A report from the Montana Missing & Murdered Indigenous Persons Advisory Council

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July 2024 – June 2026

Contents

Executive Summary……..……...3
Background 5
Montana's Urban Native Americans 7
Missing in Montana..... 7
Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Advisory Council……8
Table 1: Montana MMIP Advisory Council Members 8
Advisory Council Activities 9
Data Analysis for 2024 & 2025 10
Advisory Council Meetings 17
MMIP Advisory Council Recommendations..... 17

Montana Missing & Murdered Indigenous Persons Advisory Council

Back row left to right: Brandon Walter, Chris Benson, Jesse Lamping, Jen Murphy, Alan Doane, Stacie Four Star, Dr. Haley Omeasoo, Cheryl Horn, Kelly Gilman, Amy Hood-Schwindt, Dr. Babak Nayeri
Front row: Darci Humphrey, Brian Frost, Jody LaMere, Lea Wetzel, Sarah Wolf Tail

Executive Summary

The Montana State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee began studying the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women issue in 2017 and has sustained their work with successful bills in the 2019, 2021, 2023, and 2025 Legislative Sessions. The Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force was initially appointed and began their work in 2019 and reported to State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee (STRC) in September 2020. Attorney General Knudsen re-appointed the Advisory Council members in June 2021 and again in June of 2023. A report was provided to the State Tribal-Relations Committee covering Advisory Council activities conducted in 2024. This report provides an overview of Advisory Council activities from July 1, 2024 to present. During the 2025 Legislative Session, the Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force was changed to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Advisory Council to better describe the purpose of the body and increase the scope.

During the 2023 Legislative Session, House Bill 163 was passed and signed into law to extend the Advisory Council for 10 years. Since then, the Advisory Council met regularly to discuss related business as prescribed by HB 163.

During the 2025 Legislative Session, two bills were passed that guided the Advisory Council's work during this reporting period. House Bill 83 created a state special revenue account allowing the Advisory Council to accept donations, grants, and other funds.

House Bill 545 restructured the Advisory Council by adding in the aspect of murdered Indigenous persons to the group, including a homicide investigator to the group, and requiring the members to provide recommendations on how to combat the issue to the appropriate federal agencies. HB 545 also changed the name from Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Advisory Council and revised membership and membership duties.

Advisory Council meetings were conducted on:

- August, September, October, and November of 2024
- January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, and December of 2025
- January, February, March, April, May, and June of 2026

Background

Montana is a large geographic area with a relatively low population density. Montana's 145,522 square mile area, and an estimated 1.13 million people, leaves approximately 7.4 people per square mile. (United States Census Bureau 2020) This situation offers a unique and challenging venue to address the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons issue.

Montana Tribal Communities

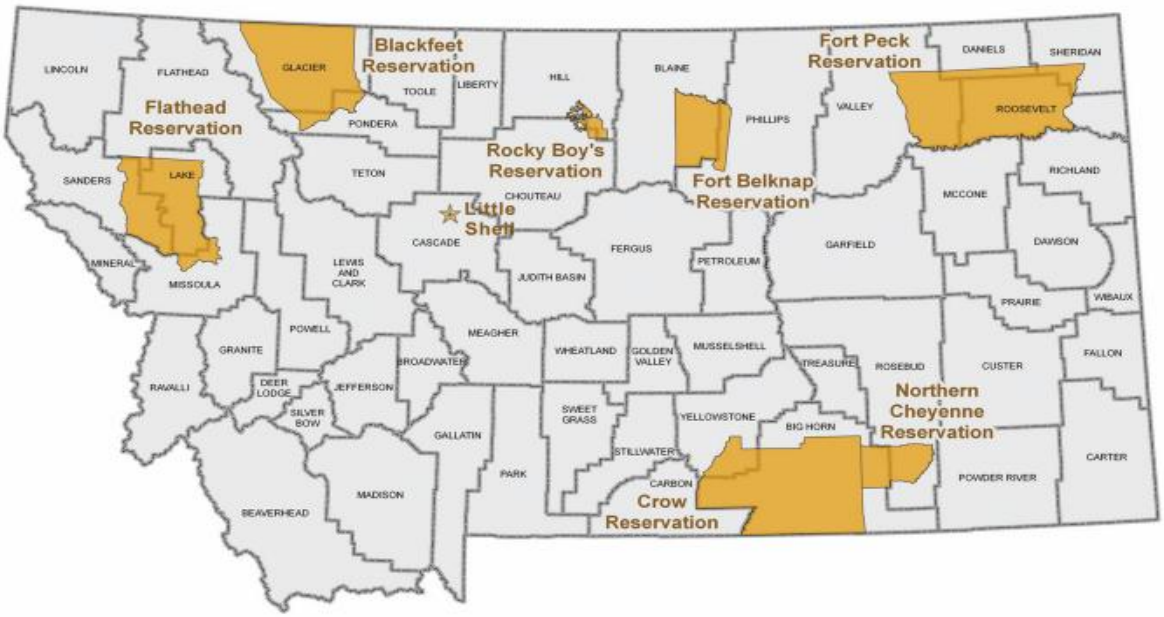


Image source: (2023 State-Tribal Relations Report)

Montana is home to 8 Federally recognized Indian Tribes.

- Blackfeet Reservation
  - Home of the Blackfeet Nation, headquartered in Browning, Montana.
  - Blackfeet Nation is one of the 10 largest tribes in the United States.
  - Of the approximately 15,560 enrolled tribal members, there are about 7,000 living on or near the reservation. (tribalnations.mt.gov)
  - The Blackfeet Reservation is situated in Northwestern Montana, within Glacier and Pondera Counties.
- Crow Reservation
  - Home of Crow Nation, headquartered in Crow Agency, Montana.
  - Crow Reservation is approximately 3.5 million acres and is home to approximately 10,000 or more enrolled members who live on or near the reservation. (tribalnations.mt.gov)
  - The Crow Reservation is situated in Southcentral Montana, within Bighorn, Yellowstone, and Treasure Counties.

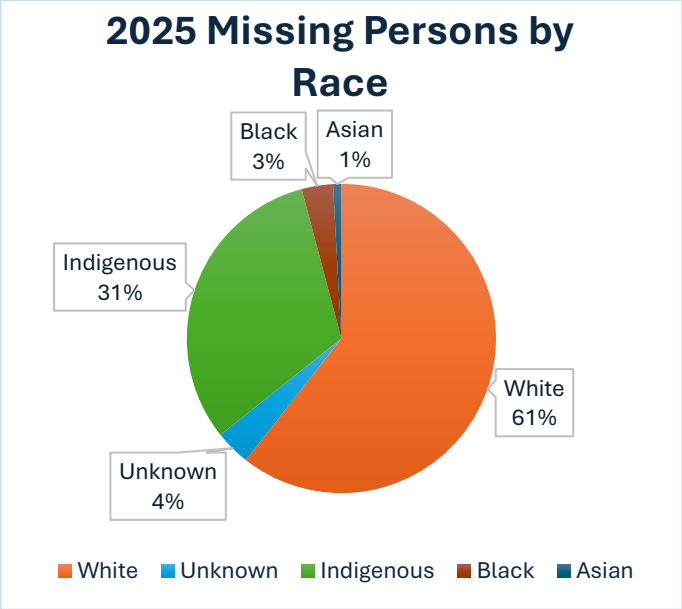
- Flathead Reservation
    - Home of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, headquartered in Pablo, Montana.
    - Of the approximately 7,753 enrolled tribal members, about 5,000 live on or near the reservation. (tribalnations.mt.gov)
    - The Flathead Reservation is situated in Northwest Montana, within Missoula, Lake, Flathead, and Sanders Counties.
- Fort Belknap Indian Community
    - Home to the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes, headquartered in Fort Belknap Agency, Montana.
    - Combined enrollment is approximately 4,000. (tribalnations.mt.gov)
    - Fort Belknap Indian Community is situated in Northcentral Montana, within Blaine and Phillips Counties.
- Fort Peck Reservation
    - Home of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, headquartered in Poplar, Montana.
    - About 6,800 members live on Fort Peck, with an estimated 3,900 living off the reservation. (tribalnations.mt.gov)
    - Fort Peck Reservation is situated in Northeastern Montana, within Roosevelt, Daniels, Sheridan, and Valley Counties.
- Little Shell Chippewa Tribe
    - The Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians is a band of the Chippewa Indians, headquartered in Great Falls, Cascade County, Montana.
    - There are an estimated 4,500 enrolled members. (tribalnations.mt.gov)
- Northern Cheyenne Reservation
    - Home to one of several bands of Cheyenne Peoples, headquartered in Lame Deer, Montana
    - There are approximately 11,266 enrolled members with about 5,012 living on the reservation. (tribalnations.mt.gov)
    - The Northern Cheyenne Reservation is situated in Southeast Montana, within Big Horn and Rosebud Counties.
- Rocky Boy's Reservation
    - Home of the Chippewa Cree Tribe, headquartered in Rocky Boy's Agency, Montana.
    - Rocky Boy's provides a home for about 2,500 members of the Chippewa-Cree tribe. (tribalnations.mt.gov)
    - The Rocky Boy's Reservation is situated in Northcentral Montana, within Hill and Choteau Counties.

Montana's Urban Native Americans

Montana's urban and suburban areas account for a large portion of the Native American population. Urban Indian Centers are established in Billings, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, and Missoula to service the urban Native American population. American Indian and Alaska Natives make up an estimated 6.5% of Montana's population (United States Census Bureau 2020), yet accounted for 31% of missing persons reported to the Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse in 2025.

Missing in Montana

In 2025, 1,957 persons were reported missing to the Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse; 1,339 were non-Indigenous, 618 were Indigenous. (Montana Depatment of Justice 2025). These numbers remained consistent in previous years of study.



Thanks to efforts of Montana Law Enforcement Agencies, federal partners, local search and rescue groups, and community planners, 1,947 of the 1,957 people reported to the Missing Persons Clearinghouse in 2025 have been located. That is a 99.5% clearance rate. (Montana Depatment of Justice 2025)

Response programs available through the Montana DOJ include:

1. Criminal Justice Information Network (CJIN) – the state's link to the FBI's National Crime Information Center
2. Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse (MMPC) – the database of missing persons in Montana
3. Montana Missing Person System (MMPS) – a searchable website providing information on Montana's missing persons
4. AMBER Alert – a national public alert system that provides notification of the abduction of a child under life-threatening circumstances
5. MEPA – Missing Endangered Persons Advisory: a statewide alert system that provides notification of a missing person in danger
6. DOJ Office of the Child and Family Ombudsman (OCFO) – an entity to which the state Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) is required to report missing children who receive services through CFSD.

Montana Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Advisory Council

Legislation requires a representative from each of the state's eight federally recognized tribes, a representative from the Attorney General's Office, a representative from the Montana Department of Justice who has expertise in the subject of missing persons, the Office of Public Instruction, and the Montana Highway Patrol. In 2019, the Advisory Council identified the need to include representatives from the United States Attorney General's Office (Montana District) and Indian Health Services. In 2025, The Legislature removed the requirement for the Montana Highway Patrol on the Advisory Council and replaced them with a homicide investigator. The Advisory Council met throughout the following year to discuss the many issues that arise when community members go missing.

Table 1: Montana MMIP Advisory Council Members

Name	Organization
Sarah Wolf Tail (primary) Lea Wetzel (alternate)	Blackfeet
Pending	Crow Nation
Danielle Matt (primary) Martin Charlo (alternate)	Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Cheryl Horn (primary) Tina Bierle (alternate	Fort Belknap Indian Community
Stacey FourStar (primary) Pending (alternate)	Fort Peck Tribes
Iris Kill Eagle (primary) Colleen Hill (alternate)	Little Shell Tribe
Yolanda Fraser (primary) Paula Carter (alternate)	Northern Cheyenne
Jody LaMere (primary) Pending (alternate)	Rocky Boy's
Brian Frost	Crime Information Bureau Chief, Montana Division of Criminal Investigation.
Chris Benson	Major Case Agent Montana Division of Criminal Investigation
Alan Doane	Montana Attorney General's Office
Dr. Brooke Gondara	Office of Public Instruction
Dr. Paula Carter Dr. Babak Nayeri	Indian Health Services
Pending	US Attorney's Office District of Montana
Dr. Haley Omeasoo	Ohkomi Forensics
Jesse Lamping	MMIP Advisory Council Coordinator
Scott Roberts Maggie Baucom	Unchained
Pending	Federal Bureau of Investigation

Advisory Council Activities

In-Person Meetings (June 2025 and June 2026)

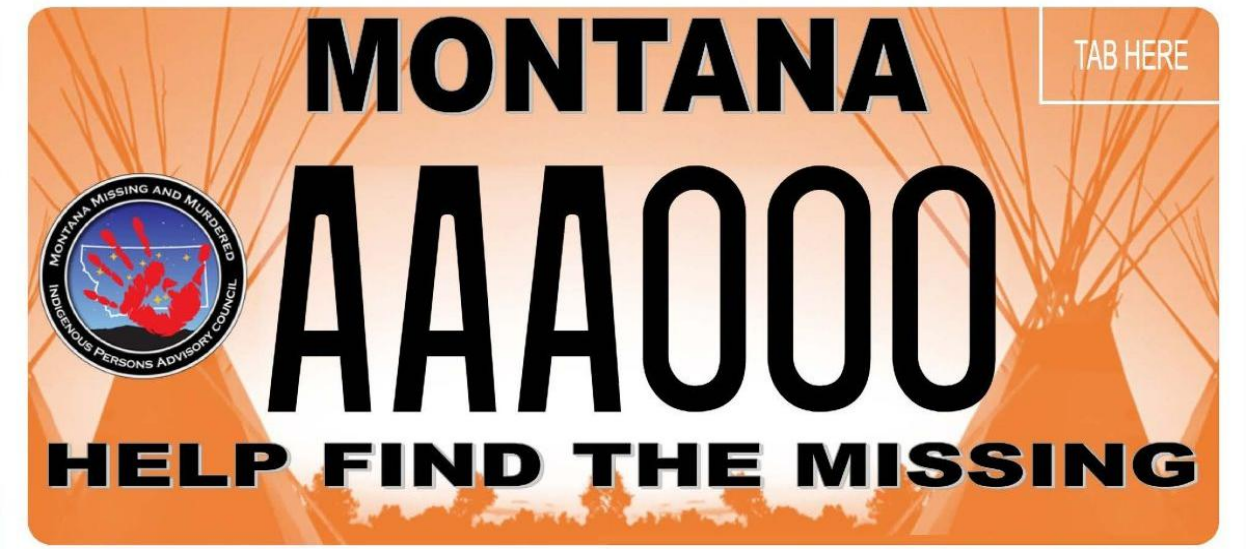
The MMIP Advisory Council convened in-person meetings in June 2025 and June 2026 to carry out its statutory responsibilities, review ongoing initiatives, and discuss emerging needs related to missing and murdered Indigenous persons in Montana. These meetings provided an opportunity for members to engage in detailed discussions, receive updates from partner agencies, and coordinate efforts to strengthen statewide response and prevention strategies. Advisory Council members also used these sessions to plan upcoming activities, identify areas for improvement, and ensure continued collaboration with Tribal nations, state agencies, and community organizations.

Development of the MMIP Advisory Council Website

The Advisory Council successfully developed and launched a MMIP Advisory Council website, www.mtmissing.org, to improve public access to information, resources, and Advisory Council activities. The website serves as a centralized location for meeting materials, updates on ongoing initiatives, contact information, and publicly available data and resources related to MMIP efforts in Montana.

Creation of the MMIP Awareness License Plate

The Advisory Council designed and created an MMIP awareness sponsored license plate to support increased visibility and public awareness across the state. This initiative was developed as a way to honor missing and murdered Indigenous individuals, promote statewide recognition of the issue, and generate long-term support for MMIP-related programs. The license plate provides Montanans the opportunity to demonstrate awareness and solidarity while contributing to continued education and outreach efforts. For a $35 fee, the license plate is available for purchase when registering or renewing registration for Montana vehicles at the County Treasurer's office.



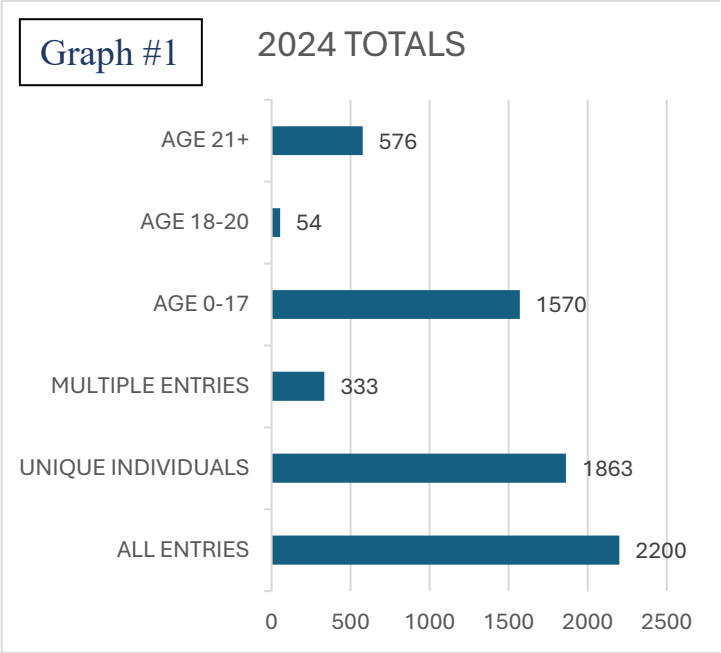
Data Analysis for 2024 & 2025

The Montana Department of Justice Missing Persons Specialist supports the work of the Advisory Council through regular updates of data from the Montana Missing Persons Database. The following graphs provide the 2024 and 2025 information required for this report. The data is from the Montana Missing Persons System (MMPS) housed in the Montana Department of Justice.

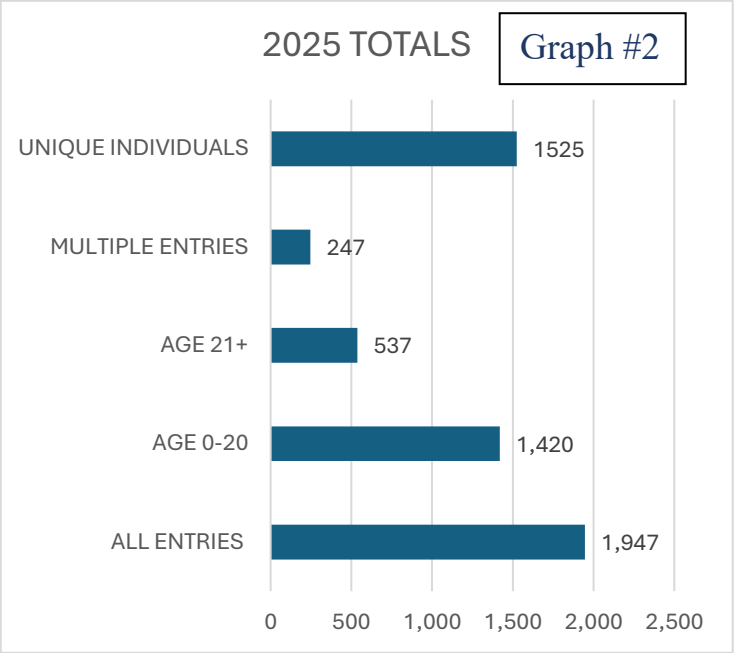
Graphs #1 & #2 represent the total entries in 2024 & 2025 and separates all entries by unique individuals. The graph further illustrates the age ranges for missing persons entered in the database. There was a total of 2,200 missing person entries in 2024 & a total of 1,947 missing persons entered in 2025. The number of unique individuals reported to MMPS in 2024 is 1,863 or **84.7%** of all missing person entries in 2024. The number of unique individuals reported to MMPS in 2025 is 1,525 or **78.3%** of all missing person entries in 2025.

During analysis, it was discovered that some individuals were reported missing more than one time during the reporting period, and some individuals were reported missing numerous times. Graph #1 & #2 separates "unique" individuals from the total of all entries to paint a more accurate reflection of the data.

Graph #1

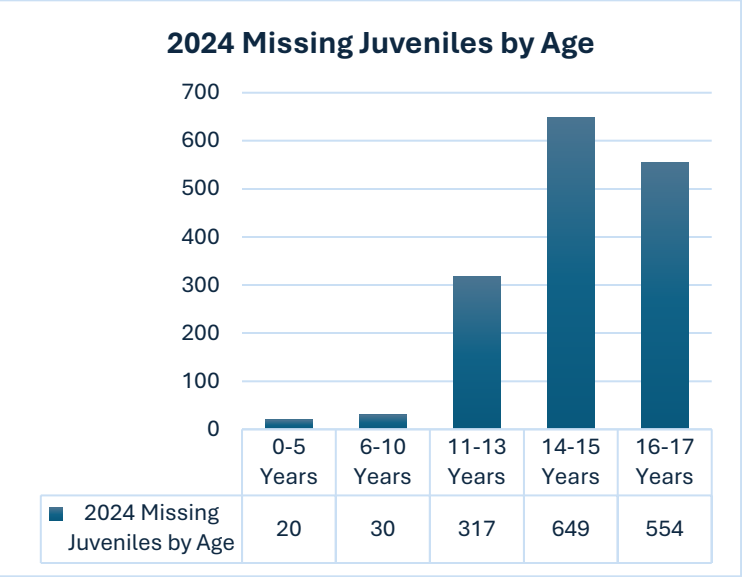


Graph #2



Graphs #3 and #4 represent missing juveniles in 2024, contrasted with missing Indigenous juveniles in 2024. Persons under the age or 21 represent 72.5% of those reported missing in 2025.

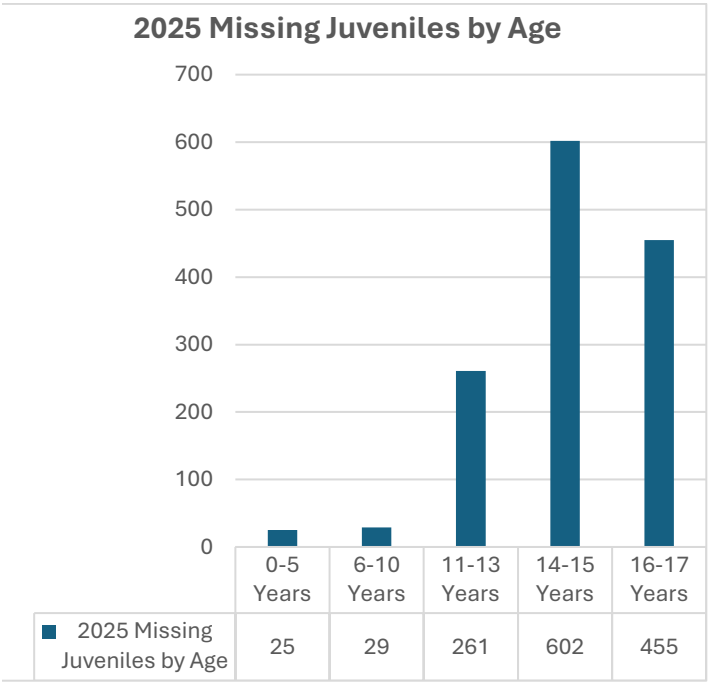
Graph #3



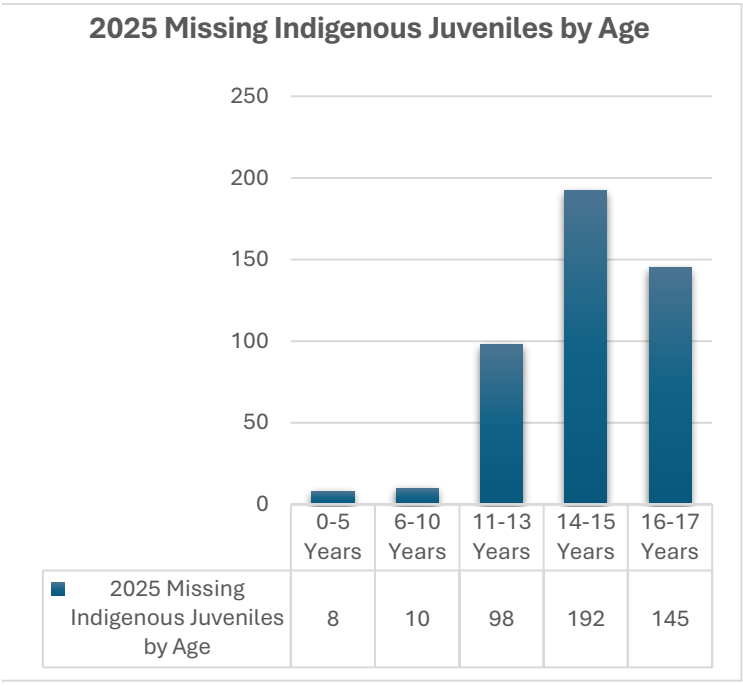
Graph #4

Graphs #5 and #6 represent missing juveniles in 2025, contrasted with missing Indigenous juveniles in 2025. Persons under the age or 21 represent 73.8% of those reported missing in 2025

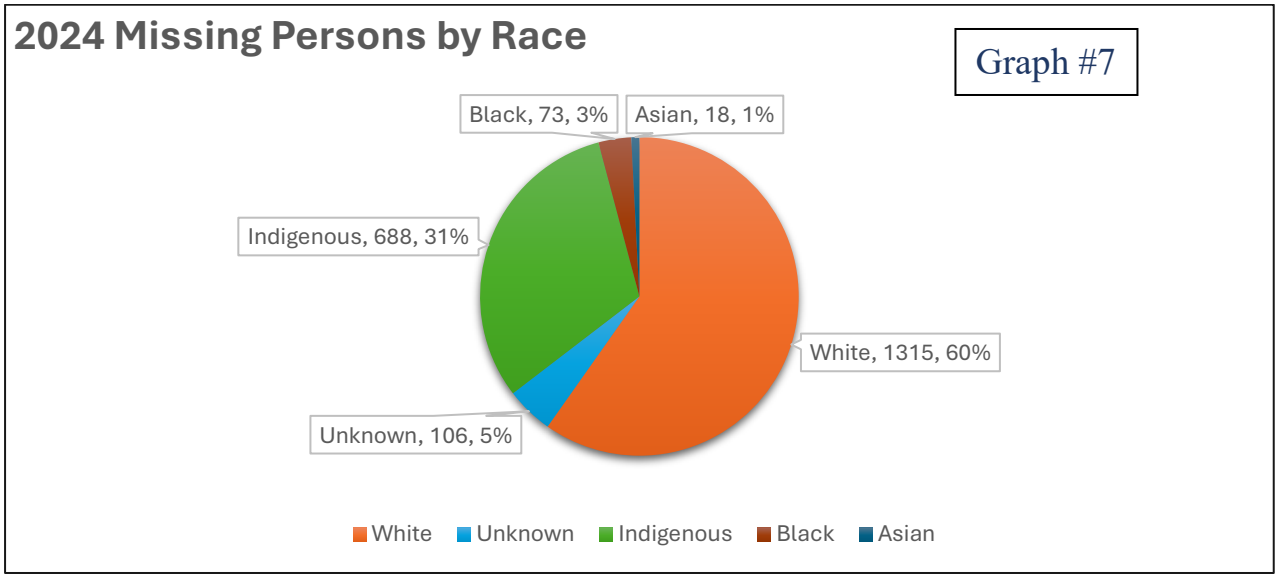
Graph #5

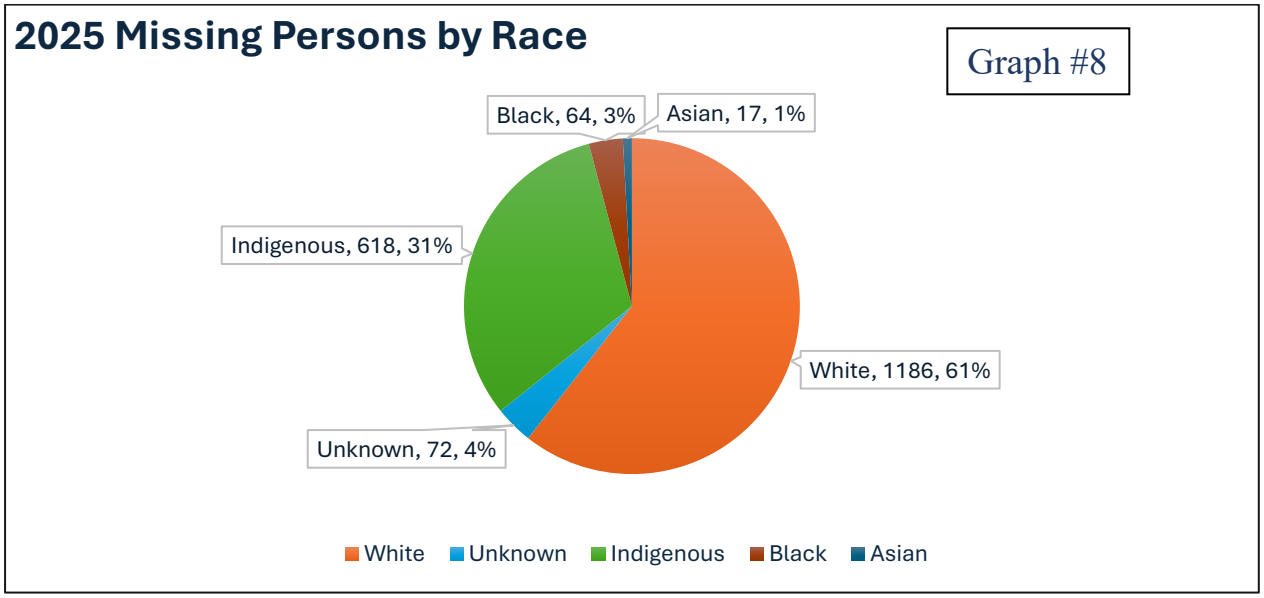


Graph #6

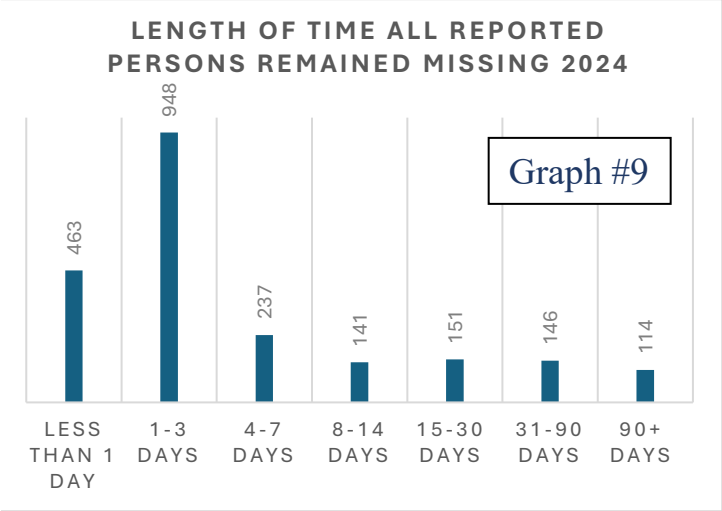


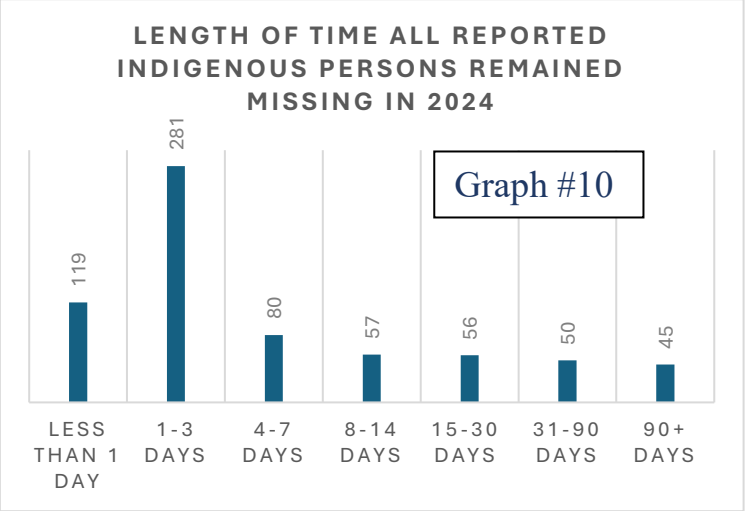
Graphs #7 & #8 represent missing persons categorized by race in 2024 & 2025. Caucasians represented the greatest percentage of missing persons with 1,386 reported in 2024 and 1,186 in 2025. Indigenous persons were the next highest percentage of missing persons in represented by racial group at 688 in 2024 and 618 in 2025. Missing persons in the remaining racial groups include 73 Black, 18 Asian and 106 unknown in 2024. While in 2025, the remaining racial groups of missing persons in include 64 Black, 17 Asian and 72 Unknown. It should be noted that there is no mechanism to designate mixed race individuals except as "Unknown", which is also used when Race is in fact unknown.

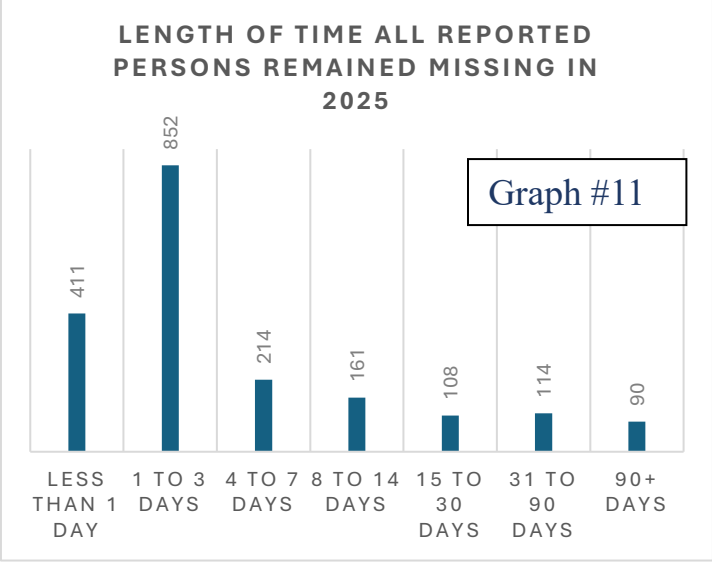


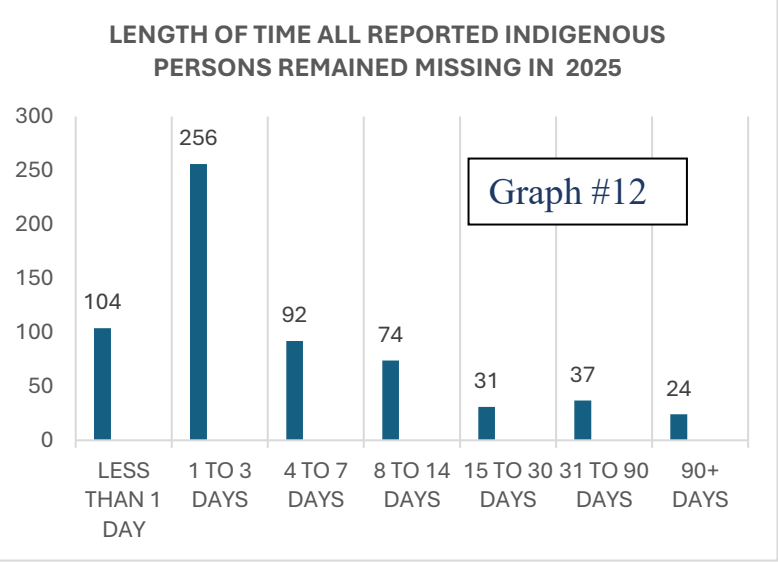


Graphs #9 through #12 refer to length of time all reported person remained missing compared to the length of time Indigenous persons remained missing. Nearly 75% of persons reported missing in 2024 were resolved within one week. In 2024, the average time all reported persons remained missing is 15 days. In 2024, the average time reported Indigenous persons remained missing is 12.5 days. 75.4% of persons reported missing in 2025 were resolved within one week. In 2025, the average time all reported persons remained missing is 16.5 days. In 2025, the average time reported Indigenous persons remained missing is 12 days for all & 10.5 days for Indigenous persons. The median remains firmly in the 1 to 3 days category, as over 64.3% of all individuals are located within the first 3 days.

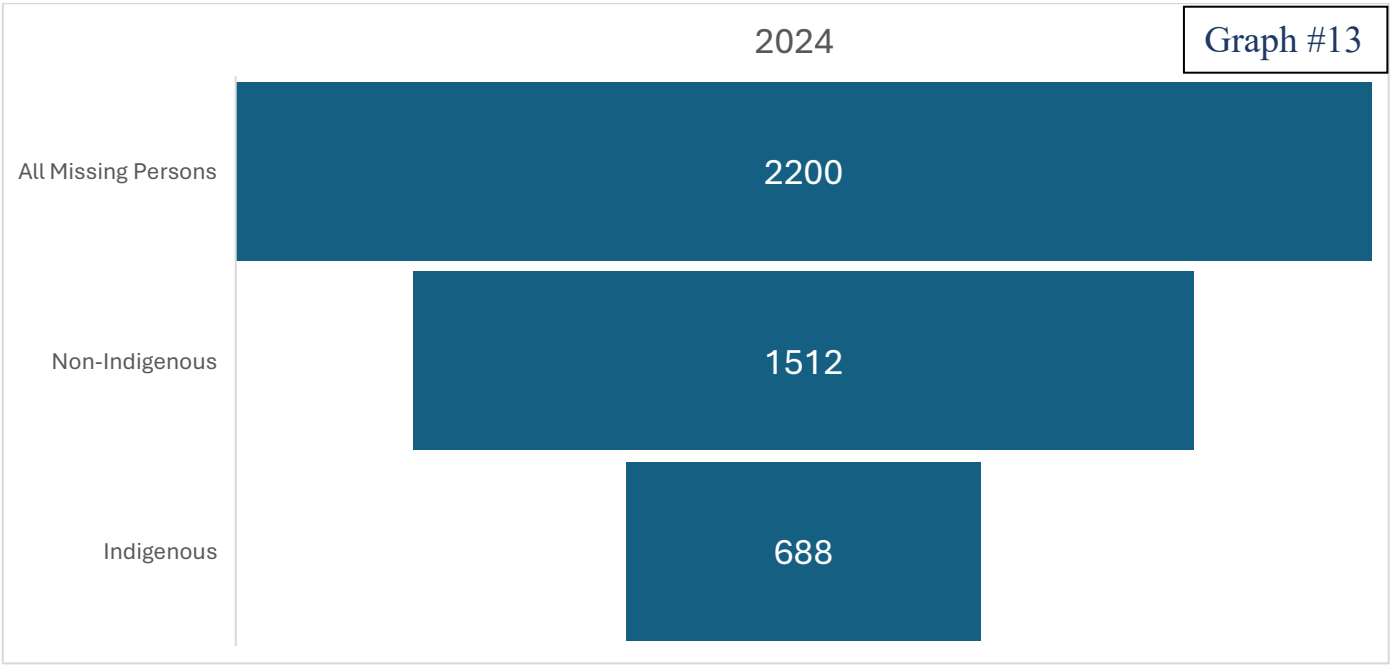


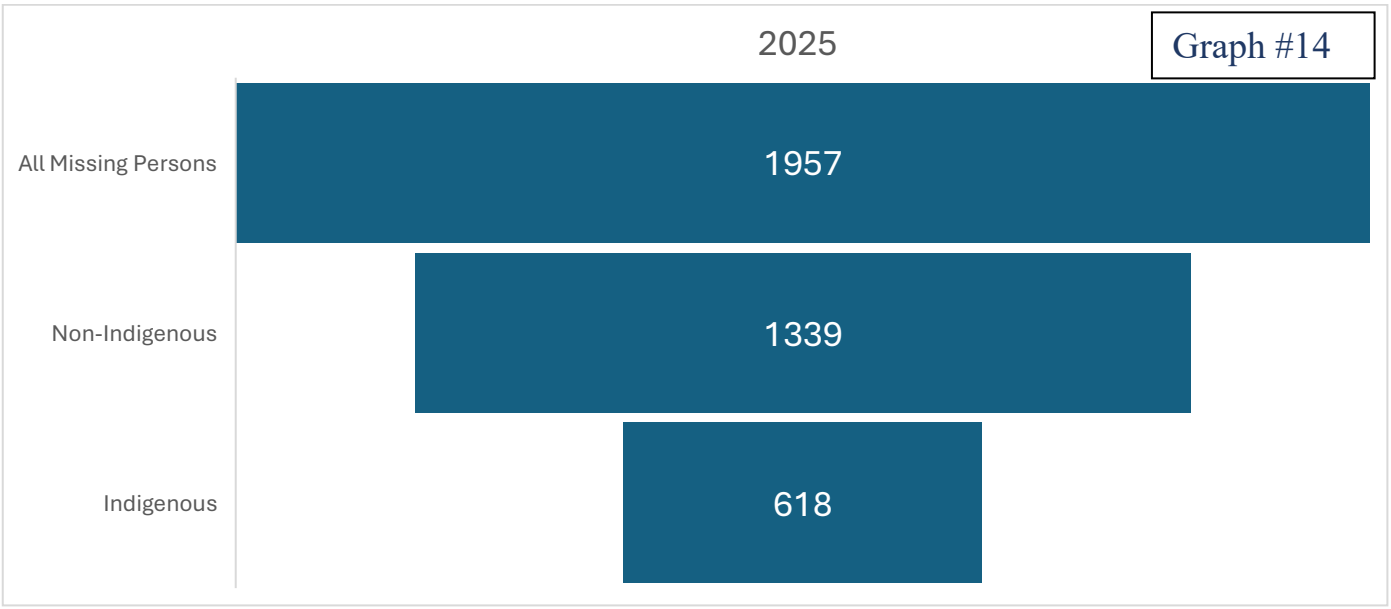






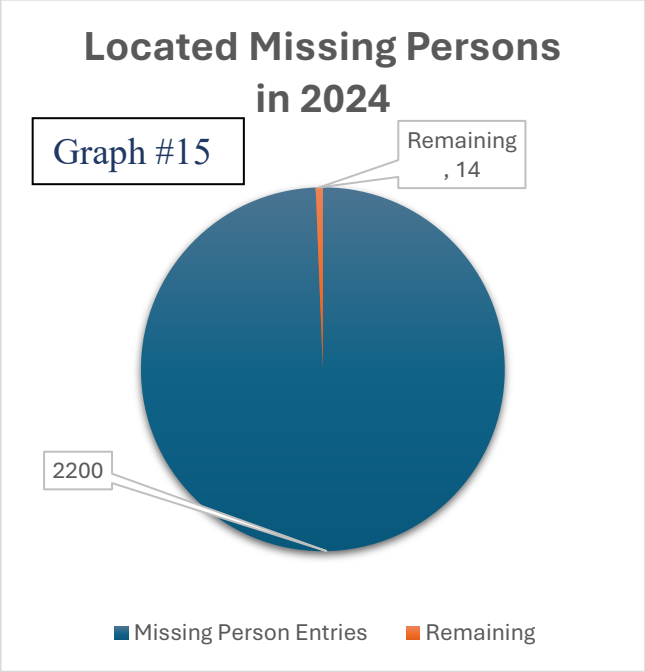
Graphs #13 & #14 depict a snapshot of the 2024 & 2025 missing Indigenous persons. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Indigenous persons make up approximately 6.2% of Montana's population. According to 2024 Montana missing person entries, Indigenous persons were exactly 31.2% of missing persons. Indigenous missing person entries made up 31.5% of all entries in 2025.



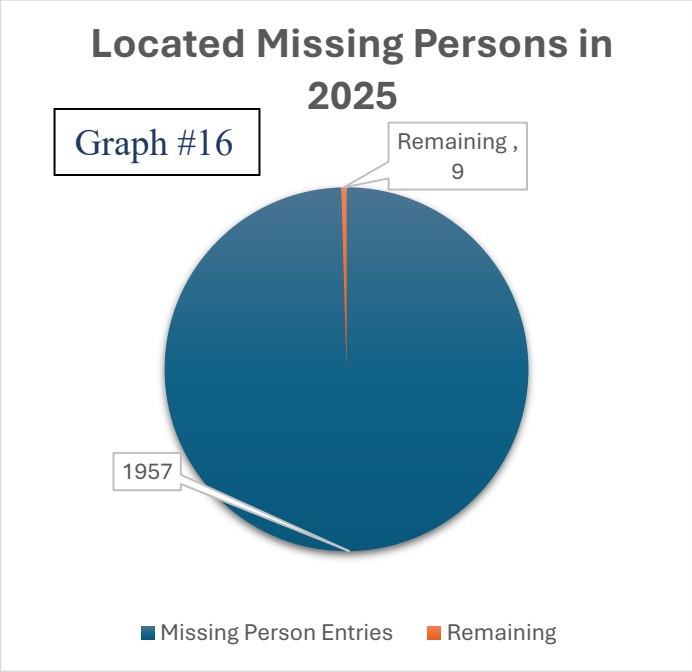


Graph #15 & #16 illustrates the number of missing persons located in 2024 & 2025.

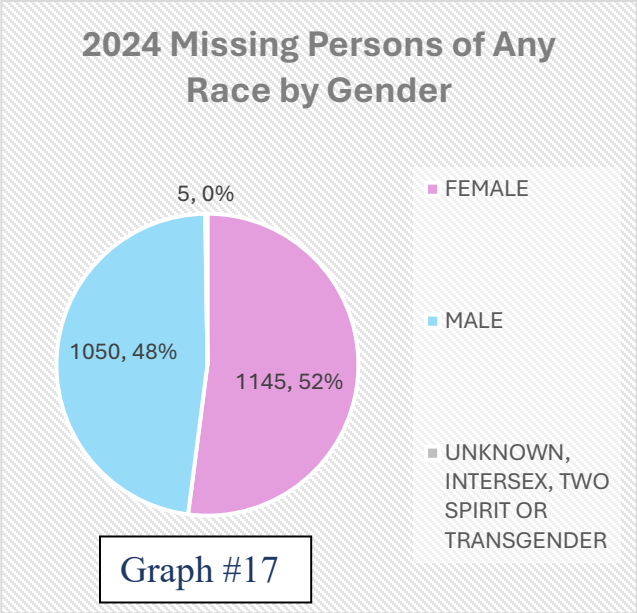
Graph #15



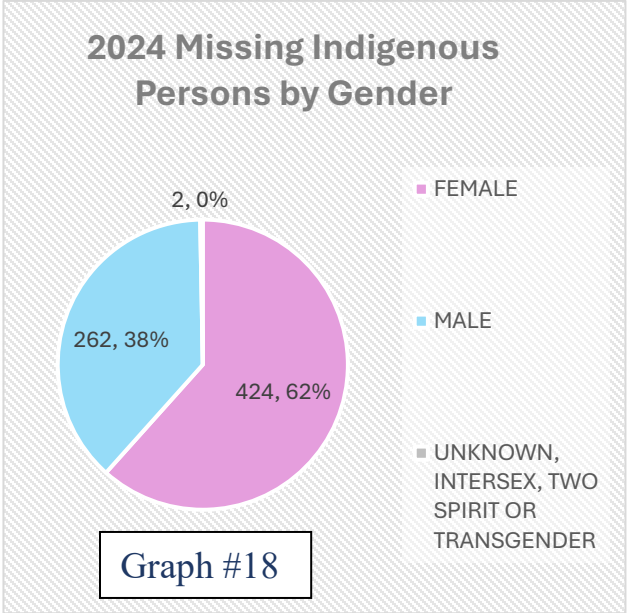
Graph #16



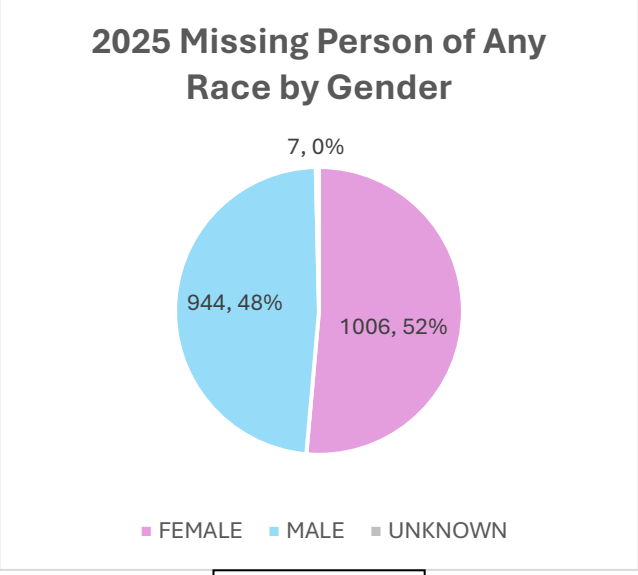
Graphs #17 through #20 depict missing persons categorized by gender. Graph #17 represents all missing persons reported in 2024, 52% female & 48% male. Graph #18 represents all missing Indigenous persons reported in 2024, 62% female and 38% male. Graph #19 represents all missing persons reported in 2025, 52% female and 48% male. Graph #20 represents all missing Indigenous persons reported in 2025, 60% female and 40% male.



Graph #17



Graph #18



Graph #19

Graph #20

Advisory Council Meetings

The membership held a vote to conduct monthly meetings on the third Tuesday of every month. Because of the size of the state, and available technology, the group decided these meetings would be held via Zoom. Since August 2024, 22 meetings have been held. Meetings were scheduled each month at 1:00pm and planned to last approximately two hours.

The meeting times were posted to the state calendar each month and opened to the public to attend. A general structure for the meeting was created to keep the flow of the gathering on task. The structure was as follows:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Presiding Officer Updates
- Data Review
- Stakeholders
- Public Comment
- Old Business
- New Business

MMIP Advisory Council Recommendations

Per statute, one of the Advisory Council's responsibilities is to make recommendations to the State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee. The current Advisory Council passed three recommendations:

Recommendation #1: The Advisory Council seeks to adopt language in its guiding legislation (MCA 44-2-411), to enable the Advisory Council the authority to spend the funds that they raise.

Rationale #1: The Advisory Council currently does not have the spending authority to spend the funds that it raises through private donation. The Advisory Council seeks to adopt language in its guiding legislation, MCA 4-2-411, to enable the Advisory Council the authority to spend all funds the Council receives.

Recommendation #2: The Advisory Council seeks to establish mandatory statewide reporting requirements for all unidentified human remains that are not deemed historic. It directs medical examiners and law enforcement agencies to submit records of unidentified human remains to the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) within reasonable timelines.

Rationale #2: Mandatory statewide reporting for unidentified human remains will help bridge the gap between missing persons and unidentified remains statewide. Currently, there is no requirement for law enforcement agencies or the State Crime Lab to enter remains into NCIC. This is intended to improve identification rates, ensure dignity and respectful handling of remains, enhance interagency coordination, and provide families with answers.

Recommendation #3: The Advisory council seeks a joint resolution that requests an interim study to examine fraudulent and deceptive treatment clinics abusing Montana's citizens.

Rationale #3: This joint resolution calls for an interim study to examine fraudulent or deceptive substance use disorder treatment practices impacting Montana residents, including unlicensed facilities, misleading recruitment, improper insurance enrollment, and billing fraud.

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House Bill 83. 2025. HB83 (69th Legislature).

House Bill 545. 2025. HB545 (69th Legislature)