to the land and recognizing the obligations that state and federal governments have toward Indigenous nations. When these responsibilities are ignored, cycles of trauma and injustice continue. Families of missing and murdered loved ones have shared powerful stories about the systemic barriers that worsen their pain. Their voices must remain at the center of all efforts for justice.

Achieving justice is a long and difficult journey that requires commitment from everyone. We must hold institutions accountable, listen to those most affected, and honor the strength and spirit of Indigenous communities. This report, alongside the work of the Washington State MMIWP Task Force, is a step toward confronting history, restoring balance, and reaffirming the rights of Indigenous people.

The findings in this report offer just a glimpse of the larger reality. As work continues with stakeholders, the focus must remain on community-driven solutions that respect Indigenous traditions, values, and knowledge. Healing and transformation are only possible when strategies are equitable and rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing.

We would like to honor all those who have contributed to this work—the survivors, families, advocates, and community members who have shared their experiences and voices. Their insights are woven throughout this report, alongside literature and data, to ensure their perspectives remain central to the discussion. This report would not be possible without their strength and determination.

i The term “missing and murdered Indigenous women and people” includes all gender identities in this report.

ii The report uses “American Indian/Alaskan Native,” “Indigenous,” and “Native” interchangeably.

iii It's important to recognize “American Indian/Alaska Native” as a political status, not just a race. There are 574 Indigenous nations in the U.S., each with its own government, treaties, and rights. This status affirms their sovereignty and self-determination, which are based on political relationships, not racial identity. Defining Indigenous peoples by race ignores their diverse cultures, histories, and the impact of colonization. Recognizing them as a political class respects their nationhood and their right to advocate for resources and rights.^{10, 51}

BACKGROUND

In May 2021, the Washington State Attorney General’s Office (AGO) convened the MMIWP Task Force, bringing together lawmakers, advocates, families, service providers, and law enforcement to address this crisis. The Task Force is an important step in recognizing and confronting the high rates of violence against Indigenous communities—violence rooted in government policies like forced relocation and removal. These harms are not just history; they continue today, made worse by system failures that leave Indigenous people vulnerable to going missing or being murdered.

In December 2022, the AGO hired a research team to help the Task Force collect and analyze MMIWP data. Between 2022 and 2025, the Data and Research Team met regularly with the AGO and Task Force to ensure the work being done supported their goals.

The agreement with the Data and Research Team included four primary purposes:

1. “Assess systemic, social, historical, institutional, and economic factors that may contribute to the disproportionately high rates of violence against American Indian/Alaska Native people;
2. Develop recommendations and best practices for improving the collection and reporting of data by Tribal, local, and state law enforcement agencies to more effectively understand and address issues of gender-based violence facing American Indian/Alaska Native people; and jurisdictional and data sharing issues on Tribal reservation land and urban areas that impact gender-based violence against American Indian/Alaska Native people;
3. Assess data tracking and reporting practices relating to gender-based violence against American Indian/Alaska Native people in Washington State; and
4. Review prosecutorial trends and practices relating to crimes of gender-based violence against American Indian/Alaska Native people in Washington State.”

In addition, it was mutually agreed that:

- The Data and Research Team shall be trauma-informed and survivor-centered in their approach to the work to understand the disproportionate levels of violence against American Indian/Alaska Native people.

- The Data and Research Team shall respect and uphold data sovereignty and work closely with the AGO Policy Analyst and Tribal Liaison to ensure that Tribes are consulted appropriately throughout the process and in accordance with the AGO's Tribal Consent and Consultation Policy.
- The Data and Research Team shall include the AGO Tribal Liaison and the AGO Policy Analyst in all communication, including email, phone calls, and meetings, with Tribes and Tribal leaders. The AGO Tribal Liaison will coordinate all Tribal consultations.
- The Data and Research Team shall conduct their research and activities in a culturally sensitive manner and will work closely with the AGO Policy Analyst and the Tribal Liaison to ensure that the work is culturally appropriate.
- The Data and Research Team shall pay special attention to understanding the impact of gender on the experience of violence, including how it impacts the LGBTQ2S community, men and boys, as well as women and girls.

The Data and Research Team conducted culturally sensitive interviews with individuals with deep knowledge of MMIWP, including family members, survivors, and service providers. The [Appendix](#) details the trauma-informed methodology used. Ten deliverables were completed to support the Task Force (Table 1), each with a full report and a one-page summary. These were given to the AGO to share with the Task Force. This report highlights the most important findings from the research to help guide future work.



Table 1: Summary of Deliverables

| Deliverable | Description |
|---|--|
| Comprehensive Literature Review on MMIWP | A review of 89 documents sourced from university repositories, government agencies, peer-reviewed journals, and news media. |
| Interviews with Service Providers | Qualitative data from 15 providers who serve Indigenous people who have experienced violence. |
| Interviews with Family Members and Survivors | Qualitative data was gathered from 53 people who have experienced the MMIWP crisis either as a family member, a survivor, or both. |
| Law Enforcement Survey | Quantitative data from 74 participating law enforcement agencies in Washington. |
| Analysis of Databases Containing Information on MMIWP | Descriptions of 16 databases. |
| Jurisdictional Laws Literature Review | A review of 50 documents sourced from university repositories, government agencies, and peer-reviewed journals. |
| Data Collection and Regulations Literature Review | A review of 69 documents sourced from university repositories, government agencies, and peer-reviewed journals. |
| Homicide Data Analysis | Quantitative analysis of Vital Statistics records 2006-2024. |
| Missing Person Data Analysis | Quantitative analysis of National Crime Information Center records, nine point-in-time estimates between April 2024 and January 2025. |
| Prosecutorial Trends | A review of 29 documents sourced from university repositories, government agencies, and peer-reviewed journals, with an examination of Washington State Patrol Computerized Criminal History Records and data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System. |

ROOT CAUSES OF MMIWP

The MMIWP crisis is deeply rooted in historical injustices, discrimination, and economic hardships that have made Indigenous communities more vulnerable to violence. These challenges continue today, shaping the conditions that put Native people at risk of disappearing or being murdered. Understanding these root causes is essential to finding solutions.

While this information is not new, it provides a foundation for the research in this report. Interviews and surveys with participants confirm the lasting impact of these problems. This section introduces these key issues, but it only scratches the surface—the rest of the report delves deeper into their impacts and the lived experiences of those affected.

“Hundreds and hundreds of years of historical trauma, and it’s transferred from generation to generation, from womb to child.” – Family Member

Historical Injustices

COLONIALISM

A major cause of MMIWP is the long history of colonial violence, which began when the first colonists arrived in what is now called the United States. This violence included widespread massacres and forced removals, leading to devastating losses for Indigenous communities. It increased in the 1800s as U.S. policies took Indigenous lands and weakened Tribal governments.⁴⁴ Racist laws and policies forced many Native people off their land, giving it to settlers, farmers, and ranchers.⁵⁰

“Every single community sits on unceded land... the land really yearns to have the ways and practices of the people back on it.” – Service Provider

The U.S. has failed to fully recognize or fix the damage caused by colonialism, leading to continued violence and inequality.² Today,

Historical & Intergenerational Trauma

Historical trauma is defined by Washington State law as “situations where a community experienced traumatic events, the events generated high levels of collective distress, and the events were perpetuated by outsiders with a destructive or genocidal intent.” This lasting harm—passed down from one generation to the next—is central to the MMIWP crisis and has left deep scars on Native communities. This trauma is not just historical; it actively shapes the present, influencing the social, economic, and institutional challenges that put Indigenous people at greater risk of violence.³ Understanding this impact is important from the start.

colonization continues in the forms of resource extraction,^{iv} tourism, and militarism.^{3, 29} Additionally, colonialism undermined and limited Tribal sovereignty and created jurisdictional confusion, which prevents families from accessing justice today; more details on this can be found in the [Justice](#) section.

BOARDING SCHOOLS

Beginning in the late 1800s, Native children were forcibly taken from their families and placed in boarding schools designed to erase their culture and assimilate them into White society. These schools prioritized manual labor over education and subjected students to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.⁴⁴ Children were isolated, forbidden from speaking their language, and forced to abandon their traditions, leading to severe cultural trauma. A 2021 federal investigation identified 408 Federal Indian boarding schools, burial sites at 53 schools, and 600 additional institutions, with at least 500^v recorded Native child deaths.³⁵ In Washington specifically, there were at least 28 boarding school facilities, and at least 16 of these received some form of federal support. The harm caused by these schools continues to affect Native communities, contributing to disparities in education and well-being.³⁶

“My Tribe lost all their culture, their songs.”

— Family Member

Native children still face the effects of colonization in schools when they are penalized for absences related to food security like hunting and fishing while following seasonal migration patterns.³⁶ Student success looks like connection to ceremony and celebration with their people such as powwows and funerals requiring them to return to their reservation lands for at least one week. The barriers created by policies rooted in colonial beliefs around labor and production further perpetuate cultural and spiritual harm. This same trauma and loss of cultural identity still also happens today when Indigenous children are taken from their families and communities by the foster care system.¹⁶

Violence and Exploitation

Widespread violence against American Indian/Alaska Native people is at the heart of the MMIWP crisis. Indigenous people experience

Lateral Oppression

This history has also contributed to internal divisions within communities. Lateral oppression—harm inflicted within Indigenous communities due to internalized colonial trauma—creates additional barriers to addressing MMIWP. These community divisions often discourage people from seeking help or justice.^{20, 23}

“And I feel that’s the lateral violence we don’t talk about. It’s like, ‘shh, we don’t talk about that.’” — Family Member

iv Resource extraction sites and associated “man camps” are linked to increased sexual violence, trafficking, and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls.²⁸ Tribal governments often lack jurisdiction over non-Indigenous offenders, allowing many crimes to go unpunished.⁴⁴

v This number is likely an undercount of Native child deaths.

disproportionately high rates of violence in the United States.^{13, 42} This violence is a direct pathway to Native people going missing or being murdered, and causes deep emotional and physical suffering within Indigenous communities. High rates of victimization often precede Native disappearances and deaths, highlighting the urgent need to address violence as a root cause of the crisis.¹

Losing a loved one to MMIWP can be deeply traumatic, and this experience may increase the risk of becoming an MMIWP oneself. The trauma of this loss is profound, and for young Indigenous people, repeated exposure to violence and grief increases the risk of future victimization.³¹

⋮ *“I can tell you that the babies grieve people. If you think they don’t, you’re crazy.” – Family Member*

More details on the prevalence and impacts of this violence can be found in the [Scope of MMIWP](#) section.

Systemic Discrimination

RACISM, MISOGYNY, AND IMPLICIT BIAS

The MMIWP crisis is fueled by racism and misogyny that devalues Indigenous lives.⁵ [Implicit bias](#) within law enforcement and society affects how these cases are investigated, often leading to victim-blaming or case dismissal. Native victims often receive less urgency and attention than White victims, allowing perpetrators to act without fear of consequences.³²

⋮ *“It didn’t feel like they care, like it was just another Indigenous person.” – Family Member*

MEDIA DISPARITIES

Additionally, mainstream media reinforces discrimination by underreporting MMIWP cases and spreading harmful stereotypes.³⁰ Indigenous women and girls receive far less media coverage than their White counterparts, and when they are covered, the focus is often on their personal struggles rather than the systemic issues behind their disappearances and murders.²⁴ One study found that only 30% of Indigenous homicide victims had media coverage compared to 51% of White homicide victims.²⁴ Further, the study found that 42% of Indigenous victims were described by the media using negative character framing, compared to only 24% of their White counterparts being described in that way.²⁴

LAW ENFORCEMENT FAILURES

Additionally, a long history of mistrust between Indigenous communities and law enforcement has created barriers to reporting and seeking justice.

⋮ *“They see this as something I can get away with because no one is going to care that such violence happened in this community.” – Service Provider*

Families often feel ignored or even blamed when they report a loved one missing. Poor coordination between Tribal, state, and federal agencies leads to confusion and inaction.³³ Deeper discussion about this lack of coordination can be found in the [Collaboration](#) section.

Improper data practices, including underreporting of cases to national databases, inconsistent data collection, limited racial classification categories, racial misclassifications, and missing Tribal affiliation data, obscure the true scope of the crisis and deter investigations.^{13, 30} These issues are examined further in the [Data Practices](#) section.

LEGAL AND JURISDICTIONAL BARRIERS

Confusing laws and gaps in the legal system make it hard for MMIWP victims to get justice, allowing many crimes to go unpunished. Colonial policies have taken power away from Tribes, making it harder for them to protect their people. Problems with prosecutions, under-resourced systems, missing data, and unfair systems makes this situation even worse.

Challenges within the legal system in Indian Country^{vi} further complicate justice efforts. Hundreds of years of legislation and court rulings have transferred criminal jurisdiction between federal and state governments and the Tribes, causing confusion over jurisdictional responsibility for crimes and contributing to a lack of accountability for law enforcement operating in overlapping legal systems.

❖ ***“I tried to reach out to them. They said, ‘well, the crime happened in the state, but not on the reservation, so we can’t help you.’” – Family Member***

Agencies often pass cases between one another, leaving them unresolved.²⁰ This weakening of Tribal sovereignty further limits Indigenous communities’ ability to prosecute crimes committed against their people.⁴⁶ More details on legal and jurisdictional barriers can be found in the [Justice](#) section.

Socioeconomic Vulnerabilities

Historic colonial policies and broken treaties have disrupted Indigenous economies, land use, and access to resources, resulting in socioeconomic disadvantages for Native people. These barriers persist even today and include limited economic opportunities, educational disadvantages, and discrimination in employment, healthcare, and housing. Intergenerational trauma has contributed to socioeconomic vulnerabilities and interconnected challenges like mental illness and substance abuse.¹ Generations of oppressive laws and policies, rather than individual choices, often put Native people in danger.³²

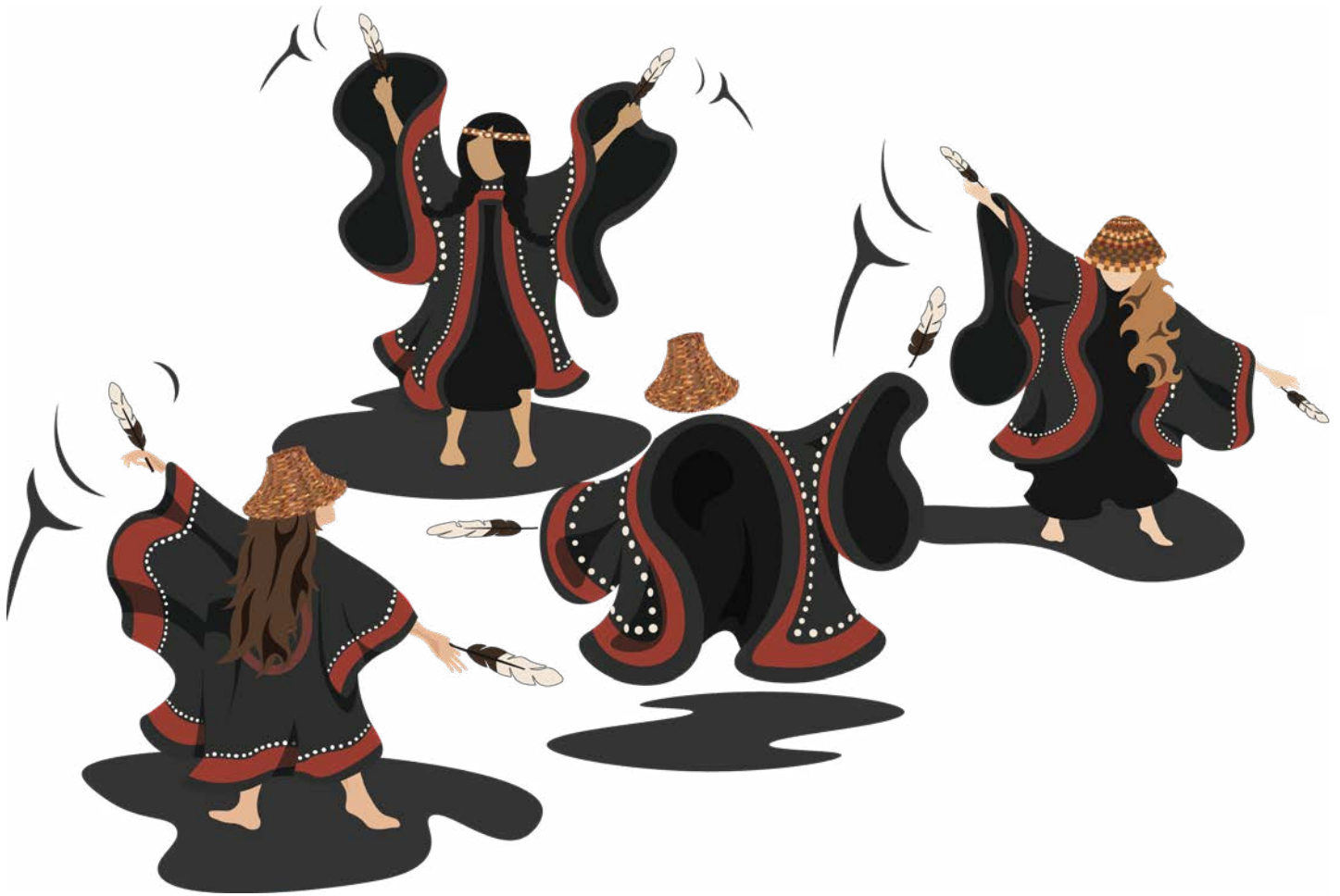
❖ ***“Us as Indian people, we’re tough. We’re survivors. And America has taught us that we have to do it on our own.” – Family Member***

Finally, high poverty rates limit access to safe transportation and housing, increasing vulnerability to violence and exploitation.²⁵ Inadequate funding for support programs further exacerbates these vulnerabilities.²³

vi The report uses the legal term “Indian Country,” as defined by [18 U.S.C. § 1151](#), to refer to land within Indian reservations, dependent Indian communities, and certain Indian allotments where titles remain intact.

Discussion

MMIWP is not just about individual crimes—it reflects deeper systemic failures that have harmed Indigenous communities for generations. Past injustices continue to shape the present, negatively impacting safety, trust in law enforcement, and access to resources. Addressing MMIWP requires more than awareness; it demands real change. Solutions must overcome legal, social, and economic barriers while addressing the lasting effects of trauma. The next sections will explore these challenges in greater detail.



THE SCOPE OF MMIWP

Gender significantly shapes the experience of violence for American Indian/Alaska Native people, affecting women and girls, the LGBTQ+ community (especially Two-Spirit individuals), and men and boys in distinct ways. Because of this widespread violence, Indigenous people are more likely to go missing or be murdered.¹

Research consistently shows that Indigenous people—especially women and girls—experience violence at much higher rates than other groups. This includes intimate partner violence, domestic violence, kidnapping, and homicide.^{30, 42} Both Native men and women face higher levels of violence than their White counterparts, with an estimated 84% of Indigenous women and 82% of Indigenous men experiencing some form of violence in their lifetimes.⁴² Much of this violence is gender-based, with Native women and girls facing extremely high rates of sexual and domestic violence, often at the hands of non-Native men³⁰—if current trends do not change, 56% will experience sexual violence in their lifetime.⁴²

LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit Indigenous people also face heightened risks of becoming MMIWPs due to intersecting layers of discrimination, stigma, and violence. Historical disruptions caused by colonization have led to the suppression of Two-Spirit identities, which were traditionally honored within many Indigenous cultures.¹¹ Today, LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit individuals experience disproportionately high rates of homelessness, poverty, and targeted violence, often making them more vulnerable to trafficking and disappearance.²⁶ Despite this, limited resources and research focus on these communities, even as present-day legislation and societal discrimination have further increased their risk of being violently targeted.

Understanding the impact of both violence and gender-based violence in Indigenous communities has always been challenging due to data limitations and inconsistencies in the reporting of race, ethnicity, Tribal affiliation, and sexual orientation. This underscores the need for inclusive, accurate data and nuanced discussions that address the experiences of all genders within Indigenous communities. In response to this need, the Data and Research Team analyzed homicide and missing person data within Washington. This section highlights key findings from the analysis; detailed results, including data on age, can be found in the full reports.

Missing Persons Analysis

The Data and Research Team examined missing persons data in Washington using records maintained by the Washington State Patrol (WSP). While historical comprehensive records of missing people in Washington are unavailable, WSP was able to give researchers access to daily lists of missing person records between April 2024 and January 2025.^{vii}

vii The number of missing persons changes daily as new cases are reported and others are resolved, so totals vary depending on when the data is accessed.

METHODOLOGY

Researchers used multiple point-in-time counts over nine months. A point-in-time count measures how many people are experiencing a specific situation— in this case, being missing— at a single moment in time. Instead of relying on just one count, this approach accounts for seasonal changes because the number of missing people can fluctuate throughout the year. It also reduces the impact of short-term spikes or drops that could skew results.

To select the dates for analysis, the Data and Research Team used a random date generator to choose one date from each of the nine available months, resulting in nine point-in-time case counts.^{viii} Each dataset was cleaned by checking for duplicate records, removing cases that were cleared or canceled, and by excluding people missing due to natural disasters.

To compare missing person cases across racial groups, researchers calculated rates per 100,000 people for each racial category in the dataset. This standardization accounts for population size differences, making the data directly comparable across racial groupings. Rates were calculated by averaging the point-in-time counts for each racial category, dividing by that group's state population,^{ix} and multiplying by 100,000.

The Data and Research Team also calculated a Disproportionality Index (DI) for each point-in-time count. The DI compares the proportion of a group in a certain measure (i.e., missingness) to their proportion of the overall population. In this analysis, it was calculated by dividing the percentage of missing persons from each racial group at each of the nine points in time by that group's percentage of the state population. Researchers then averaged the nine DI scores for each racial group to determine an overall DI for the four racial categories.

RESULTS

American Indian/Alaska Native and Black people went missing in Washington between April 2024 and January 2025 at almost three times the rate expected based on their share of the state's population (Table 2). In contrast, White and Asian or Pacific Islander individuals were reported missing less often than their population size would suggest. If there were no disproportionality, the percentage of missing persons by race would match the percentage of the state population by race in the table below.

viii This study reflects the number of missing person cases that were available in the WSP datasets on 4/24/2024, 5/12/2024, 6/29/2024, 7/30/2024, 9/29/24, 10/08/2024, 11/28/2024, 12/07/2024, and 1/3/2025.

ix Researchers used 2024 population estimates from the [Washington Office of Financial Management](#) because they are the official figures Washington uses for resource allocation, growth management, and policy planning.

Table 2: Distribution of Washington Missing Person Records, by Race

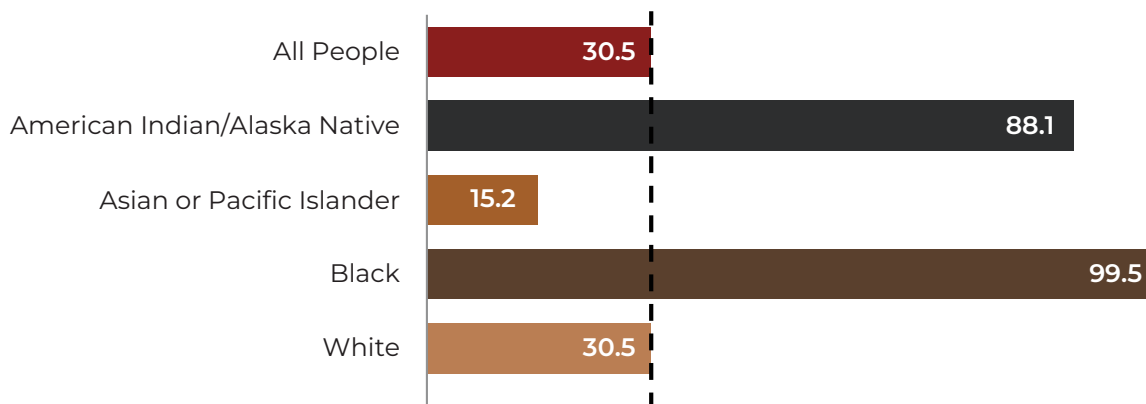
| Racial Category | Average Missing Persons Count | Percent of Missing Persons by Race | Percent of State Population by race |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 140 | 5.7% | 2.0% |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 140 | 5.7% | 11.5% |
| Black | 355 | 14.5% | 4.4% |
| White | 1,747 | 71.4% | 71.3% |
| Unknown | 66 | 2.7% | - |

Note: 2.7% of Washington's missing-person population was categorized as "Unknown Race" and therefore could not be compared to state population data.

Source: Washington State Patrol; Washington Office of Financial Management

Missing Person Rates by Racial Category

Figure 1 further shows that Native people have the second highest missing person rate in Washington at 88.1 per 100,000. These rates are nearly three times the statewide average of 30.5 per 100,000, indicating Indigenous people are at a much greater risk of going missing.

Figure 1: Missing Person Rate per 100,000

Note: The dotted line indicates the average statewide missing person rate for the general population.

Sources: Washington State Patrol; Washington Office of Financial Management

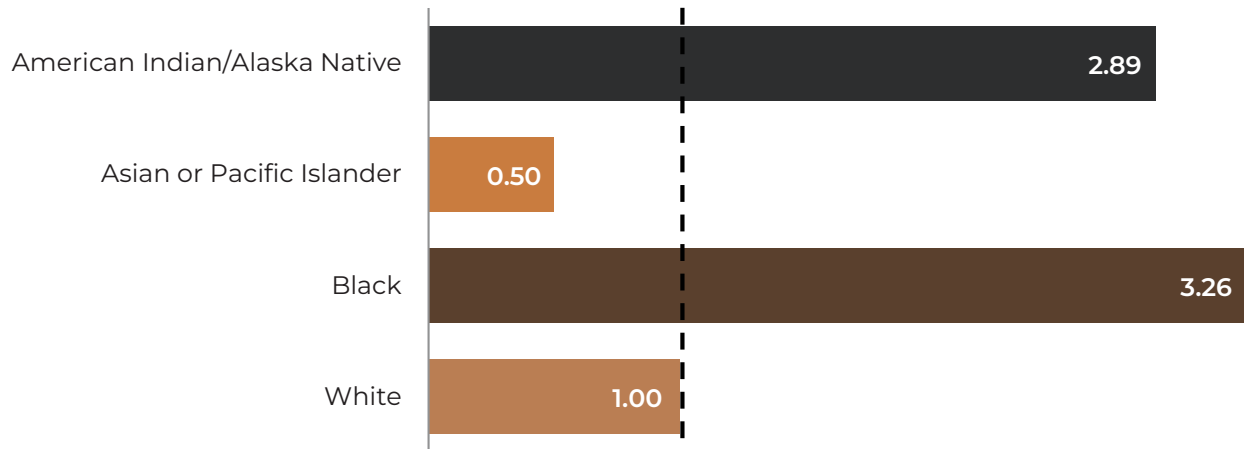
Missing Person Records by Sex and Racial Category

Among Indigenous people, more females than males were reported missing (53% compared to 47%). Within this dataset, all racial groups besides American Indian/Alaska Native had more reported missing males than females. This highlights the overrepresentation of Indigenous women and reaffirms the ongoing concerns about MMIWP in Washington.

Disproportionality Index

The analysis found that American Indian/Alaska Native and Black populations had DI scores well above 1.00, indicating significant overrepresentation among missing persons in Washington.^x In contrast, Asians and Pacific Islanders had lower DI scores, reflecting underrepresentation. Whites had an average DI of exactly 1.00, representing parity.

Figure 2: Missing Persons Disproportionality Index, by Racial Category



Note: The dotted line represents a DI score of 1.00, or parity.

Sources: Washington State Patrol; Washington Office of Financial Management

Homicide Analysis

The Data and Research Team then examined homicide records maintained by the Washington State Department of Health Center for Health Statistics (WDH CHS). WDH CHS allowed researchers access to homicide records covering a 19-year period.^{xi}

METHODOLOGY

The Data and Research Team received Excel files from WDH CHS that contained data on 5,245 homicides that occurred between 2006 and the third quarter of 2024. The data included death date, race, ethnicity, sex, age at death (in years), and manner of death.

Each record's race category was examined to identify which homicide victims were Indigenous. If a person was listed as American Indian/Alaska Native alone or with another race or ethnicity, the case was counted as

^x A DI score of 1.00 represents parity, meaning a group's share of missing persons matches its share of the state population. Scores above 1.00 indicate overrepresentation, while scores below 1.00 indicate underrepresentation.

^{xi} Homicides that occurred between 2006 and the third quarter of 2024 span approximately 18.75 years, which researchers rounded up to 19 years for the analysis. This results in slightly more conservative annual homicide rate estimates.

an American Indian/Alaska Native homicide. All other cases were counted as non-American Indian/Alaska Native. While the dataset allowed for multiple races and ethnicities to be recorded for each case, our analysis classified cases into these two groupings to maintain clarity and align with the research objective of assessing Indigenous homicides. Of the 5,245 homicides, 286 were identified as American Indian/Alaska Native people. Researchers then used descriptive statistics to study homicide trends over time, comparing cases with Indigenous victims to all other homicide cases.

To compare the homicide cases across the two racial groupings, researchers calculated homicide rates per 100,000 people for each group using the WSP data alongside population estimates.^{xii} This method accounts for population size differences, making the data directly comparable. To calculate rates, researchers divided the number of male and female victims in each racial group by their state population, multiplied by 100,000, and then divided by 19 to find the yearly homicide rate.

The Data and Research Team also calculated a DI score for Native and non-Native homicide victims. The DI was calculated by dividing the percentage of homicide victims from each racial group over the 19-year period by that group's percentage of the state population.

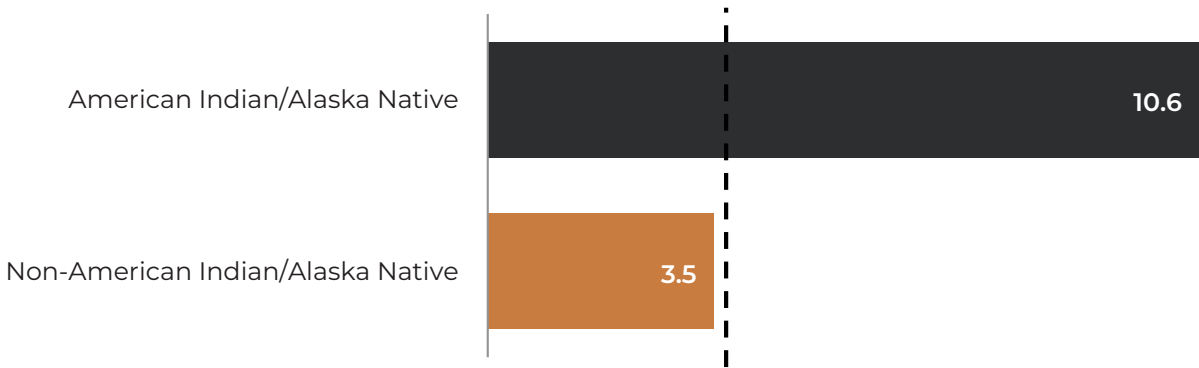
RESULTS

Although American Indian/Alaska Native people make up only two percent of Washington's population, they account for about six percent of the state's homicide victims.

Homicide Rates by Racial Category

During the 19-year period, the average annual homicide rate for American Indian/Alaska Native people was 10.6 per 100,000, more than three times higher than the 3.5 per 100,000 rate for non-Native people.

Figure 3: Homicide Rate per 100,000



Note: The dotted line indicates the average statewide homicide rate for the general population.

Sources: Washington State Department of Health Center for Health Statistics; Washington Office of Financial Management

^{xii} Researchers used 2006-2024 population estimates from the [Washington Office of Financial Management](#) because they are the official figures Washington uses for resource allocation, growth management, and policy planning.

Homicide Rates by Sex and Racial Category

Both male and female American Indian/Alaska Natives are murdered at a higher rate than their non-Native counterparts. Between 2006 and 2024, a higher proportion of Native homicide victims were female compared to non-Native victims (29% versus 24%, respectively). Native females had an overall homicide rate of 6.3 per 100,000, which is 3.7 times higher than the rate for non-Native females in Washington.

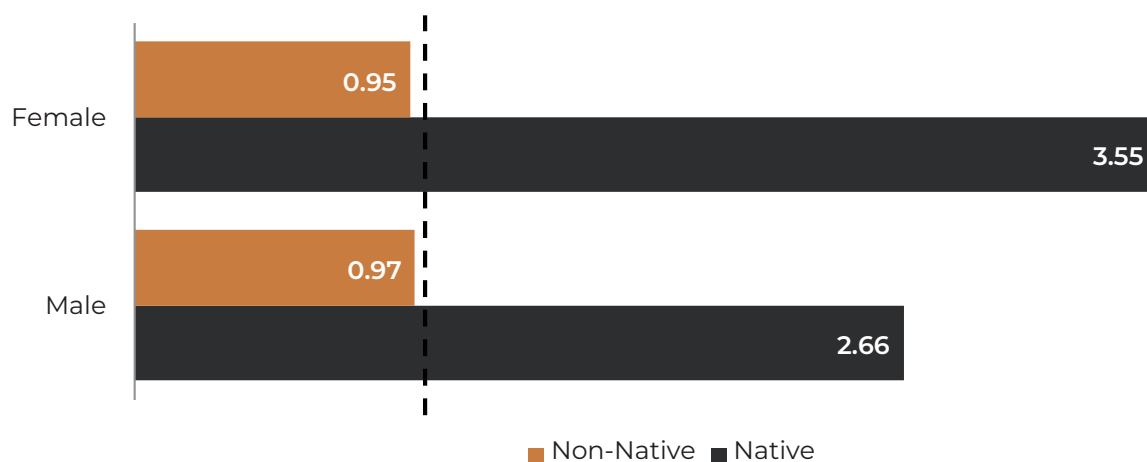
Similarly, Native males had an overall homicide rate of 14.8 per 100,000, which is 2.8 times higher than the rate for non-Native males in Washington. For both sexes, the disparity was most pronounced among youth aged 0-19 (4.3 times higher among Native females, and 3.1 times higher among Native males).

Disproportionality Index

The analysis found that Native homicide victims had a DI score of 2.90, meaning Native people were about three times more likely to be homicide victims compared to their share of the population.^{xiii} In contrast, the DI of 0.96 for all other races suggests their homicide risk was nearly proportional to their population share (4% lower than expected, but very close to parity).

Native women had the highest DI score of any group in this dataset, indicating they were the most overrepresented group relative to their population share.

Figure 4: Homicide DI, by Race and Sex



Note: The dotted line represents a DI score of 1.00, or parity.

Sources: Washington State Patrol; Washington Office of Financial Management

^{xiii} A DI score of 1.00 represents parity, meaning a group's share of missing persons matches its share of the state population. Scores above 1.00 indicate overrepresentation, while scores below 1.00 indicate underrepresentation.

Gaps: Washington's Data Limitations

Washington's homicide and missing persons data have major gaps that almost certainly result in an undercount of Native victims. Limited racial categories and missing case entries^{xiv} in the WSP database make it hard to understand the true impact of missingness, meaning the actual numbers are likely even higher.¹³

LIMITED GENDER CATEGORIES

Addressing MMIWP requires recognizing how gender influences experiences of violence for American Indian/Alaska Native women, girls, Two-Spirit individuals, men, and boys. Indigenous advocacy groups have been at the forefront of addressing these disparities, pushing for better data collection, policy changes, and culturally responsive support systems.^{13, 30} Unfortunately, however, the WDH CHS and WSP data only include “male” and “female” categories, excluding Two-Spirit and other LGBTQ+ identities. This gap makes it impossible to fully understand how violence affects these individuals. The 2019 Urban Indian Health Institute report flagged this issue in Washington's data, yet the problem remains unaddressed.

Additionally, law enforcement and media often fail to correctly identify or report the gender identities of missing and murdered LGBTQ+ Indigenous people, further erasing them from data.³⁰ Officers frequently rely on their perceptions instead of asking individuals or their families about gender identity,¹⁹ which can lead to misclassification and incomplete records.

RACIAL MISCLASSIFICATION

Racial misclassification and underreporting further complicate efforts to understand the true scope of the problem.^{13, 28} Issues with racial misclassification and limited ways that race is categorized in WSP data sets have not been addressed and remain problematic. The Data Practices section further discusses how officers collect data on race, ethnicity, and Tribal affiliation.

FOCUS SOLELY ON HOMICIDE

These data only capture fatal instances of violence. They do not provide information on the disproportionately high rates of other forms of gender-based violence experienced by American Indian/Alaska Native women, girls, and LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit individuals, such as sexual assault, domestic violence, and trafficking, which are well-documented in other sources.^{30, 42}

The Impact of Violence

Interviews conducted by the Data and Research Team with survivors and families who have experienced MMIWP made it clear how deeply this crisis affects Native communities. The trauma of losing a loved one to violence does not just impact individuals—it ripples through entire families and future generations. Those who have lost loved ones to violence often struggle with grief and mental health crises, including

xiv It is unclear if missing cases are absent due to record keeping or lack of reporting by law enforcement agencies.

depression and anxiety. These ongoing tragedies make it harder for communities to heal, leading to a cycle where the effects of violence never fully fade.

“It’s an enormous trauma. It’s worse than I think anybody could ever imagine going through.”

– Family Member

This crisis can potentially fuel harmful stereotypes. When violence becomes common, outsiders may wrongly believe it is a “normal” part of Native life, reinforcing racist beliefs and making it harder to get justice.

“They’re good people. We are all good people, but we are made to look as if though we are less than and there’s a stigma around us that we’re just drunk Indians or we’re addicts, and it doesn’t matter that we’re missing and lost.” – Family Member

At the same time, Indigenous individuals may become desensitized to violence, seeing it as unavoidable. This can create feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, where people feel that no matter what they do, they or their loved ones could be next. Many live in constant fear for their safety. The family and survivor interviews revealed just how deeply this fear and anxiety shape daily life in Indigenous communities, making it difficult to move forward.

“It’s hurting us. We’re never going to heal... There’s still sadness, there’s still anxiety. For a long time, I didn’t want to lose weight. I wanted to stay fat so nobody could pick me up and kidnap me. You know, I get scared even now when I go places by myself.” – Family Member

The lasting impact of MMIWP extends beyond grief and fear. Many people turn to substances to cope with their pain, leading to addiction and overdose. Others withdraw from their communities, isolating themselves to avoid further loss.

“He was so happy and so full of life and so full of energy and so full of love. In a million years, I would have never imagined him turning to drugs, and least of all, fentanyl, the pinnacle of the drugs out there, the one that can take your life. But it’s par for the course, because what he endured as a child is what so many of our babies endure, and we don’t know what they’re going through until it’s too late.” – Family Member

Perhaps most troubling is how this violence perpetuates a continued cycle of violence and intergenerational trauma. If Native people continue to be murdered or go missing at such high rates, the crisis will continue to harm Indigenous communities for generations to come.

“I think it impacted the whole family in a way that’s indescribable.” – Family Member

Discussion

To effectively address the root causes and the resulting impact of the MMIWP crisis, the Data and Research Team focused the recommendations voiced from families, service providers, and the literature into three key areas: Data, Collaboration, and Justice. Each of these areas plays a crucial role in improving prevention, response, and support systems for American Indian/Alaska Native people.

The sections that follow provide a detailed examination of these key areas, including background information, original data collection findings that illustrate the challenges, and insights from service providers and families directly affected by MMIWP. Each section concludes with specific, actionable recommendations for improvement. By strengthening data collection and analysis, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and advancing justice initiatives, we can create more effective and culturally responsive solutions to address MMIWP.



DATA PRACTICES

High-quality data are the foundation for understanding the scope, magnitude, and underlying causes of MMIWP. Data can be defined as information—such as words, numbers, or images—that are collected, organized, and analyzed to better understand a topic. For data to be considered “high-quality,” they must be accurate, complete, trustworthy, relevant, and timely.⁴³ Without reliable data, decision-makers cannot develop effective policies or strategies to address the crisis.

High-quality data are also important to understand how often American Indian/Alaska Native people experience violence and how many MMIWP cases exist.^{5, 13} Having accurate numbers helps researchers and policymakers measure progress and improve efforts to keep people safe. When law enforcement agencies (LEA) collect, report, and share data openly, it can also help build trust with communities.⁹

Despite the importance of high-quality data, there are limited federal and state laws that establish data collection standards and practices for LEAs in Washington. Without legal or regulatory requirements, decisions about which data to collect are left to individual agencies. This lack of standardization creates inconsistencies that make it difficult to assess the scope of MMIWP.

To understand the legal and regulatory requirements of data collection for LEAs in Washington, the Data and Research Team examined state and federal laws and surveyed LEAs about how they collect data on race, ethnicity, and Tribal affiliation. This section summarizes key findings from the survey and legal review.

Review of Federal and State Laws

The Data and Research Team reviewed laws related to data collection in Washington, focusing on mandatory and voluntary reporting requirements for LEAs. The review found that Washington LEAs are only required to report a few specific types of data, including missing persons cases (over 30 days or with foul play suspected) to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), missing children from foster care to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, DNA data for qualifying offenses to the Combined DNA Index System, and Tribal land offenses to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

If LEAs choose to submit data voluntarily, they may report to systems such as the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) or the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). Other options include federal and state programs like the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP) and the Washington State Attorney General’s Office Homicide Investigation Tracking System (HITS). More information about these systems and the laws that address them can be found in the full report.

Law Enforcement Survey

The Data and Research Team collaborated with the MMIWP Data and Research Subcommittee, the AGO Tribal Liaison, and the AGO Policy Analyst to develop an online survey. The survey aimed to address community recommendations from the 2022 Washington MMIWP report.

METHODOLOGY

The law enforcement survey included 25 questions on LEAs' relationships with Tribes, collaboration, consultation, needed support, and data collection practices for race, ethnicity, and Tribal affiliation. The survey questionnaire and consent agreement can be found in the corresponding full report. The Data and Research Team sent the survey to 191 non-Tribal LEAs in Washington, with weekly reminders sent to non-responding agencies.^{xv}

RESULTS

Survey results were analyzed by the Data and Research Team using SPSS 27. Frequencies were calculated to summarize responses. Due to limited participation, cross-tabulations and regional analyses were not conducted.

Results

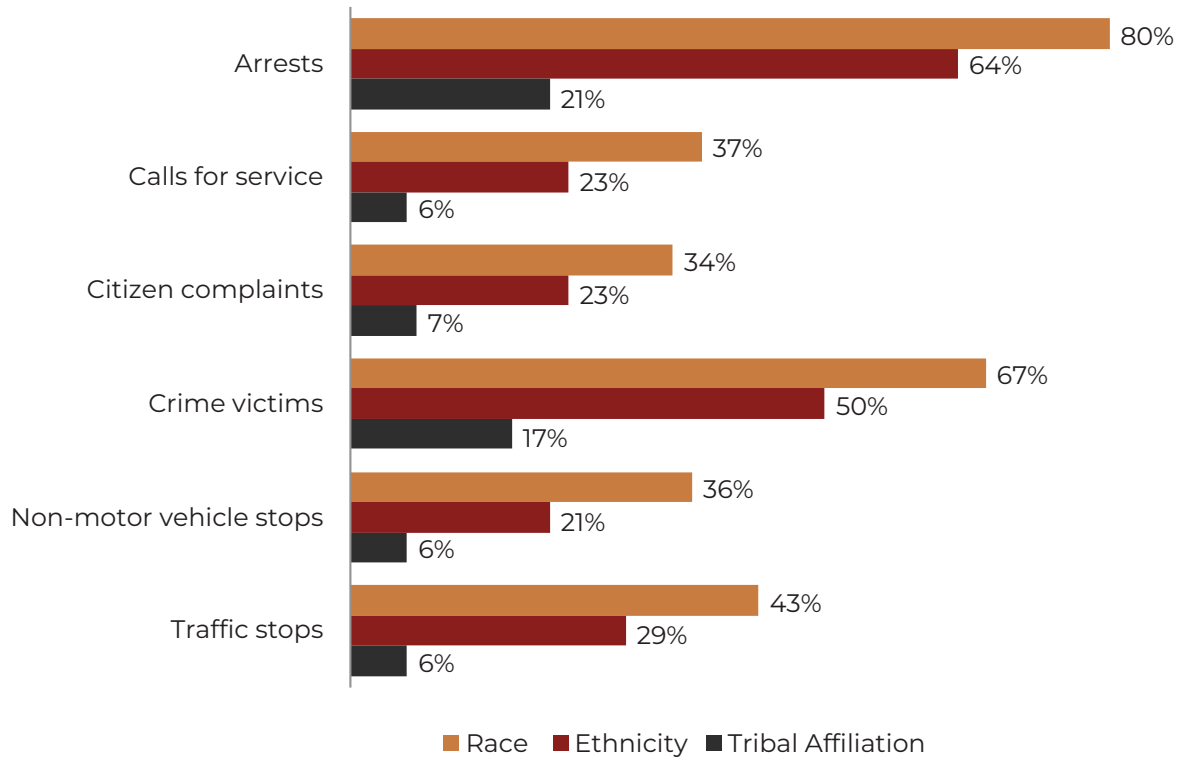
Of the 191 LEAs contacted, 74 respondents completed the survey (39% response rate). Because of the low response rate, answers cannot be interpreted as representative of all agencies.

LEAs were asked how often they collect data on race, ethnicity, and Tribal affiliation during six common policing interactions (Figure 5). Agencies report collecting race data most often, followed by ethnicity, while Tribal affiliation was recorded the least. The data suggests that while race is routinely documented, ethnicity and especially Tribal affiliation are less consistently captured.

In addition, the survey found that while the primary method for obtaining Tribal affiliation data was self-reporting, observation by officers played the most significant role in determining race and ethnicity (Figure 6).

^{xv} The survey was hosted on Qualtrics, began with an informed consent statement, and took approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. The survey was open for four weeks (July 10 – August 6, 2024).

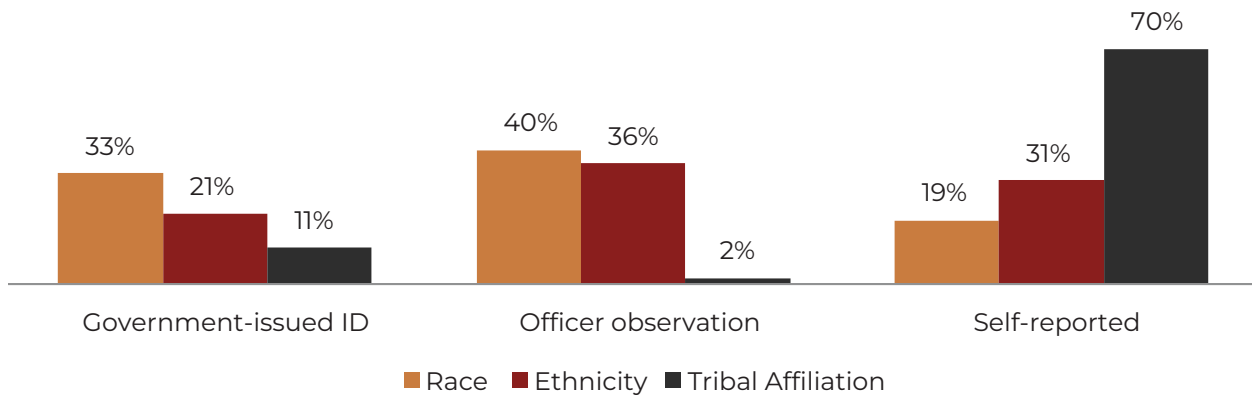
Figure 5: Frequency of Data Collection by LEAs



Note: This figure shows the percentage of agencies that said they collect the information “always” or “often.”

Source: Law Enforcement Survey

Figure 5: Frequency of Data Collection by LEAs



Note: “Data provided by another agency” was indicated for 2% of responses about race and 3% about ethnicity.

Source: Law Enforcement Survey

Data Gaps and the Resulting Impacts

Violence against American Indian/Alaska Native people is severely underreported due to racial misclassification and lack of Tribal affiliation data, as well as inconsistent reporting among LEAs.^{13, 30}

RACIAL MISCLASSIFICATION

Indigenous individuals are often misclassified as belonging to a different race or ethnicity, leading to significant underestimations of violence and death rates.^{28, 28, 49} This misclassification occurs when data collectors rely on appearance or name instead of self-identification. Previous studies suggest that up to 30% of Native death certificates contain racial misclassification.²⁸ Findings from the law enforcement survey support these concerns, revealing that 40% of respondents in Washington determine a person's race based solely on visual observation rather than self-reporting or official identification.

LACK OF TRIBAL AFFILIATION DATA

Similarly, the failure to consistently record Tribal affiliation makes it harder to understand and respond to violence against Indigenous people.³⁰ Including Tribal affiliation in missing person reports is crucial for reconnecting individuals with their families and communities. However, many agencies do not collect this information, and research shows that most MMIWP victims are missing this data in law enforcement records.³⁰ Findings from the law enforcement survey further corroborate these concerns, showing that responding Washington LEAs rarely collect data on Tribal affiliation. This lack of documentation, combined with the frequent racial misclassification of Indigenous individuals, makes it even more difficult to assess the true scale of violence and effectively allocate resources to address the crisis.

DATABASES AND REPORTING INCONSISTENCIES

The absence of national and state standards for data collection leads to inconsistent and unreliable information. LEAs have broad discretion over data collection efforts, creating discrepancies between agencies.¹⁸ For example, one study found that there are significantly fewer Indigenous women and girls reported missing in NamUs compared to NCIC.³⁰ Additionally, even though NIBRS is considered the best practice for law enforcement data collection, participation is not federally required, and agencies may choose not to report.^{8, 9} Finally, national datasets used for decision-making and funding often underrepresent Native populations, resulting in inadequate resources and ineffective policies.²⁴










CONFUSION

Jurisdictional confusion further complicates data collection and reporting. Depending on where a crime occurs, it may fall under Tribal, state, or federal jurisdiction, creating confusion over which LEA is responsible for investigating and collecting data.²¹ A more detailed discussion of jurisdictional confusion and its impact can be found in the [Justice](#) section.

Recommendations for Improvement

Improving data collection is essential to understanding and addressing violence against Indigenous people. Stakeholders, impacted individuals, and experts^{xvi} suggest the following actions:

.....

-  **Provide Training and Resources:** Ensure LEAs, including Tribal agencies, have the staff, tools, and training—such as cultural competency programs—to collect and analyze data effectively.
-  **Standardize Data Collection:** Require all LEAs to collect and report race, ethnicity, and Tribal affiliation in the same way.
-  **Improve Accuracy:** Use self-reporting to better record racial and Tribal affiliation data.
-  **Address Racial Misclassification:** Improve database accuracy by following best practices for correctly identifying American Indian/Alaska Native individuals.
-  **Improve Data Reporting:** Help LEAs at all levels develop the tools and skills needed to consistently report data to federal systems and share information with the public.
-  **Increase Transparency:** Regularly review state data to ensure accuracy, completeness, and accountability in law enforcement reporting.
-  **Expand and Strengthen Reporting Systems:** Require mandatory reporting to databases like NamUs, NIBRS, and NCIC; encourage broader participation in the Tribal Access Program; and promote voluntary contributions (e.g., ViCAP) from LEAs to enhance data collection on MMIWP.
-  **Include Tribal Affiliation:** Make sure missing person reports include all Tribal affiliations to help reconnect missing Native people with their communities.
-  **Enhance Collaboration:** Strengthen data sharing among Tribal, state, and federal agencies through formal agreements like Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).

xvi These recommendations are compiled from the Criminal Justice Statistics Interagency Working Group, U.S. Government Accountability Office, Washington Race and Criminal Justice Task Force, and Urban Indian Health Institute.



Modernize Data Systems: Invest in digital tools to improve how data is stored, shared, and accessed.



Address Data Suppression: Use research methods that strengthen small sample sizes to prevent missing or misleading data on Indigenous people.

By implementing these recommendations, agencies can improve data accuracy, support investigations, and develop better strategies to prevent and respond to violence against Indigenous people.



COLLABORATION

Effective collaboration between law enforcement, service providers, and MMIWP family members and survivors is critical to improving responses and outcomes in these cases. Strong partnerships can help identify cases more quickly, enhance investigations, and ensure families receive the support they need. Research highlights the importance of coordination as a key strategy for addressing the MMIWP crisis.³⁷

To better understand how these groups communicate and collaborate, the Data and Research Team conducted a law enforcement survey and interviewed service providers who work with Native communities, family members, and survivors. This section focuses on how these groups work together, the challenges they face, and opportunities for improving collaboration. Relevant findings from the law enforcement survey and service provider, family, and survivor interviews are summarized here, with more detailed results available in each respective full report.

Understanding Collaboration

The Data and Research Team surveyed 74 law enforcement respondents and interviewed 15 service providers and 53 people who identified as MMIWP family members, survivors, or both.

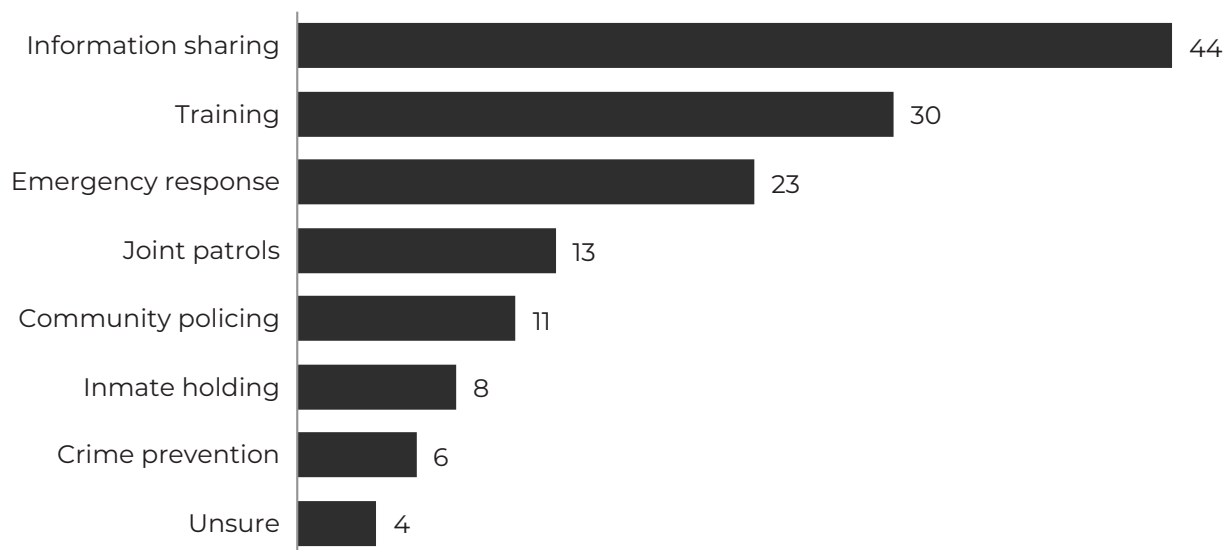
METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the law enforcement survey is detailed in the Data Collection section, while methodologies for the service provider, family, and survivor interviews can be found in the [Appendix](#). The findings in this section reflect the perspectives of those interviewed.

RESULTS: LAW ENFORCEMENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Overall, the survey found that collaboration between LEAs and Tribal law enforcement varies widely, with only 18% reporting they collaborate “Often,” while 16% indicated they “Never” collaborate. Survey results further show that while some LEAs and service providers have established formal agreements, like MOUs, structured partnerships remain limited. When asked if their agency had a formal relationship with a Tribe, most respondents (55%) reported that they did not. Among agencies that reported working with Tribal LEAs, the most common activities were information sharing and training. Other areas of collaboration included emergency response, joint patrols, community policing, and inmate holding. Fewer agencies engaged in crime prevention efforts, and some were unsure of their collaboration activities.

Figure 7: Number of LEAs engaging in collaborative activities



Source: Law Enforcement Survey

Informal collaboration appears to be more common. Most LEA respondents (63%) reported having informal relationships with Tribes, which include regular meetings, joint community events, shared training opportunities, and informal information sharing.

Most LEAs (62%) indicated they had not sought a Tribal consultation^{xvii} in the past five years, demonstrating limited direct engagement with Tribal governments. Engagement with Urban Indian Organizations is even lower—only one percent of agencies reported seeking an urban confer^{xviii} in the past five years, while 80% had not, highlighting a significant gap in outreach to urban Indigenous communities.^{xix}

RESULTS: SERVICE PROVIDERS' PERSPECTIVES

Collaboration with Law Enforcement

Interviews with service providers revealed various ways they collaborate with law enforcement. Some providers reported having formal agreements, while others rely on informal relationships built through professional networks. In some cases, LEAs refer individuals to service providers when they identify a need.

⋮ *“If they have somebody that is in need, they send them our way.” – Service Provider*

Service providers also play a role in training law enforcement on issues like MMIWP and cultural sensitivity. Some participate in task forces and coalitions alongside LEAs to improve responses to violence. Many

xvii A Tribal consultation is a formal discussion between a government agency and a Tribal government about issues affecting the Tribe.

xviii An urban confer is a formal discussion between a government agency and an Urban Indian Organization to address issues affecting urban American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

xix 19% of respondents were unsure if they agencies had sought an urban confer in the past five years.

interviewees highlighted the importance of Tribal liaisons facilitating communication and resource-sharing in MMIWP cases.

While some service providers described positive collaborations, others shared challenges in maintaining partnerships with LEAs. Staff turnover in law enforcement has disrupted relationships and past negative experiences with officers have contributed to limited engagement in some cases.

⋮ ***“I have lost all faith in them at this point, because they don’t show up when you need them. And so it’s been pretty strained.” – Service Provider***

Collaboration with Other Providers

Beyond their work with law enforcement, service providers emphasized the importance of collaboration within their own networks. Many participate in coalitions, committees, and referral systems to connect Indigenous individuals with resources across Washington and beyond. Some have formal agreements with other service agencies, while others maintain informal partnerships that allow them to share specialized services and expertise.

⋮ ***“There is an open door as far as being in collaboration with sister organizations.” – Service Provider***

Training and cross-training were frequently mentioned as essential collaborative efforts. Many service providers coordinate with other agencies to secure and share training opportunities, making education on domestic violence, sexual assault, and clinician support more accessible and cost-effective.

Collaboration with Community Members

Service providers emphasized that collaboration is central to their work, as they strive to meet the needs of those experiencing violence and loss. In the area of safety and emergency support, service providers described working closely with individuals to assess risks and develop safety plans tailored to their specific situations. They also highlighted their involvement in search efforts for missing people, working directly with affected families to provide guidance and resources during crises.

⋮ ***“If somebody is missing in the community, we can provide lodging, we can assist in helping folks search for people. We support them in that search by giving them gas cards and food cards. If there are other needs that they have then we look for different things in the community to be able to support them while they’re searching.” – Service Provider***

When discussing health and well-being services, providers stressed the importance of direct engagement in delivering mental health and substance use support. They described offering wrap-around services, case management, and referrals to ensure individuals receive the help they need. Many also noted the value of emotional support and cultural healing, such as attending events, facilitating talking circles, and working with traditional healers, as essential elements of their work with Indigenous communities.

“We are able to help with healing activities that are tailored towards culture. And so anything from attending events, to ribbon skirt making, talking circles, beading, going out and forest bathing, attending Tribal recovery events, having traditional healers and bodywork practitioners come in and work with our clients.” – Service Provider

Service providers also discussed the necessity of social and economic support, emphasizing that helping individuals access employment, food, family services, transportation, and legal assistance requires direct collaboration. Many providers expressed that their role goes beyond simply offering resources; they strive to be present for those who feel they have nowhere else to turn.

“When they feel like they don’t have anybody, we’re there for them.” – Service Provider

RESULTS: COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Collaboration with Law Enforcement

Most of the family members and survivors interviewed expressed frustration with law enforcement, feeling that officers did not provide enough support. Many believed their cases were not handled properly, leading to feelings of neglect. While some families said police took reports, collected evidence, and provided updates, the overall sentiment was negative.

“From the beginning, they dropped the ball on so many things.” – Family Member

A common complaint was poor communication and a lack of follow-up. Cases were sometimes transferred between departments, or officers changed positions, making it even harder for families to get information. Some also felt law enforcement was not transparent about investigations.

***“I don’t know who’s doing my cousin’s case, but it doesn’t seem like they care. They don’t check in, they haven’t followed up, they don’t give an update, or anything. You have to pursue them.”
– Family Member***

However, a few participants shared positive experiences when officers showed empathy, stayed in touch, or referred families to helpful resources. Some also noted that collaboration improved when law enforcement involved larger agencies with specialized equipment. Still, many families experienced deep flaws within the system. They cited mishandled investigations, lost evidence, and a lack of accountability. Some shared that their missing loved one’s case was not taken seriously due to bias or dehumanization.

“And I just feel like they’re just forgotten. They’re not looked at as human beings.” – Family Member

Collaboration with Service Providers

Experiences with service providers were more varied. Some families reported that they received valuable support from victim assistance programs, crisis lines, shelters, mental health providers, grassroots organizations, and Tribal programs. Financial aid from Tribes and community organizations was especially helpful. Emotional and practical support, such as grief counseling and case management, was also appreciated. Grassroots groups played a key role by helping with searches, providing resources, and creating a network of support.

“[REDACTED] came through for me when nobody else would. They helped me search, and they helped me financially... They prayed over me. They smudged me off constantly. They constantly called me all the time, doing follow-up care, checking up on me, making sure I was okay. They became my family when I had none.” – Family Member

However, not everyone had access to these services. Some families said they felt completely alone, while others found that resources were unavailable, unhelpful, or did not reflect their cultural needs. Barriers included a lack of services and restrictive policies that made it difficult to qualify for assistance.

“There is nobody to turn to for support.” – Family Member

Collaboration with Peers

Many participants found comfort in connecting with others who had experienced similar tragedies. Peer support helped them feel understood and less isolated. Events such as marches, vigils, and gatherings allowed families and survivors to share their stories, creating a sense of community and emotional support. These spaces provided validation and played an important role in the healing process. The interviews largely focused on the positive effects of survivors supporting one another.

“They have support groups where you can go and you can talk freely, you can cry, you can cuss, you can... and it’s non-judgmental. Get it out of your system so that you can be okay until the next meeting, or until the next vigil or until the next whatever it is that they do, where we come together. That was very helpful.” – Family Member

Gaps in Collaboration and the Resulting Impacts

LACK OF ADEQUATE SUPPORT CAUSES MISTRUST

Family members, survivors, and service providers overwhelmingly report feeling unsupported by law enforcement, particularly when it comes to MMIWP cases. Families often report being unheard and excluded from investigations. Additionally, they report receiving inconsistent or inaccurate information. Families and survivors describe feeling ignored by law enforcement, making them less likely to report missing people in the future. Many seeking help feel dismissed, not believed, or subjected to harmful stereotypes.

“The one that comes to mind of being harmful to me is reporting my sister missing and getting told her criminal history.” – Family Member

These experiences deepen existing trauma and reinforce feelings of fear and distrust which create significant barriers to justice. This mistrust also adds to the severe underreporting of violent victimizations against Indigenous people, as families often turn to their communities first, believing law enforcement will not help them.

“So we were just a number. We were a number in line. And he wasn’t going to take my mother’s case personally or he didn’t have the time.” – Family Member

JURISDICTIONAL CONFUSION

Confusion over jurisdiction remains a major challenge in MMIWP cases. The overlapping authority of Tribal, state, and federal agencies often leads to delays, miscommunication, or gaps in investigation. Service providers and families frequently report difficulty navigating these complexities, particularly when multiple agencies are involved. Some express frustration that LEAs often do not communicate with one another, leading to conflicting responses and uncertainty about which agency has primary responsibility.

“There’s all that jurisdictional stuff you have to work through, and they don’t talk to each other. They are all in their little silos, doing their own thing, and they’re not communicating.” – Service Provider

“Eventually [REDACTED] stopped wanting to deal with it, it seems like, and they transferred it back to [REDACTED]. And then that was it. Nothing much has really happened.” – Family Member

INCONSISTENCIES

Variations in reporting, administration, and lack of collaboration between LEAs leads to crucial details being overlooked, resulting in cases falling through the cracks, delaying justice for victims and their loved ones.

Administration

LEAs follow different policies for handling missing persons cases, causing inconsistencies in reporting, investigation, and data collection. Some families explained that their cases were not taken seriously or were delayed due to these differences. Service providers and families further express frustration with law enforcement’s lack of transparency and accountability in handling cases, making collaboration more difficult.

“I don’t know what they did. I have no idea. I’ve never seen a report.” – Family Member

Data Collection and Reporting

As mentioned in the Data Practices section, administrative inconsistencies contribute to data problems and racial misclassification. Law enforcement officers often rely on their own observations to determine a person’s race rather than collecting self-reported race, ethnicity, or Tribal affiliation data. In many cases, this information is not gathered at all, leading to incomplete or inaccurate records. When race is misclassified or missing, Indigenous victims become statistically invisible.³⁰ Underreporting of Indigenous homicides

to federal databases further distorts the data, limiting resources, hindering investigations, and preventing systemic change. Service providers also struggle with inconsistent state databases, which create additional challenges in tracking cases across jurisdictions.

“Speaking of the police, when [REDACTED] first disappeared, they had her classified as Asian. From day one, I tried to tell them, she looks Asian, she is not Asian. It took months, almost a year, to have that changed.” – Family Member

Law Enforcement Collaboration

Collaboration between LEAs and Tribal law enforcement remains inconsistent. While some agencies have established partnerships, many only work together on a case-by-case basis. Survey results show that most agencies do not have formal agreements, and most of the respondents’ agencies had not sought Tribal consultation within the past five years. Even informal collaboration is inconsistent, with some officers trying to engage while others rarely interact with Tribal or urban Indigenous communities. This further contributes to a breakdown of trust and communication.

“It’s one thing for the crime itself, but it’s another thing for the people who are supposed to help us find justice to be complacent and without answers or guidance. That adds another level of hopelessness, pain, trauma, and distrust.” – Family Member

LACK OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Both service providers and family members noted that a lack of cultural understanding among law enforcement and other professionals hinders effective collaboration. In corroboration, many LEAs reported needing more guidance on Tribal etiquette and cultural competency. Families often felt that officers lacked empathy or awareness of the unique challenges Indigenous communities face, which contributed to distrust.

“A lot of them probably will never understand the traumas and the experiences that we have here on the reservation. It’s different.” – Family Member

This lack of understanding also leads to a shortage of culturally responsive support services. The criminal justice system typically does not provide culturally appropriate healing resources for survivors or victims’ families. Across Washington, is a lack both generalized and specific Indigenous-centered services, including mental health therapy and counseling, basic needs support, and legal advocacy. Service providers emphasize the need for funding for incentives to encourage Indigenous providers to offer services both on and off reservations.

“Cultural rejuvenation is prevention. How do we prevent violence, not just mitigate it? Cultural practices, cultural arts, language, hunting, harvesting, gathering, longhouse, our ceremony—all of that is prevention, and it also needs to be sustained. Putting money and resources into that is important.” – Service Provider

LIMITED RESOURCES AND FUNDING

Many service providers do not have the funding needed to sustain collaborative efforts. Insufficient resources make it difficult to support search efforts, investigations, victim assistance programs, and legal services. Limited budgets also prevent agencies from hiring dedicated liaisons. Families often bear the financial burden of search and recovery efforts, further exacerbating stress and trauma.

“We still need to be able to collaborate with other jurisdictions. That’s going to take resources, and it shouldn’t always be up to the Tribes to cover such expenses. We need to be partners in this.”

— Service Provider

Recommendations for Improving Collaboration

The following recommendations aim to address identified gaps and provide actionable steps for LEAs and service providers. These suggestions are based on input from law enforcement survey respondents, as well as interviews with service providers, family members, and survivors. They are also supported by findings from other state task forces and research.^{14, 32, 38}



Strengthen Relationships Between LEAs and Tribal Entities: Develop both formal and informal partnerships through regular interactions, clear benefits, and consistent collaboration. Promote periodic informal check-ins and shared training opportunities to build trust and foster cooperation. Highlight the benefits, such as improving community trust, enhancing intelligence sharing, and gaining cultural insights to strengthen response efforts.^{xx}



Encourage More Frequent Collaboration Between LEAs and Tribal Law Enforcement: The Task Force should provide guidance on best practices for collaboration and recommend routine joint exercises or information-sharing protocols. For agencies already collaborating, promote activities like joint patrols, coordinated responses to specific crime types, and cross-agency training.



Standardize Collaboration Efforts: Agencies should implement uniform policies, standardized reporting protocols, and information-sharing agreements (e.g., MOUs) to improve coordination across Tribal, state, and federal law enforcement. Agencies should also formalize

xx Only 29% of law enforcement officers surveyed in Washington view formal relationships as important, and only 17% see value in informal ones.

coordination across city, county, state, and Tribal governments to ensure effective search and investigative efforts.^{xxi}



Appoint Dedicated Tribal Liaisons: Establishing Tribal liaisons within LEAs or leveraging existing staff to coordinate Tribal outreach could bridge communication gaps and serve as a resource for both LEAs and Tribal communities.^{xxii}



Promote Tribal Consultation Efforts: Encourage more frequent formal consultations with Tribal governments, especially on matters impacting Indigenous communities, and raise awareness of the Urban Confer process to ensure urban Indigenous populations are also represented. The Task Force could assist LEAs by creating a standard process or checklist for both Tribal and urban consultations.



Provide Mandatory Cultural Competency Training: All agencies working with Indigenous communities should receive comprehensive training on Tribal protocols, cultural sensitivity, and best practices for handling MMIWP cases.^{xxiii}



Expand Resources for Victims and Survivors: Increase financial, emotional, and practical support services, especially those offered by grassroots organizations.



Establish Advocacy Positions: Specialized MMIWP advocates should be available to help families navigate complex legal and investigative systems and communicate with law enforcement and service providers.



Offer Legal Guidance for Cross-Jurisdictional Work: Provide LEAs guidance and access to legal consultations regarding cross-jurisdictional work.



Create an Online Resource Hub: Establish an online repository for LEAs to access materials such as cultural competency guides, templates for MOUs, success stories, and contact information for Tribal liaisons.

By implementing these recommendations, law enforcement and service providers can enhance collaboration, strengthen relationships with Tribal communities, and ensure more effective responses to MMIWP cases. These efforts will help build trust, improve resource accessibility, and ultimately support justice and healing for Indigenous communities.

xxi Twenty-one law enforcement survey respondents indicated that their agency needs guidance on proper protocols.

xxii Sixteen of the law enforcement survey respondents indicated that they need dedicated staff for outreach.

xxiii Twenty-four of law enforcement survey respondents indicated that their agency needed guidance on Tribal etiquette, and 17 needed cultural competency training; these were the two most requested types of support.

JUSTICE

Victims, families, and survivors of MMIWP deserve justice, but significant gaps in the system prevent it. Issues with jurisdiction, prosecution, data collection, and resources leave Indigenous victims without the protection they need. Confusion over legal authority, prosecution patterns, and systemic failures allows many crimes to go unpunished, fueling a cycle of violence.^{1, 30, 32}

The Data and Research Team struggled to conduct a prosecutorial trend analysis for MMIWP cases due to missing victim details in court records, case tracking issues with NIBRS, and limited access to sentencing records. However, the team conducted a literature review and examined laws to better understand jurisdiction in Washington, highlighting gaps and the impacts of justice-related failures. Family and survivor interviews, along with service provider interviews, further supported the literature and added depth to the findings. Details about the laws in the U.S. that have shaped jurisdiction and affected Tribal sovereignty and specifics of the attempted prosecutorial trends analysis are in the corresponding full reports.

The Root of the Problem: Colonialism

This crisis cannot be separated from the lasting effects of colonialism. Colonial policies created deep injustices, including racial bias in law enforcement and the judicial system, along with a lack of resources. These factors have led to unfair laws, weakened Tribal sovereignty, and made Indigenous people more vulnerable to violence.^{2, 34} For many years, federal policies, laws, and court decisions have taken away Tribal power, making it harder for Indigenous people to get justice for crimes that happen on their lands.^{2, 34} With less control over their own communities, Tribes struggle to protect their people—especially when the offender is not Indigenous.²

Legal Gaps and Jurisdictional Confusion

A major challenge in the justice system for Indigenous communities is the jurisdictional confusion created by federal laws that limit Tribal authority, especially over crimes committed by non-Indigenous individuals. This gap has allowed many perpetrators to evade justice, worsening the violence in Indian Country.³⁷

Public Law 280 (PL 280) and other legal complexities make it unclear whether Tribal, state, or federal authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting crimes. This confusion causes delays in criminal investigations and prevents justice from being delivered.⁴⁶ LEAs often struggle to determine who has authority, which can lead to slow or ineffective responses, particularly in missing persons cases.⁴⁷ The lack of coordination between federal, Tribal, and state authorities reduces the chances of finding missing individuals alive or solving homicide cases.

⋮ *“Sometimes the police don’t even show up.” – Family Interview*

The federal government is often responsible for handling major crimes in Indian Country, but a long history of case neglect, failed investigations, and prosecution declinations has left Native communities vulnerable.^{2, 34} Federal inaction has been widely criticized for failing to protect Indigenous people, particularly Native women, who experience disproportionately high rates of violence.³⁴

⋮ *“They wouldn’t look at the evidence. They sat there. ‘Not our jurisdiction.’” – Family Member*

JURISDICTION IN WASHINGTON STATE

Criminal jurisdiction over a crime committed in Indian Country—whether by federal, state, or Tribal authorities, or a combination of them—depends mainly on the race of both the offender and the victim, the type and severity of the crime, and whether the crime occurred in a PL 280 state.

In Washington, the state government has broader jurisdiction than both the federal and Tribal governments. Tribal governments have the least authority and can usually only handle cases where both the offender and victim are American Indian/Alaska Native. Even then, the state and federal governments still have the power to be involved. Over the past 200 years, Tribes have lost nearly all ability to protect their people and lands.

⋮ *“I just don’t understand the process and even the jurisdiction, who has that right, because of all of the back and forth.”*
– Family Interview

Treaty and Trust Responsibilities

The federal Indian trust responsibility, a legal and moral obligation established through centuries of Supreme Court rulings, requires the U.S. government to safeguard Tribal rights, lands, and resources — a duty that has too often been neglected at the expense of Native communities’ safety and sovereignty.

Table 3: Jurisdiction in Washington State Today

| Offender | Victim | Jurisdiction in Washington State |
|------------|------------|--|
| Non-Native | Non-Native | The State of Washington holds jurisdiction exclusive to federal and Tribal jurisdiction. |
| Non-Native | Native | The State of Washington and the federal government have concurrent jurisdiction. The Tribe may have jurisdiction in certain domestic violence cases. |
| Native | Non-Native | The State of Washington has concurrent jurisdiction with the federal government. |
| Native | Native | The State of Washington has concurrent jurisdiction with the Tribe for all minor [misdemeanor] offenses and concurrent jurisdiction with the federal government for major [felony] crimes listed in 18 U.S.C. § 1153 (Major Crimes Act). |

Source: United States Department of Justice; Tribal Clearinghouse

Legislative reforms like the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013^{xxiv} and its 2022 amendment has aimed to address these justice gaps by expanding Tribal jurisdiction over certain crimes. These changes allow participating Tribes to prosecute non-Native offenders for domestic violence and sexual assault.³⁸ However, many experts argue these measures do not go far enough to fix the deeply entrenched legal barriers that limit Tribal sovereignty.²

In addition to these legal challenges, many criminal cases in Tribal communities are handled by Tribal justice systems, which lack a unified system for data collection. No single database connects federal, state, and Tribal jurisdictions, making it nearly impossible to assess crime and prosecution trends in Indian Country.⁴⁷

“We don’t even have the data. So, what is being done here? We don’t have the data. We don’t have new laws.” – Family Interview

Prosecutorial Failures

Research shows that many cases involving Indigenous victims are not fully prosecuted, leaving families without justice and allowing violence to continue. High declination rates by prosecutors and plea deals that reduce serious charges contribute to the problem. A U.S. Government Accountability Office report found that U.S. Attorney’s Offices declined 67% of sexual abuse cases and 46% of assault cases involving American Indian/Alaska Native victims.¹⁷ This lack of prosecution fuels ongoing violence and deepens mistrust in the legal and colonial government systems.

Additionally, U.S. Attorney Offices are more likely to decline cases from Indian Country than from other jurisdictions, further endangering Indigenous communities.⁷ A Northern California study found that 50% of alleged perpetrators in MMIWP cases were never charged or convicted.¹ Studies from the U.S. and Canada confirm that many homicides involving Indigenous victims are never fully investigated or prosecuted.^{11, 30, 31, 32}

“And then the FBI contacted me, and they told me there’s nothing going on here. We’re dropping your case from the FBI file.” – Family Interview

The federal government is often responsible for these cases, but a history of failed investigations and case declinations has led to widespread neglect.³⁴ Many Native women face high rates of violence due to federal inaction.

xxiv Section 904 “Gives Indian Tribes jurisdiction over domestic violence, dating violence, and violations of protective orders that occur on their lands. Makes that jurisdiction concurrent with federal and state jurisdiction. Requires Indian Tribes prosecuting crimes of violence to: (1) prove that a defendant has requisite ties to the Indian Tribe; (2) provide defendants the right to an impartial jury trial; and (3) notify defendants of their rights, including the right to file a writ of habeas corpus in federal court.”

“Nothing ever happened, no one was ever charged, no one was ever prosecuted, and nothing was ever done.” – Family Member

Prosecutors also plead down serious charges, reducing accountability for offenders. One study found that many domestic violence cases against Native women were downgraded to minor offenses like “disorderly conduct,” even when victims suffered severe injuries.⁴¹

“For my younger brother, there was a plea deal. They dropped it from murder one to murder two, and then tried to reduce it to manslaughter. Thank God it didn’t pan out.” – Family Interview

Bias and Mistreatment in the Judicial System

Indigenous people face racial bias at every stage of the justice process, leading to unequal treatment and barriers to justice. Studies show that American Indian/Alaska Native individuals experience harsher treatment than other groups, from arrest to sentencing, which deepens the injustice and prolongs the suffering of victims and families.⁴⁰

This bias affects prosecution decisions, often resulting in cases involving Indigenous victims being deprioritized, investigated with less urgency, or dismissed altogether.⁴⁰ Seemingly neutral institutional practices can also disproportionately harm people of color, making it even harder for Native people to access justice.⁴⁰ These findings from Washington’s Race and Criminal Justice Task Force align with national data on sentencing disparities for American Indian/Alaska Native individuals.¹⁵

Research Gaps

While some studies have examined prosecution trends in Indian Country, they generally focus on factors like disparities in sentencing based on the race of the offender, but less is known about the race of the victim. Very few studies have examined the interaction of offender and victim demographics and prosecutorial trends, and those that have, focus on Black and White racial categories and specifically on capital punishment sentencing. The research team attempted to explore the relationship of victim and offender characteristics in the prosecution of MMIWP cases in Washington, but was ultimately unable to do so due to limitations in the existing data systems, such as missing victim details in court records and limited access to sentencing records. In addition, federal case management systems like CaseView contain errors and inconsistencies in tracking Indian Country cases. These combined issues make it difficult to measure crime trends, evaluate policy changes, or ensure accountability in prosecutions.⁴⁷ Without structural reforms to improve data collection, Indigenous communities will continue to face significant barriers to justice.

Resource Deficiencies

Tribal LEAs face serious resource shortages, including underfunded police departments, too few officers, and inadequate forensic resources. These challenges make it difficult to investigate and prosecute crimes effectively. Limited police presence, lack of training, and insufficient forensic equipment lead to delays or failures in addressing cases.⁴⁷

The Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA) was enacted to help fill some of these gaps (e.g., broadening of Tribal authority, reauthorization of funding to support Tribal justice systems), but many issues remain. Tribal justice systems still lack the necessary resources to protect their communities from violence.^{37, 47} Resource deficiencies in Indian Country significantly hinder the ability to investigate and prosecute MMIWP cases.⁴⁷ However, it is important to note that resource deficiencies are not unique to Indian Country and are a broader challenge faced by many underserved communities.

⋮ *“You missed out on clear evidence of things to help get this case prosecuted.” – Family Interview*

Despite efforts like TLOA, Tribal law enforcement continues to struggle with inadequate funding, staffing shortages, and limited forensic tools. This issue is not limited to Tribal LEAs; many non-Tribal law enforcement agencies that serve Indigenous people in cities and towns across the state also face resource deficiencies that hinder investigation and response. These gaps leave families feeling abandoned and forced to seek justice on their own.

⋮ *“Nobody showed up for us, and I was in the middle of the street screaming at everybody, and I was so angry because we had to do this all ourselves.” – Family Interview*

Recommendations for Pursuing Justice


Recommendations found in the literature and heard from service providers, law enforcement officers, family members and survivors echo those in other sections, especially the need to collect better data, increase formal collaboration among LEAs, provide cultural competency and anti-bias training for LEAs and legal professionals, and offer legal guidance for cross-jurisdictional work. Additional suggestions include the following:


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Strengthening Prosecution and Accountability: Reduce prosecution declination rates by increasing resources, training, and collaboration among federal, state, and Tribal authorities.


 **Expanding the Number of Dedicated Prosecutors for Indian Country:** This would help ensure proper investigation and prosecution of MMIWP cases. Programs like the U.S. Department of Justice’s MMIP Regional Outreach Program (2023) should be expanded to enhance responses.

 **Increasing Resources for Tribal Law Enforcement:** Provide funding for Tribal LEAs to improve their investigative capabilities. This includes personnel, training, and forensic tools, which are critical to investigating and prosecuting MMIWP cases.

 **Adopting Federal Guidelines:** Washington should adopt federal Savanna’s Act guidelines to improve responses to MMIWP cases, aligning with recommendations from the Not Invisible Act Commission.

 **Strengthening Tribal Sovereignty:** Increase resources for Tribal courts and law enforcement to exercise their jurisdiction effectively.

 **Federal Oversight:** Revisit unresolved cases through federal oversight to ensure justice is served.

 **Justice-Focused Training:** Expand training focused on justice within Tribal communities. The MMIWP crisis is a result of historical and systemic injustices. Addressing these failures requires significant legal and structural reforms to ensure Indigenous victims receive the justice they deserve. By implementing these recommendations, we can close existing gaps, improve responses, and create a more equitable justice system for Indigenous communities facing this crisis.

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“I think the red tape is real, and the red tape is the genocide. That’s the continuation if these laws aren’t adjusted, you’re continuing to let this problem be a problem.” – Family Member

CONCLUSION

The findings of this report emphasize the urgent need to address the crisis of MMIWP in Washington state. Despite growing awareness and ongoing initiatives, Indigenous communities continue to encounter systemic barriers to justice, including gaps in reporting, limited coordination among agencies, and insufficient resources. These challenges highlight the necessity of sustained efforts, policy reforms, and strengthened collaboration between Tribal, state, and federal entities. Only through dedicated action can justice be found for victims and healing for their families.

Moving forward, it is imperative to enhance data collection, improve interagency communication, and provide culturally appropriate support services for affected families. Community-led initiatives, supported by governmental commitments, must remain central to these efforts to drive meaningful change. By amplifying Indigenous voices and incorporating their perspectives into policymaking, we can build a future where Indigenous people have the respect, agency, and protections they deserve.

This report serves as both a call to action and a testament to the resilience of Indigenous communities and the unrelenting determination of Native families. The stories shared within these pages remind us that behind every statistic is an individual, a family, and a community seeking justice. It is our collective duty to honor their voices and take meaningful steps toward ending this crisis.



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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW METHODOLOGIES

Family and Survivor Interviews

METHODS

Source Selection

The Data and Research Team worked with the MMIWP Data and Research Subcommittee, MMIWP Family Subcommittee, and the Attorney General's Office (AGO) Tribal Liaison and AGO Policy Analyst, with Tribal consultation, to develop the plan to engage family members and survivors impacted by MMIWP. The team worked with six indigenous-serving organizations across Washington, which served as host locations and assisted with recruiting participants. The Data and Research Team and the AGO developed informational materials, handouts, and email language describing the purpose of the interviews, and the host locations shared the information with the people they serve. Interviews were open to any adult who self-identified as being a survivor or family member impacted by the MMIWP crisis. A total of 53 people participated in the family and survivor interviews.

Tools

The Data and Research Team collaborated with the MMIWP Data and Research Subcommittee, Family Subcommittee, AGO Tribal Liaison, and AGO Policy Analyst to develop seven open-ended interview questions to gain knowledge on six learning objectives. The learning objectives were designed by the AGO and Task Force in response to recommendations voiced by the community from the previous Washington MMIWP report (2022). The Data and Research Team, alongside the AGO Tribal Policy Team, developed protocol to uphold culturally appropriate and trauma-informed best practices for the overall interview process including an informed consent document which uses clear communication to explain the goals of the research; the value of the service providers contribution; and an documentation for how the researcher will begin and end the interview. The MMIWP Data and Research Subcommittee, the MMIWP Family Subcommittee, the AGO Tribal Liaison, and the AGO Policy Analyst provided input on the developed materials for the family and survivor interviews and suggestions for appropriate changes. The family and survivor interview tool was finalized after final approval from the AGO.

Collection Procedure

The Data and Research Team, the AGO, and host locations worked together to schedule those who indicated they would like to participate in the MMIWP family and survivor interviews. AGO and the research staff traveled to the host locations throughout the state, spending 2-3 days in each location interviewing participants. Interviews were conducted in private rooms at the host locations.

As recommended by the MMIWP Family Subcommittee, video recording, audio recording, and professional photography services were made available to the interview participants to decrease the burden they have

of retelling their story multiple times and to affirm their agency and ownership of their story. During the consent process, participants chose which, if any, type of recording they wanted, how they wanted the recording to be shared, and if they wanted to receive a professionally edited copy of their interview.

Researchers and AGO staff read the informed consent to each participant and began the interview once they provided written consent. If the participant did not want a visual recording, they asked to consent to have the interview audio recorded solely for note-taking purposes. If the participant declined audio recording, AGO staff were present to take notes on paper. Before beginning the interview, the interviewer reaffirmed the prepared questions were to guide the conversation, but the participant was in control of their story. They could skip questions, return to questions later, take breaks when needed, and end the interview whenever they like. The videographer also took time to explain the recording process and how the equipment worked and answered any questions they had.

The interviews lasted approximately one hour but ranged from 15 minutes to three and a half hours. Support staff from the host locations were onsite to assist the participants at their request. Support included prayer, smudge, companionship, and sharing of resources. After each interview, the research team thanked each person and told them when to expect a final project report. Participants were compensated \$200 for their time. Additionally, small gifts provided by the host locations, the task force, and items provided by the AGO were made available as a “thank you” to take care of the participants. The items included blankets, beadwork, candles, traditional medicines, food, beverages, and other items, as available in each location.

After the interviews were complete, the videographer edited and distributed recordings to participants as they had indicated on their consent forms. The videographer transferred audio files to the Data and Research Team for transcription. Transcripts were redacted of all personally identifying information to protect the participants’ anonymity. All notes taken during the interviews were stored on a secure server, accessible only to research staff associated with this project.

ANALYSIS

Family and survivor interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis (data analysis that identifies common themes across all interviews). Researchers used QDA Miner software to organize, code, and analyze the data. An open-coding reflexive process was used to allow the themes to emerge organically from the data. Once the open coding process was finished, researchers performed second-level axial coding to provide a more focused and systematic examination of the data. Axial coding aims to identify the relationships between the categories and subcategories identified during the open coding process.

Service Provider Interviews

METHODS

Source Selection

The Data and Research Team worked with the MMIWP Data and Research Subcommittee, the AGO Tribal Liaison and AGO Policy Analyst to generate a list of organizations and roles and positions which would

have the most insight or experience with MMIWP family members or survivors. With Tribal consultation and defining parameters of “sufficient,” criteria for inclusion were as follows: (1) Service providers who have sufficient experience working with the twenty-nine (29) Tribes in Washington and (2) Service providers who have sufficient time and/or experience in their positions. Researchers worked with the MMIWP Data and Research Subcommittee, the AGO Tribal Liaison, and the AGO Policy Analyst to define the parameters of “sufficient.”

Researchers contacted each organization by phone or email to describe the purpose of the interview and identify the appropriate service provider to interview. The researchers shared the resulting list of organizations who agreed to participate with the AGO Tribal Liaison and AGO Policy Analyst. After obtaining input on the list and with revisions, researchers then finalized the participant list. All service provider names, contact information and individual interview responses are kept confidential by the research team. Upon conclusion of the project, the research team will destroy all identifying information.

Tools

Researchers worked with the MMIWP Data and Research Subcommittee, AGO Tribal Liaison, and AGO Policy Analyst to develop ten service provider interview questions to gain knowledge on six learning objectives. The learning objectives are in response to recommendations voiced by the community from the previous [Washington MMIWP report \(2022\)](#). The Data and Research Team, alongside the AGO Tribal Policy Team, developed protocol to uphold culturally appropriate and trauma-informed best practices for the overall interview process including an informed consent document which uses clear communication to explain the goals of the research; the value of the service providers contribution; and an documentation for how the researcher will begin and end the interview. The MMIWP Data and Research Subcommittee, AGO Tribal Liaison, and AGO Policy Analyst provided input on the developed materials for the interviews. Researchers finalized the service provider interview tool after final approval from the AGO.

Collection Procedure

Researchers contacted each service provider by phone and/or email to arrange a time to conduct the interview remotely or through a web-based meeting platform. Upon scheduling, the service provider was emailed the interview consent form and interview questions to review and prepare prior to the interview date. At the beginning of the interview, the service provider was read the interview consent form; provided verbal consent for participation and to have the interview audio recorded for note-taking purposes only. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. After each interview, the research team thanked the service provider and told them when to expect a final project report.

The audio recordings were transcribed and then deleted to ensure confidentiality. Information that is not associated with the interview transcription are: service provider’s name, organization and/or contact information. All interview notes taken by researchers were compiled and stored on a secure server. Only research staff associated with this project has access to this server.

ANALYSIS

The Data and Research Team analyzed the service provider interview data using thematic analysis (data analysis that identifies common themes across all interviews) and QDA Miner Lite software to organize, code, and analyze the data. Researchers used an open-coding reflexive process to allow the themes to emerge organically from the data. Once the open coding process was finished, a second-level axial coding was performed to provide a more focused and systematic examination of the data. Axial coding aims to identify the relationships between the categories and subcategories identified during the open coding process.