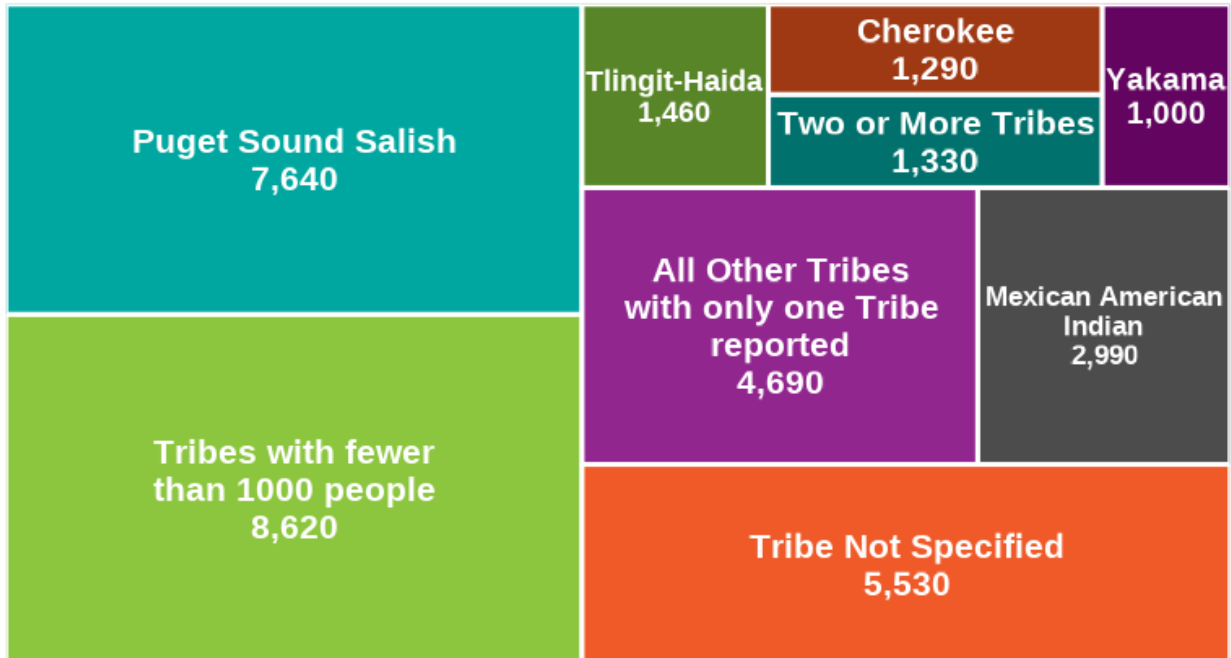


Examining Native American Trends in the Puget Sound



This month, PSRC delves into updated data on the region’s American Indian and Alaska Native population. People with First Nations heritage in our region are very diverse, with over 50 Tribal groups represented. About **7,600** of the region’s residents identify as Puget Sound Salish. The American Community Survey groups Tribes who have original homelands in the four-county region under the name Puget Sound Salish. The region’s second most common Tribal grouping is Mexican American Indian. The number of Mexican American Indian residents in the region has almost doubled since last year.

Tribal Groupings With 1,000 or More Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B02014 for King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

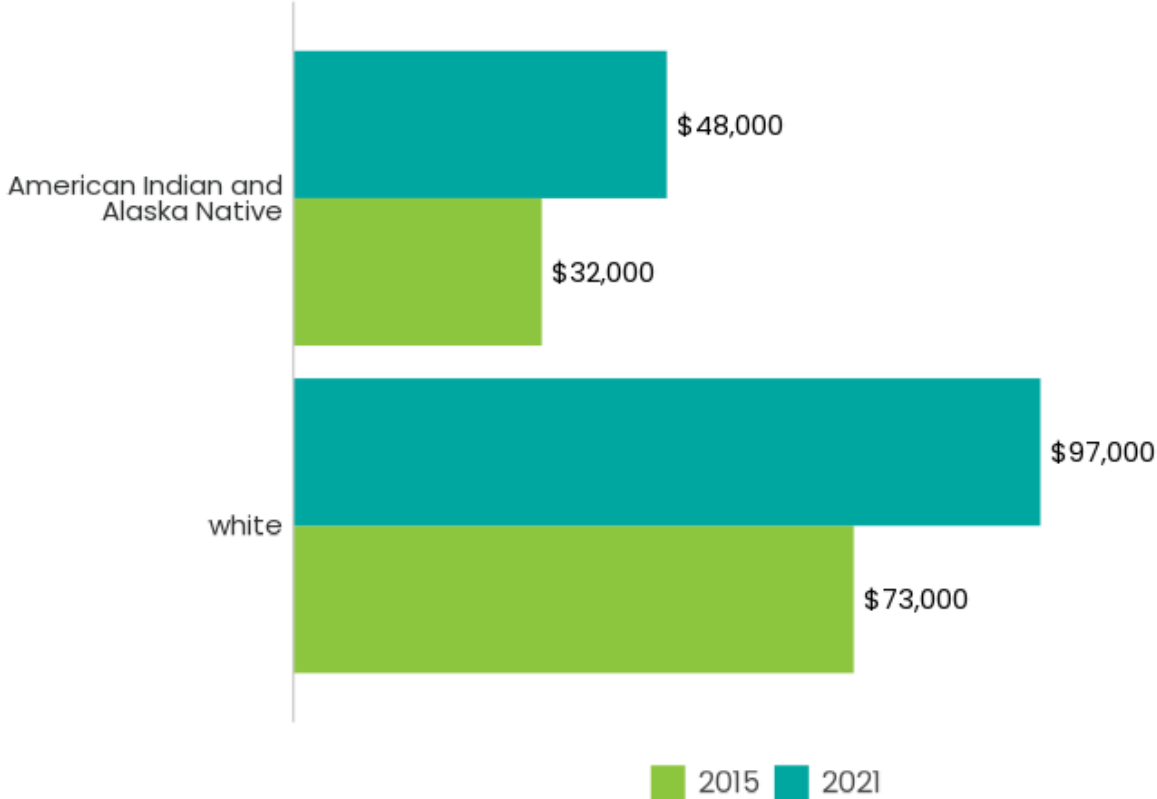
[View the full data set here](#)

Wealth and Income Disparities

PSRC celebrates the diverse, rich cultures of people with American Indian and Alaska Native heritage. We also recognize the suffering that members of these groups have experienced in the past and continue to endure due to historical policies and practices. Economic inequities persist for people with American Indian and Alaska Native heritage and lead to disparities in income and home ownership.

Between 2015 and 2021, incomes grew for both American Indian and Alaska Native households and white households. Despite growing slightly faster than white households, the 2021 Median Annual Income for an American Indian and Alaska Native household of \$48,400 was still less than 50% that of a white household.

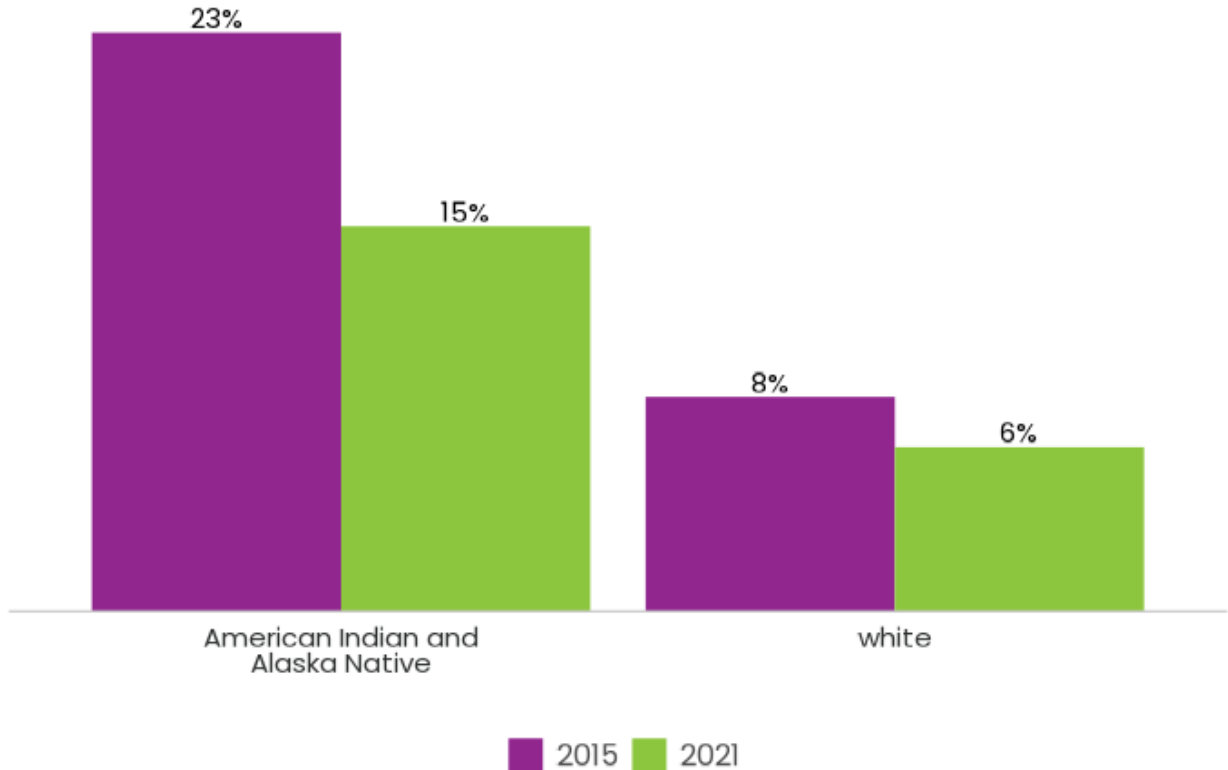
Median Annual Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Public Use Microdata Sample 5-Year Estimates, variable HINCP for King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

As median incomes grew, the percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native households living in poverty decreased to 15% in 2021. However, it is still 2.3 times the rate for white households. The federal poverty level (FPL) is a measure of income issued every year by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and used to determine eligibility for certain programs and benefits, including savings on Marketplace health insurance, and Medicaid and CHIP coverage. The FPL varies by household size and was \$26,500 for a family of four in 2021.

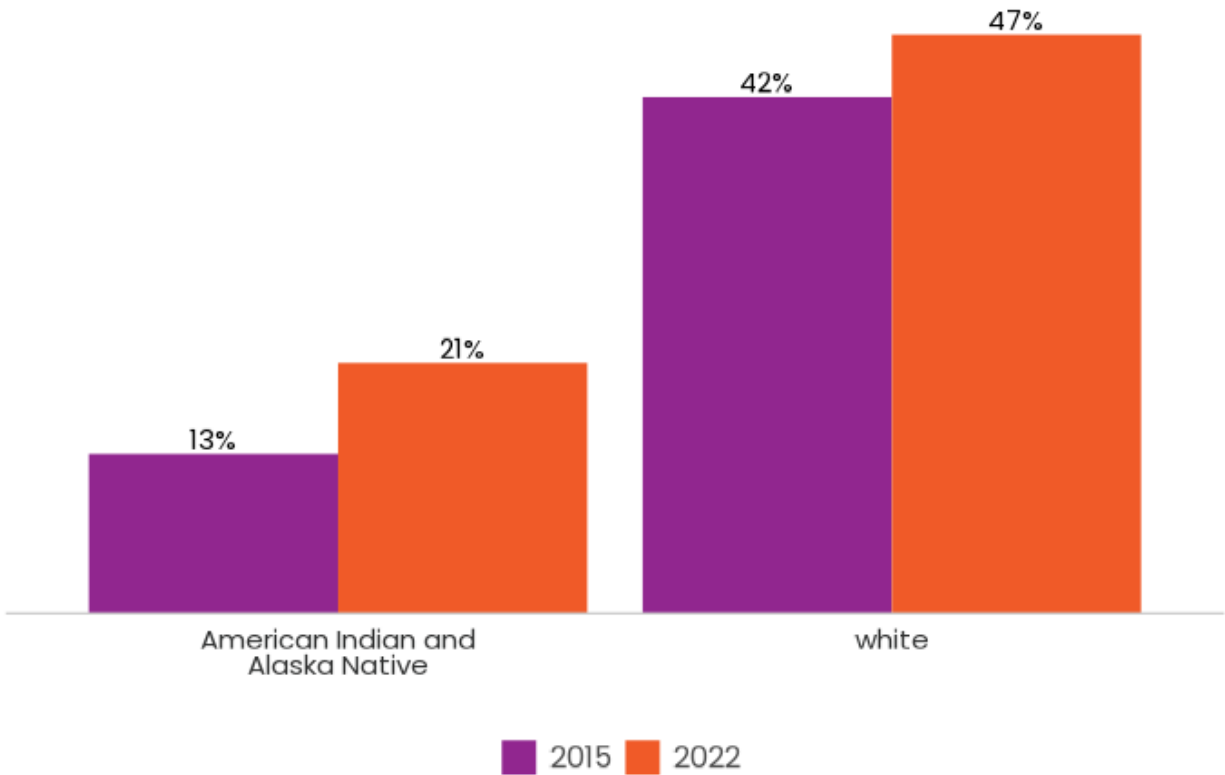
Percentage of Households Experiencing Poverty



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, tables B17020H, B17020C for King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

Education unlocks opportunities to the highest income jobs and ensures that people have the chance to benefit from the PSRC region’s strong economy. In order to compete for high-tech jobs in the region, people increasingly need at least a bachelor’s degree. The percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native people with a least a bachelor’s degree has increased since 2015 to approximately 21% in 2022. However like income metrics it is significantly lower than the rates of white residents with at least a bachelor’s degree (43%). [Disparities in funding for schools](#) and, access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs continue to provide barriers to economic growth for American Indian and Alaska Native people.

Share of the Population With at Least a Bachelors Degree

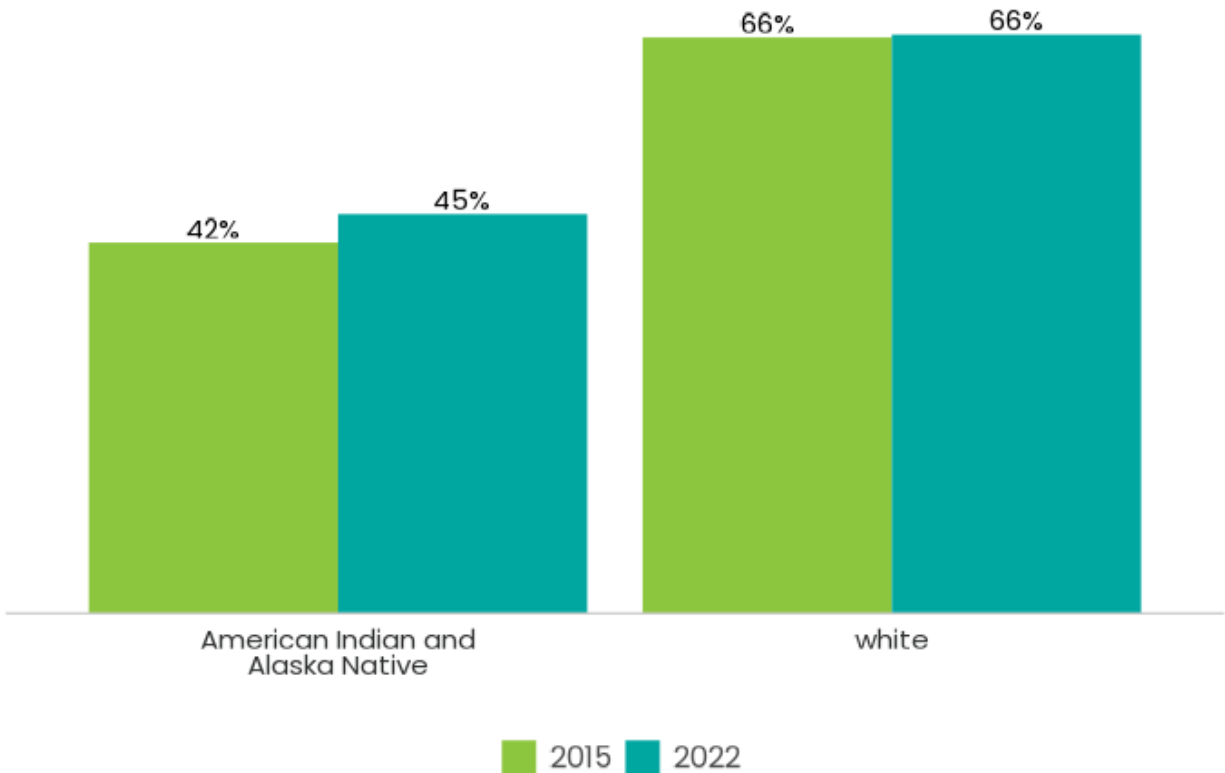


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 1-Year Estimates, tables C15002H, C15002C for King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

Disparities in Home Ownership

Home ownership is a key to wealth in the United States. For decades, lending practices have benefited white people and have led to large wealth disparities between people of color and white households. In 2015 an American Indian and Alaska Native household was 36% less likely to own a home than a white household. By 2022, the home ownership rate for American Indian and Alaska Native households had increased slightly from 42% to 45%. Tribes are creating home ownership and affordable housing programs in the region. Learn more about the Suquamish Tribe's [home ownership programs](#).

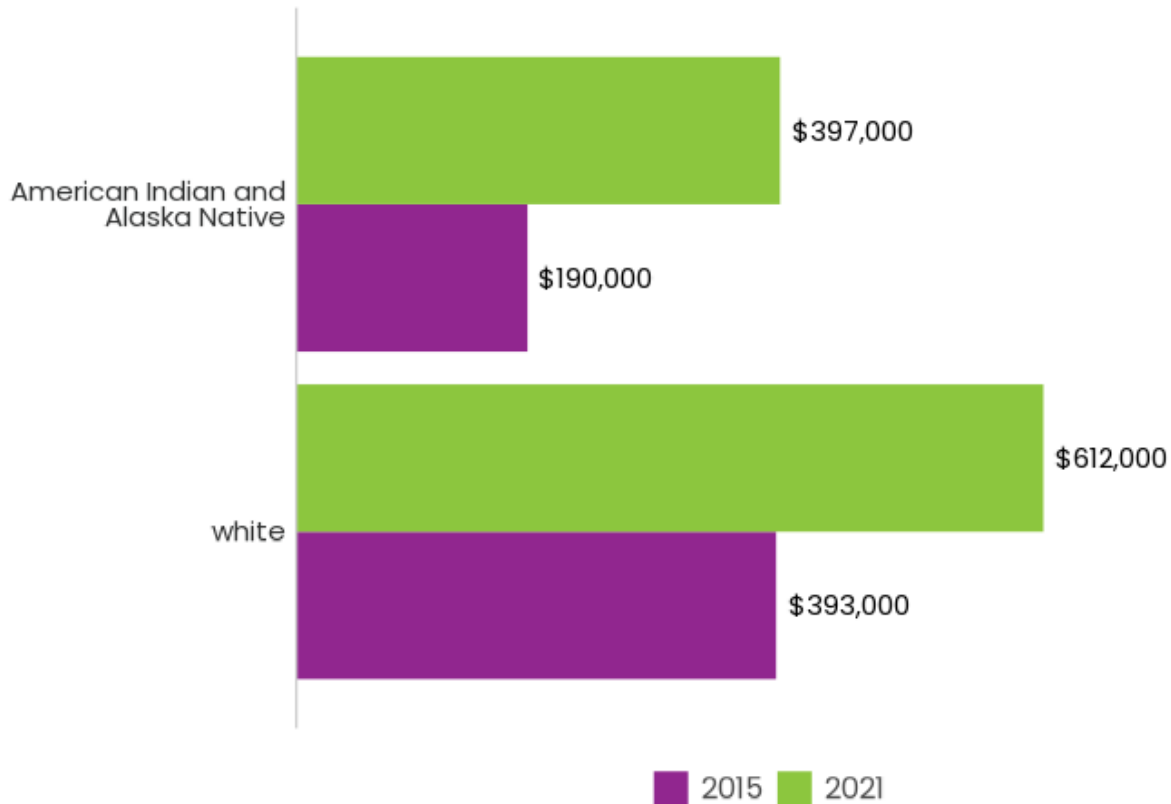
Share of Households That Own Their Home



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 1-Year Estimates, Tables B25003H, B25003C for King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

Home ownership, and the wealth afforded by it to home owners, has increased dramatically in recent years in the central Puget Sound region. The average value of a home owned by a white household has increased by approximately 156% since 2015, unlocking opportunities through refinancing or home sale to increase household wealth. The value in homes owned by American Indian and Alaska Native households has also increased significantly over the past five years; however, the average value of a home owned by an American Indian and Alaska Native household was still 35% lower than the average home value for a white household. Lower home values, combined with lower ownership rates and more difficulty obtaining low-interest loans creates further wealth disparities for American Indian and Alaska Native households.

Average Home Value

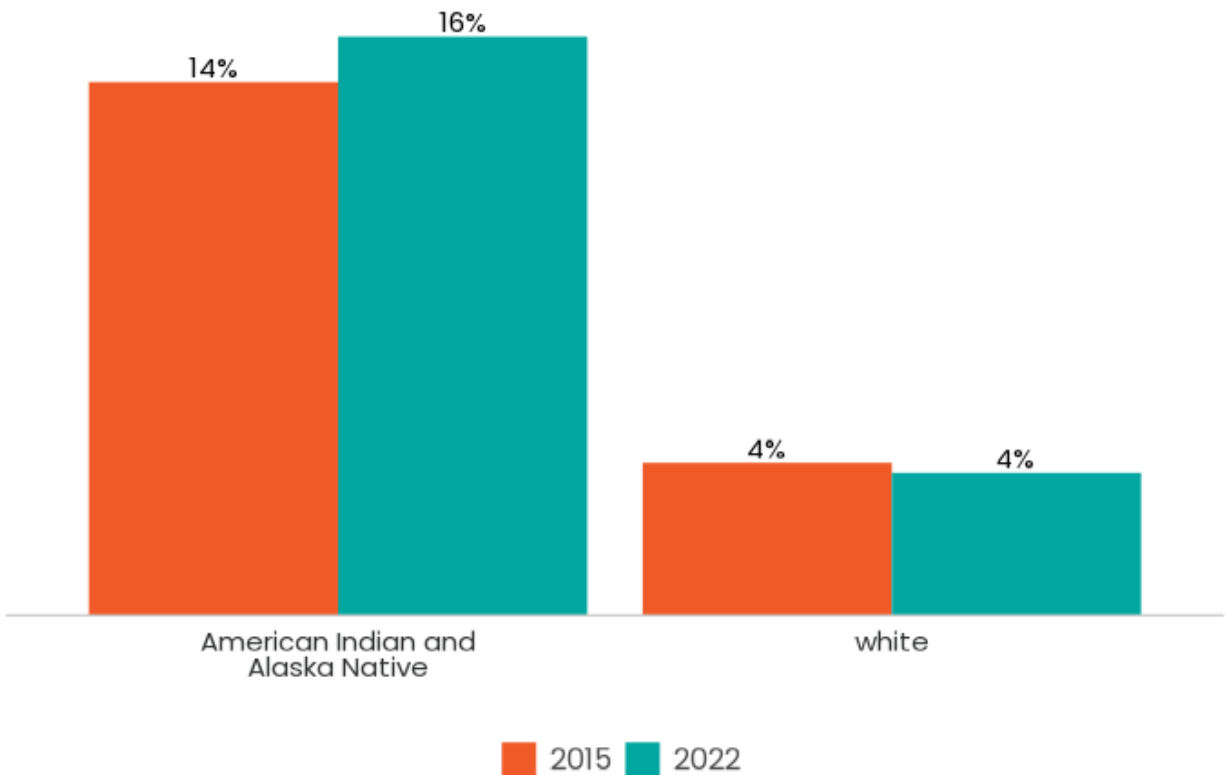


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Public Use Microdata Sample 5-Year Estimates, variable VALP for King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

Health Disparities

Access to affordable health care is key to ensuring positive health outcomes. When people lack access to health insurance, they are less likely to visit the doctor for routine care, remain current on vaccinations and receive preventive screenings that can catch health issues early when they can still be treatable. Unfortunately, in recent years the racial gap in health insurance has widened. American Indian and Alaska Native residents are now 4.1 times more likely to lack health insurance than white residents.

People Without Health Insurance

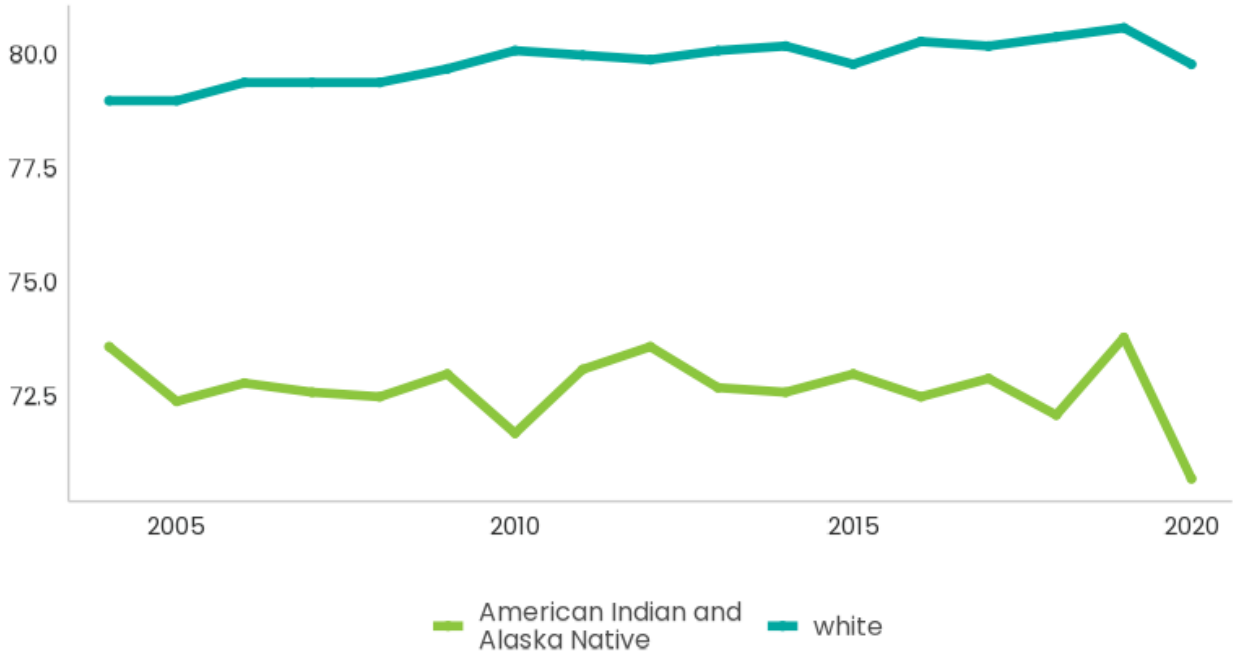


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 1-Year Estimates, tables C27001H, C27001C for King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

The average life expectancy for American Indian and Alaska Native people in 2020 was 70.7 years, 9.1 years less than white people. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the average life expectancy for all people regardless of race and ethnicity; however, the impacts show very clear racial disparities. For American Indian and Alaska Native people, the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the average expected life span by 3.1 years, almost three times greater than the reduction for white people (0.8 years).

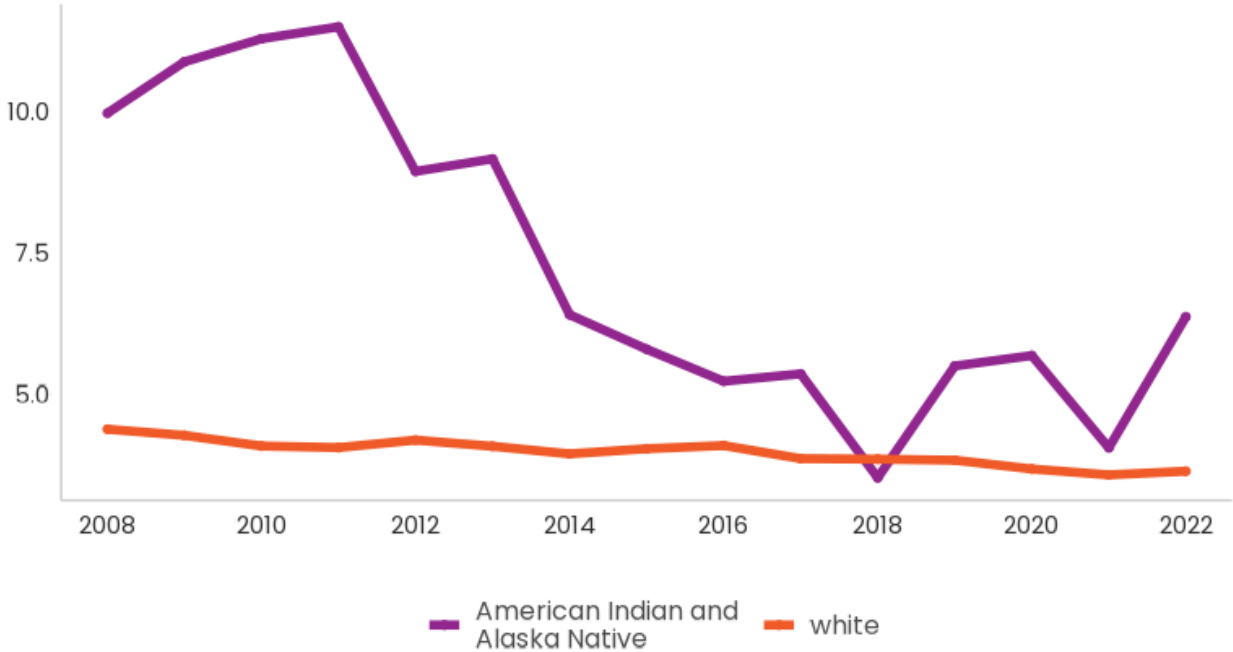
Lack of access to health insurance also has clear impacts on infant mortality which is calculated by comparing the number of live births in a given year with the number of deaths for infants within their first year of life. The long-term trends for infant mortality are encouraging for American Indian and Alaska Native infants, but the rate of infant deaths per 1000 live births for American Indian and Alaska Native infants (6.4 deaths per 1000 births) is still 1.8 times higher than the rate for white infants.

Average Life Expectancy at Birth



Source: Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Death Certificate Data 2020, Community Health Assessment Tool (Chat), December 2021

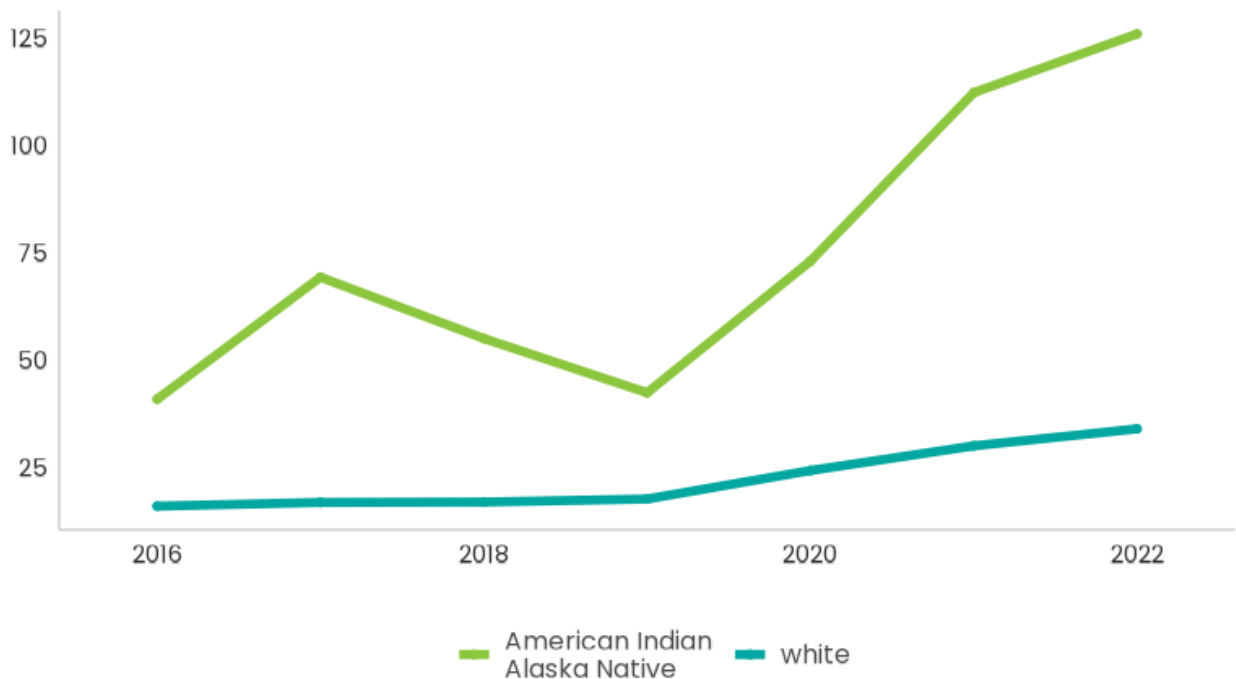
Average Five-Year Infant Mortality Rate per 1000 Live Births



Source: Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Birth & Death Certificate Data 2020, Community Health Assessment Tool (Chat), December 2021

Drug overdose deaths are increasingly impacting all communities. For American Indian and Alaska Native people, they are impacted more so than any other race or ethnicity. In 2022, the drug overdose rate for the American Indian and Alaska Native population was almost four times higher than for the rate for the white population. U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell recently announced grant money to help improve programs addressing substance abuse. The Puyallup Tribe of Indians and The Tulalip Tribes [received this grant money](#).

Drug Overdose Rate per 100,000



Source: Washington State Department of Health

Advancing Racial Equity

The region's vision for 2050 is to provide exceptional quality of life, opportunity for all, connected communities, a spectacular natural environment, and an innovative, thriving economy. This cannot be achieved without dismantling systems of racial inequity.

This data doesn't easily reveal the varied experiences of different ethnic groups within the region's American Indian and Alaska Native community and how it shapes where they live, the opportunities they can access and the trajectory of their lives. However, it does highlight the need to address the unique barriers these communities face that depress their incomes and disproportionately push them into poverty and lead to significant disparities for health.

"One-size-fits-all" strategies are rarely successful. Rather than seeking to establish policies and practices where everyone is treated the same, PSRC is establishing universal goals while considering how different groups have faced, and continue to face, different barriers. The agency recognizes that other groups of people are still marginalized based on gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, etc. Focusing on racial equity provides the opportunity to address the unique circumstances of various racial groups and recognizes the interconnected ways in which marginalization takes place.

PSRC is working to advance opportunities for people of American Indian and Alaska Native heritage through its Equity Advisory Committee. The group is helping PSRC develop a Regional Equity Strategy and advise PSRC on policies and programs with an equity lens that can help lessen these disparities as we move forward. [Learn more about the committee.](#)

[Click here to Download the Data used in this Trend](#)