

By the Numbers

Snapshot of urban American Indian and Alaska Native (Native) people in Seattle and King County, Washington

NATIONWIDE, 76% OF NATIVE PEOPLE LIVE IN URBAN AREAS.¹

Urban Native people are tribal people that live off of federally defined tribal lands. As a result of the chronic underfunding of trust and treaty obligations, institutional racism, and inequitable practices of governments, urban Native people experience significant disparities in health, housing, education, and economic outcomes, yet also demonstrate health resiliencies.²

Seattle-King County is home to a diverse and thriving urban Native community. This includes the Coast Salish tribal nations that have stewarded these lands since time immemorial and tribal people from across Indian Country.



Urban Native Population

- **55,940 Native people live in King County comprising 2% of the population,⁶ and 37,684 Native people live in the city of Seattle comprising 0.5% of the total population.⁷** Despite inadequate data collection and undercounts due to racial misclassification, Native people are fastest growing multi-race population across the nation.⁸
- **The Native population in King County is young.** 36.1% of Native people are under the age of 25, compared to 23.9% of Non-Hispanic White people.⁹

Social Determinants of Health

Urban Natives face pervasive inequities across social determinants of health including access to housing, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

- **Among American Indian and Alaska Native people, positive rates for COVID-19 are 1.5 times higher than Non-Hispanic white people,** with hospitalization rates 1.8 times higher than Non-Hispanic white people, and related mortality rates 1.3 times higher than Non-Hispanic White people.¹⁰
- **Native people experience higher rates of unemployment (8.5%),** compared to Non-Hispanic White people (4.3%).¹¹
- **Urban Native people experience higher rates of housing insecurity than Non-Hispanic White people.** In King County, Urban Natives are 1.7 times more likely to rent their home than Non-Hispanic White people.¹²

Indigenous Resilience in Health

In King County, Urban Indian Organizations come together for political and social change to improve the wellbeing of our relatives through housing, nutrition services, childcare, and education, and healthcare.

- **>95% of Native residents aged 12 and older have at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose;** 89.9% have completed their vaccine series.³
- **Obesity rates for Native people have declined by 50%** compared to the stable obesity rates within the general population in King County.⁴
- **Native people in higher education has increased 172%** from 2016 to 2019.⁵



- **Urban Native people have lower rates of health insurance** compared to Non-Hispanic White people, despite persistent disparities in health. In King County, 19% of urban Natives are uninsured compared to 5% of Non-Hispanic White people.¹³ The proportion of uninsured Native children (0-18 years old) is 5.9 times higher than Non-Hispanic White children.
- **Urban Native people make up about 15% of the population experiencing homelessness**, but just 2% of the general population.¹⁴
- **Urban Native people in King County lack permanent residence (30%)**, with 25% living in transitional housing, and 21% living in tents or unsheltered.¹⁵

Economic Inequality

Across household types in King County, Native people disproportionately experience poverty.

- **22.7% of urban Native people live in poverty** compared to 6.9% for Non-Hispanic White people.¹⁶
- **Nearly one in five Native children aged 17 and under (19.3%) live in households with an income below the federal poverty level.** This proportion is 3.7 times that of Non-Hispanic White people (5.2%).¹⁷
- **Nearly one in six Native families (16.1%) live in poverty**, which is 4.8 times the proportion of Non-Hispanic Whites (3.3%).¹⁸

Mortality

Mortality data is a way to measure the burden of disease in a community. Tracking death rates may identify groups that are at an increased risk for premature death and identify more prevalent diagnosis resulting in death in certain populations. High mortality rates may indicate an issue with environmental factors, communicable diseases, risk factors, and/or socioeconomic factors. Notably, racial misclassification leads to an underestimation of mortality rates in Native populations.

- **Maternal mortality is significantly higher for Native people** at a rate 2.3 higher than Non-Hispanic White people nationally.¹⁹
- **Infant mortality was 3 times higher among urban Natives than Non-Hispanic Whites in King County.**²⁰ In King County, one in six women experience a preterm birth.²¹

Top Causes of Urban Native Mortality²²

1. *Vascular disease* affects your body's network of blood vessels.
2. *Cancer* involves abnormal cell growth that can spread to other parts of the body.
3. *Chronic lower respiratory disease* obstructs the lungs and airflow.
4. *Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis* can stop the liver from working normally.
5. *Diabetes mellitus* affects your body's ability to take up sugar as fuel resulting in blood sugar levels to be abnormally high.

Food Security

- **31% of urban Native 6th graders in Seattle Public Schools lack access to breakfast**, contributing to childhood hunger and community food insecurity.²³
- **25% of Native people experience food insecurity** with urban Natives more likely to experience food insecurity than rural Natives.²⁴

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