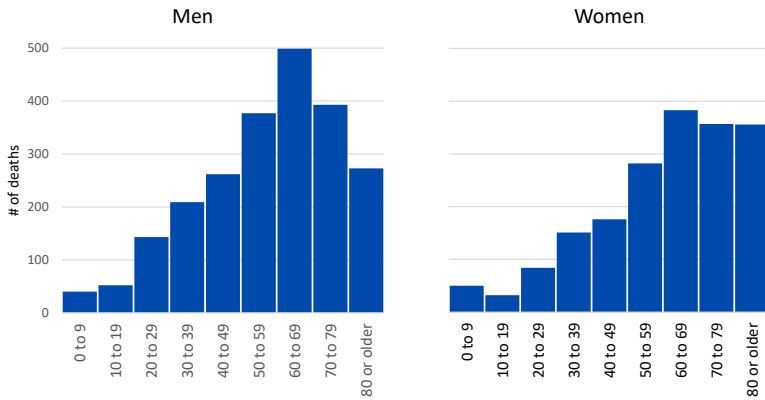


# Common Causes of Death among American Indian people in Montana

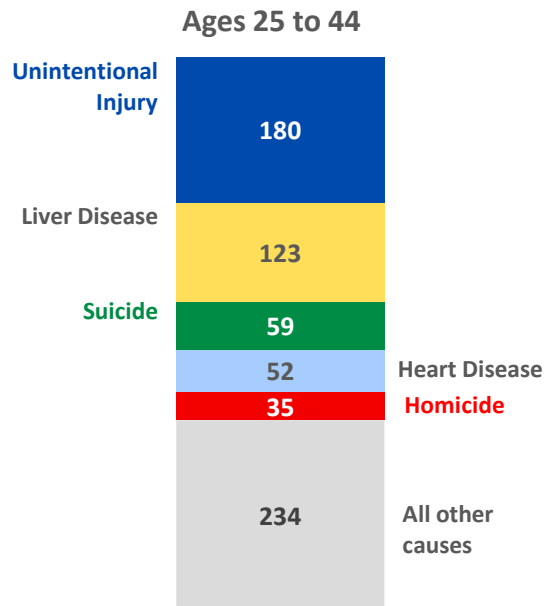
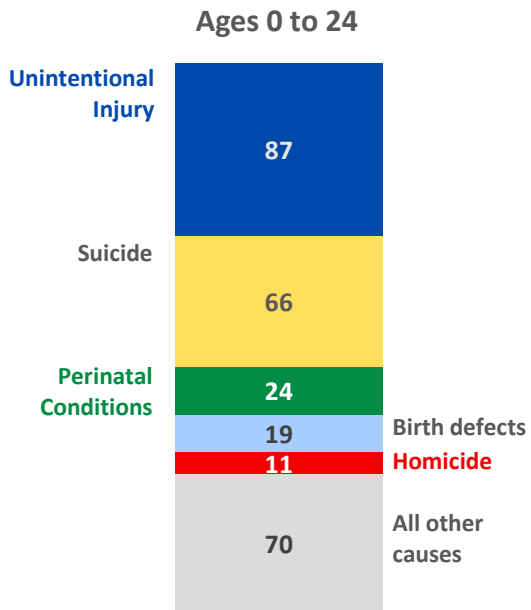


## Age at Death among American Indian (AI) Montanans, 2017 to 2021<sup>1</sup>



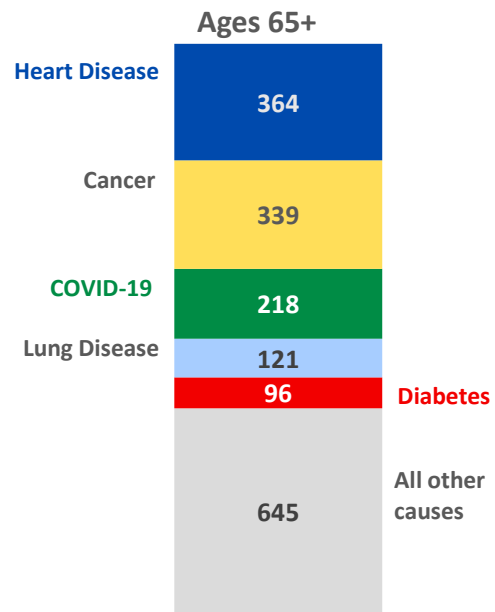
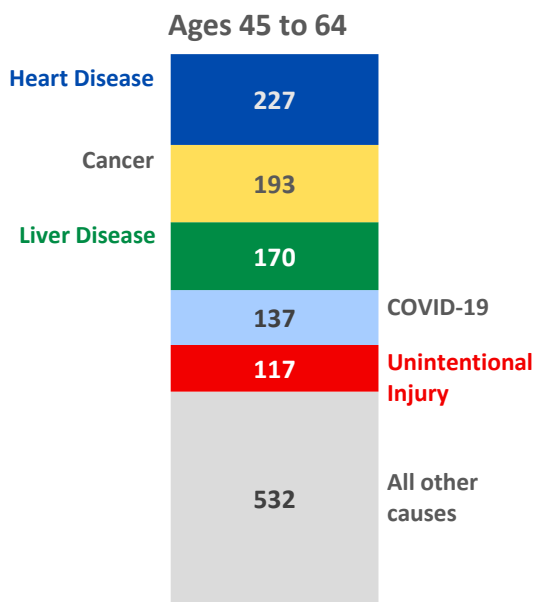
- There were **4,119** deaths among AI Montanans from 2017 to 2021 for an average of about **824 deaths each year**.
- The median age at death was **60 among AI men** and **64 among AI women**. That is 15 years younger than white men and 17 years younger than white women in Montana.
- Most deaths occurred between ages 60 and 69 among both men and women.

## Most Common Causes of Death among AI Montanans by Age at Death, 2017 to 2021<sup>1</sup>



- There were **277** deaths among AI youth aged 0 to 24 years old from 2017 to 2021.
- About **55 deaths each year**
- Unintentional injury and suicide account for more than half of deaths among AI youth in Montana.
- Perinatal conditions were the third most common cause of death and account for most infant deaths. They include conditions that arise anytime from 22 weeks gestation to 7 days after birth. The most common perinatal conditions are related to birth trauma and consequences of preterm birth.
- There were **683** deaths among AI young adults aged 25 to 44 years old from 2017 to 2021.
- About **140 deaths each year**
- Unintentional injury was still the most common cause of death among young adults but suicide dropped to the 3rd most common cause of death.
- Chronic liver disease is the second most common cause of death among AI young adults.
- Heart disease is the fourth most common cause of death among young adults.



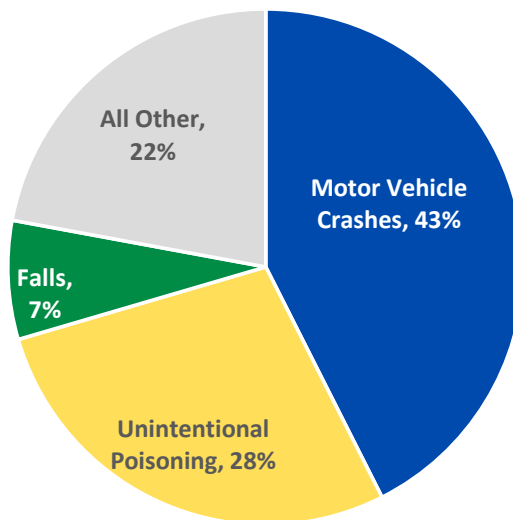


- There were **1,376** deaths among AI middle aged adults, aged 45 to 64 years old from 2017 to 2021.
- About **275 deaths each year**
- Chronic conditions: including heart disease, cancer, and chronic liver disease, account for almost half of death among middle aged AI adults.
- COVID-19 was the fourth most common cause of death.

- There were **1,783** deaths among AI elders aged 65 years or old from 2017 to 2021.
- About **360 deaths each year**
- Chronic conditions: including heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, and diabetes, account for more than half of death among AI elders.
- COVID-19 was the third most common cause of death.

## Causes of Unintentional Injury Deaths<sup>1</sup>

- Unintentional injury is one of the 5 most common causes of death for all age groups less than 65.
- There were **430** unintentional injury deaths among AI Montanans of all ages, about **90 each year**.
- Motor vehicle crashes (MVC) caused 43% of unintentional injury deaths.
- Poisoning was the second most common cause of unintentional injury deaths with nearly all poisonings being caused by drug or alcohol overdoses.
- The most common substances associated with drug overdose deaths are:
  - Methamphetamines
  - Opioids, including fentanyl and heroin
  - Alcohol combined with drugs



- **Young Drivers**  
Nearly 1 in 4 (23%) AI people killed in an MVC were killed in a crash with a young driver (aged 15 to 20)
- **Alcohol-impaired drivers**  
60% of AI people killed in a MVC were killed in a crash that involved an intoxicated driver (BAC of .08+ g/dL)

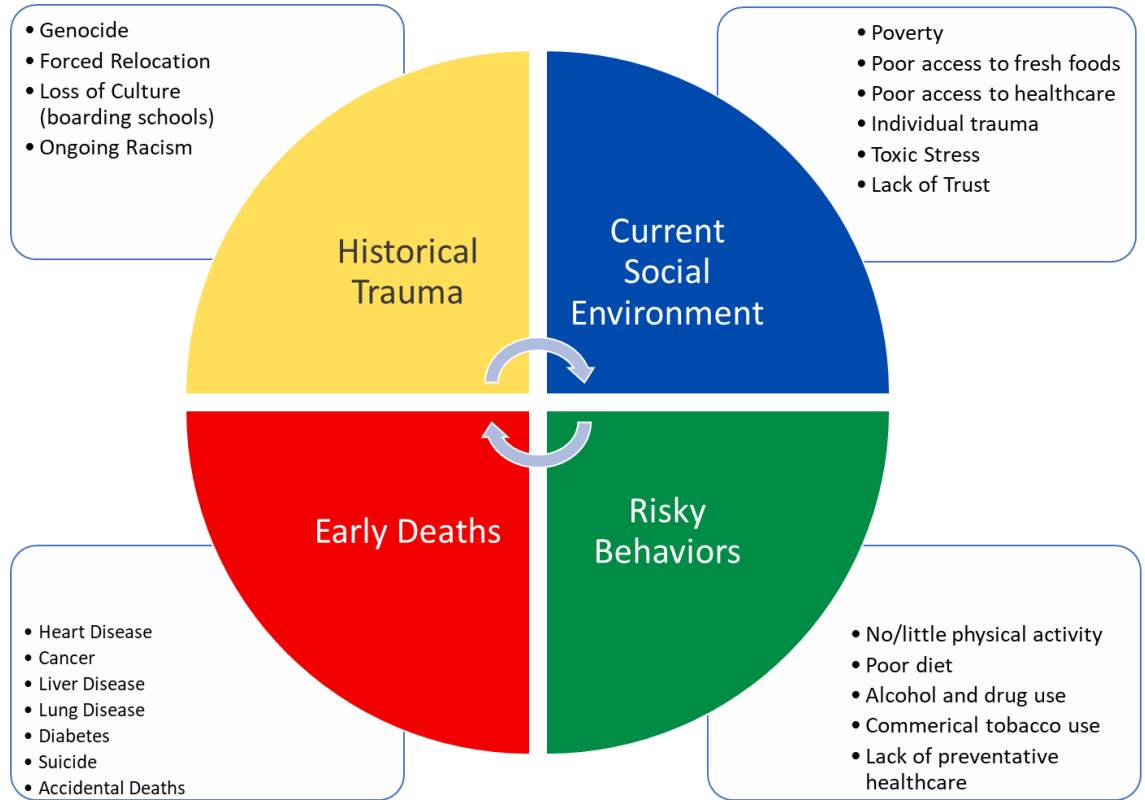
## Common contributing factors to AI MVC deaths<sup>2</sup>

- **Pedestrians**  
Twice as many AI people killed in a MVC were pedestrians compared to all Montanans killed in MVC (14% vs 8%)



# Preventing Deaths Among AI Montanans by Addressing the Foundations of Health Disparities<sup>3</sup>

The most common causes of death in all age group are primarily caused by risk behaviors that can be changed: commercial tobacco use, alcohol use, substance use disorder, poor diet, little or no physical activity, and lack of preventive healthcare such as: vaccines, cancer screening, or treating high blood pressure. **Changing these risky behaviors requires correcting the current social environment and acknowledging the historical trauma that lead to it.**



### 3 Actions to Support American Indian Communities

1) Protect children and integrate traditional tribal practices into everything we do. This will improve their physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health for their whole life.

**45%** of AI adults in Montana reported high HOPE (health outcomes from positive experiences), often or always: feeling safe, feeling like they belong at school, having support from family and friends, and participating in community traditions.<sup>4</sup>

**52%** of AI adults reported less than 4 adverse childhood experiences (ACE): living with someone with mental health or substance abuse problems, living with someone who was incarcerated, having parents who were divorced or separated, witnessing domestic violence, and experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.<sup>4</sup>

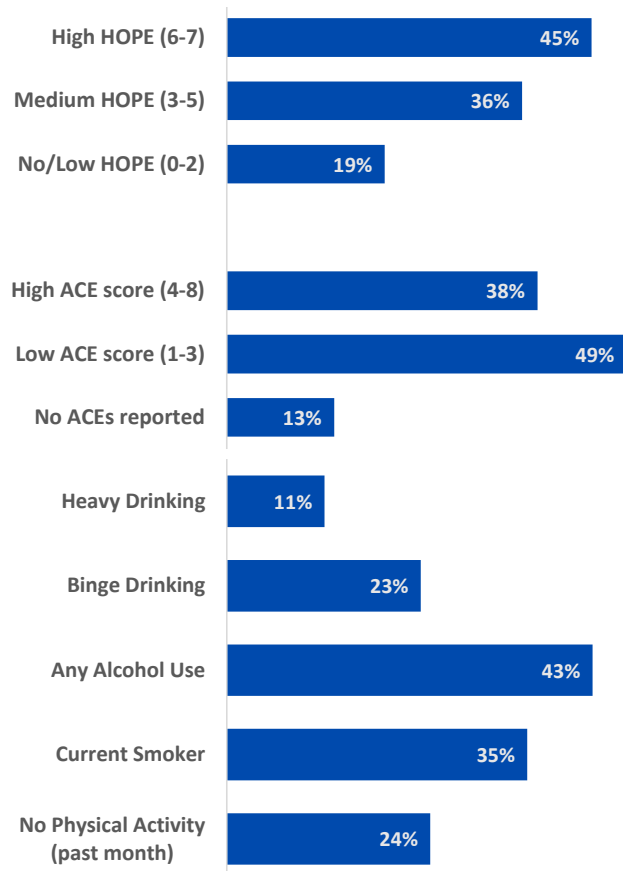
2) Reduce use of alcohol and commercial tobacco products.

**23%** of AI adults reported binge drinking in the past month.<sup>4</sup>

**35%** of AI adults reported currently smoking cigarettes.<sup>4</sup>

3) Promote healthy lifestyles through access to fresh whole foods and safe physical activity.

**24%** of AI adults reporting no physical activity in the past month.<sup>4</sup>



Binge drinking is 4+ drinks for women and 5+ drinks for men on one occasion. Heavy drinking is an average of 8+drinks for women and 15+drinks for men in a week.



## References

- 1) Montana Department of Health and Human Services, Montana Office of Vital Statistics, death data 2017 to 2021.
- 2) National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Fatality Analysis Reporting System, 2017 to 2021. Accessed at <https://cdan.dot.gov/query> in Dec 2023.
- 3) Warne, D., & Lajimodiere, D. (2015). American Indian health disparities: Psychosocial influences. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 9(10), 567-579.
- 4) Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), data from 2019 , 2020 , and 2022.

