Nevada Advisory Committee on Traffic Safety (NVACTS)

TRAFFIC SAFETY DEMOGRAPHICS IN NEVADA

Special Report – April 2025

Introduction

Under the direction of the Nevada Advisory Committee on Traffic Safety (NVACTS), the Safety Demographic Data Working Group (SDDWG) was formed with the goal, "To identify overrepresented and/or underserved populations in Nevada traffic crash data to inform effective interventions that equitably improve road safety."

The SDDWG held five meetings over the course of 2024. The members represent multiple disciplines of road safety across the state.

- Amy Davey, DPS-OTS (Chair)
- Noehealani Bareng-Antolin, UNLV School of Medicine
- Assemblywoman Tracy Brown-May, Nevada Assembly
- Shannon Bryant, Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor
- Major Kevin Honea, DPS Nevada State Police
- Tyler Mleczko, DPS Nevada State Police
- William White, DPS Nevada State Police
- Yvan Pittmon, DPS Nevada State Police
- Rebeca Lefler, NDOT
- Terri Lewis, NDOT
- Alex Neal, DHHS
- Julia Peek, DHHS
- Anita Pepper, DPS-OTS
- Rachael Shaw, TRPA
- Lacey Tisler, NDOT

The meeting topics were:

- Meeting 1 & 2: Identify and discuss equity models, review of national and Nevada data, resources, FHWA and NHTSA materials on equity in transportation and safety. Discuss NVACTS role in supporting equity and develop equity description and framework. Possible presentations: FHWA and NHTSA
- Meeting 3 & 4: Review best practice and recommendations from other states and organizations, discuss current programs and partnerships in Nevada, identify opportunities for new partnerships. Possible presentations: Participants (representing their organizations), Nevada state or local agencies or organizations.
- Meeting 5: Discuss and draft written materials such as fact sheets, briefing paper, recommendations, PowerPoint presentation for NVACTS.

This brief examines communities and populations that face disproportionally high traffic incident rates along with those who receive inadequate safety services.

Because of its distinctive socio-economic environment Nevada faces numerous traffic safety challenges which are intensified by distinct disparities among different demographic groups. The combined effects of socio-economic conditions and cultural diversity along with infrastructure constraints cause some groups to experience higher rates of traffic incidents while others seemingly receive insufficient safety support. The Safety Demographics/Equity Working sub-Group of NVACTS explored these issues by examining available data and national best practices on racial and ethnic disparities, age demographics, transportation modalities, disability issues, homelessness factors and differences between resident and non-resident road users. This report provides actionable recommendations to enhance traffic safety outcomes in Nevada

Disproportionate Impact on Racial and Ethnic Minorities

Although American Indian/Alaska Native communities represent just 1.6% of Nevada's population and live mostly on 31 reservations they face disproportionately high rates of traffic-related incidents. This demographic is widely recognized across the U.S. as being overrepresented in crash statistics. Infants from these communities experience more than double the traffic crash risk when compared to other populations and data shows o speeding and alcohol-related incidents are high-risk factors for all tribal populations.

A further review of data shows that Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander also have fatality rates that exceed their representation within the Nevada overall populations.

Recommendations:

1. Establish grant-funded programs or projects that focus exclusively on outreach activities to connect state resources with tribal needs through dedicated resources.
2. Develop outreach initiatives that require face-to-face visits to communities over-represented in data to engage through listening and learning while showing cultural respect. State agency collaboration together with community leadership helps build trust and enables teamwork to enhance safety measures.
3. Consider an in-depth review of crash data within over-represented communities to determine additional risk factors and develop effective countermeasures, such as transportation patterns that can be addressed with safety treatments.

Socio-Economic Status

Socio-economic status influences the types of transportation available to individuals and the types of transportation infrastructure they are exposed to. According to a report by NHTSA, low-income households are less likely to own vehicles and have access to transportation options in their community to perform daily tasks without personal cars. Low-income people are more likely to use public transportation and are more likely to be vulnerable road users (pedestrian, bicyclist, personal conveyance). Thirty seven percent of lower-income people report that they drove every day compared to 73 percent of higher-income people.

Localities that face economic disadvantages typically do not have essential road safety infrastructure and resources such as illuminated streets and pedestrian crossings along with traffic enforcement. The dangerous environment created by unsafe vehicles together with risky driving practices and substandard infrastructure impacts low-income communities the hardest. Nevada’s Income Equity Fact Sheet shows us that across all crash types, the rate of traffic fatalities is higher in census block groups where the average household income is less than $50,000 annually than those census blocks where household income is

greater than the rise in traffic fatalities across Nevada highlights the urgent necessity for interventions that address socio-economic disparities.

Recommendations:

1. Improve vehicle safety by developing a program supported by local mechanics, schools and non-profit organizations to assist with vehicle repairs for basic safety issues (e.g. lighting, brakes, tires)
2. Prioritize infrastructure upgrades in distressed neighborhoods using data on traffic fatalities improving street lighting, installing speed bumps, pedestrian crossings, and signage in high-risk areas through federal and state grants specifically for low-income community transportation safety improvements (e.g., Safe Streets and Roads for All grant).
3. Develop community education and outreach programs focused on the dangers of impaired, distracted, and fatigued driving.

Age Demographics and Traffic Safety

The age demographics of a population significantly affect traffic safety issues within Nevada. Young drivers, those persons between the ages of 16 and 20, along with older drivers, those persons over 65 years represent higher proportions in crash statistics. Young drivers frequently do not have access to modern collision avoidance systems in their vehicles which increases their risk while highlighting the larger problem of insufficient safety technology distribution.

The greater likelihood of crashes among mature drivers stems from their slower reaction times and limited ability to turn their heads rapidly. The presence of advanced crash warning systems has not benefited many older adults who cannot buy vehicles with such features or due to a lack of understating of those features, turn them off, leaving them unprotected and more exposed to road dangers.

Recommendations:

1. New driver training can be improved by integrating compulsory safety webinars alongside practical in-person training sessions that teach real-world driving scenarios. Financial resources need to be directed towards updating driver's education materials with current safety technology advancements.
2. Foster assessment programs which evaluate older drivers' abilities. The combined work of health services and transportation agencies along with local law enforcement support at-risk drivers receiving proper guidance as well as alternative transportation choices.
3. Support programs that promote the use and understanding of advanced technologies that assist drivers.

Transportation Modalities and Micromobility

The quick growth of micromobility choices like e-scooters and bicycles brings fresh traffic safety concerns. In crash-prone areas near transit hubs VRUs show a higher presence than average population density. Although these sustainable transportation modes serve as alternatives to cars, they create distinct risks for users and other road users.

Recommendations:

1. Infrastructure modifications at transit hubs should include the development of exclusive lanes and improved signage to protect users of micromobility devices. Enhanced lighting along with distinct road markings and physical barriers where possible should be implemented.

2. Areas with high micromobility-related incidents should receive increased behavioral enforcement efforts. We need to implement educational initiatives that teach users about safety protocols and device limitations.

3. County-level research should be carried out to pinpoint specific high-risk areas for vulnerable road users. The collected data serves as a foundation for developing targeted interventions that maximize efficacy while minimizing resource use.

Addressing Ability and Disability Challenges

A substantial number of licensed drivers choose not to operate vehicles because of physical or mental restrictions which leads to an essential transportation access gap. Traffic safety programs fail to address the needs of this population segment because they operate under the assumption that most residents drive vehicles.

Recommendations:

1. Create specialized driver education programs that help people overcome their unique challenges to obtain and maintain licenses. The program may offer financial support for training programs that assess drivers to enhance their road preparedness.

2. Initiate community-based transportation solutions and public options which support non-drivers to keep underprivileged groups connected to essential services and community activities.

3. The state should consider projects modeled after Washington State to study transportation challenges faced by people who hold a license yet choose not to drive.

Homelessness and Traffic Safety

Recent statistics show Nevada has one of the highest homelessness rates in the U.S. and experienced a 20% rise in its homeless population during 2023. The homeless population faces increased road vulnerability because they experience long-term exposure to traffic conditions while possibly dealing with mental health or substance use disorders and a shortage of secure living spaces. Pedestrian death statistics reveal that homeless individuals suffer fatality rates far exceeding those of the general population which demonstrates the critical need for specific intervention strategies.

Recommendations:

1. Create specific outreach programs that help homeless populations by using models from successful programs like Springfield, MO's "Use Your WITS" program. The development of such programs should include collaborations between local non-profits and mental health organizations.

2. Law enforcement, emergency services, and social service agencies should work together to offer comprehensive support through safe spaces, healthcare, and mental health counseling.

3. The program should identify homeless community members who can act as spokespersons and provide them with necessary support. The information provided by these speakers will enable the creation of customized safety initiatives as well as foster trust among populations who generally distrust such efforts.

Resident vs Non-Resident Crash Dynamics

According to 2020-2024 crash data, approximately 7% of all crashes involve a non-Nevada resident, as identified by driver's licenses. However, approximately 35% of citations are non-Nevada residents or UNK. Based on anecdotal observations and opinion pieces, there is a sentiment that non-residents significantly

contribute to crashes. However, data shows that non-residents are involved in a relatively low rate of crashes. Personal experience in Tahoe was referenced, “here is a lot of local frustration around tourists – driving well under the speed limit because they are lost or looking at the view, braking suddenly for a last-minute turn, not chaining up in the snow, and making illegal U-turns.” While this is frustrating (and sometimes illegal, hence the 35% citations), these actions do not necessarily equate to more crashes and the data backs that up. In Las Vegas, a couple of reddit threads on driving in Las Vegas overwhelming recommend two things: 1) always go when the light is yellow, or you may get rear-ended and 2) always pause when the light turns green to look for red-light runners. The sentiment is that Las Vegas drivers run red lights and anyone new to the area should be careful to not get rear-ended at a yellow light or hit by a red-light runner; it puts the impetus on the person not committing a violation to change their behavior to avoid a crash.

Recommendations:

1. Incorporate “rules of the road” in marketing to tourists or on changeable message signs entering into the region. Marketing is already in progress (see sources under Nevada Road Safety Tips for Tourists/Non-residents) New Zealand has a very successful campaign with signs that say “NZ roads are different, allow more time”
2. Social media campaigns to resident population asking them to be patient and not expect visitors to know the roads like they do.
3. The state should implement educational campaigns and dynamic message signs at Nevada entry points to educate non-residents about local driving rules.

Policy Recommendations and Collaborative Actions

The Safety Demographic/Equity Working Group’s analysis shows a multi-pronged approach is necessary to enhance traffic safety in Nevada by tackling both systemic and demographic-specific obstacles. Key policy actions include:

1. Municipal codes and state laws need updates to strengthen best practice policies and traffic safety enforcement while providing for sustained and improved support of education, road safety enhancements, and equitable access to transportation alternatives.
2. Initiate educational and outreach programs directed at groups with high representation levels including American Indian/Alaska Native communities and youth as well as populations that receive inadequate services such as the elderly, non-drivers and homeless individuals. All campaigns need to incorporate cultural and social awareness and require coordination with community representatives during their design process.
3. Continue collaborative relationships between state agencies such as NDOT and DMV alongside law enforcement with tribal organizations alongside non-profit groups and educational institutions. Develop dedicated positions including a grant-funded outreach liaison to maintain focused and sustainable efforts.
4. Secure additional funds for research and data gathering to identify existing safety gaps and evaluate the success of current interventions. Equity fact sheets development plays a part in tracking progress and shaping upcoming policy changes.

It is clear that Nevada’s traffic safety issues include elements closely connected to social and economic conditions. Targeted interventions must be developed for over-represented populations including American Indian/Alaska Native communities, youth and VRUs and under-serviced groups such as non-drivers and

homeless populations because they face specific vulnerabilities. Through better data collection alongside investments in education and outreach and progressive policy implementation as well as cross-sector collaboration efforts Nevada can start reducing these risks and build safer roadways. A multi-dimensional strategic plan is critical to address socio-economic disparities within Nevada's traffic safety environment for the protection of all road users.

Racial Equity in Traffic Fatalities in Nevada

https://zerofatalitiesnv.com/app/uploads/2024/09/NDOT_Nevada-Crash-Facts-Equity-Pages_Final-v5.pdf

Resources

National

Health in All Policies | Policy, Performance, and Evaluation | CDC
https://youtu.be/6ZBnRVqmwDo

Environmental Justice
https://www.environmentaljustice.gov/

Real Talk on Equity in Roadway Safety | Vision Zero Network
https://visionzeronetwork.org/real-talk-on-equity-in-roadway-safety

Integrating Equity into the Safe System Approach Presentation | FHWA (dot.gov)
https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths/integrating-equity-safe-system-approach-presentation

Equity in Roadway Safety Webinar Series | FHWA (dot.gov)
https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths/equity-roadway-safety-webinar-series

Public Roads - Spring 2023 | FHWA (dot.gov) – Virtual Magazine Dedicated to Transportation Equity
https://highways.dot.gov/public-roads/spring-2023

Institutionalizing Equity through Transportation Decision Making
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhmLwYgexYY

USDOT Equity
https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/equity

USDOT Equity Road Safety
https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths/equity-roadway-safety

Equity in Transportation GIS Resources
https://hepgis-usdot.hub.arcgis.com/pages/equity-in-transportation-gis-resources

An Analysis of Traffic Fatalities by Race and Ethnicity
https://www.ghsa.org/resources/Analysis-of-Traffic-Fatalities-by-Race-and-Ethnicity21

FHWA - Promising Practices to Address Road Safety among People Experiencing Homelessness
https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths/promising-practices-address-road-safety-among-people-experiencing-homelessness

Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool
https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5

American Public Transportation Association – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
https://www.apta.com/research-technical-resources/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/

Equity in Transportation for People with Disabilities
https://www.civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/transportation/final-transportation-equity-disability.pdf

State

Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine at UNLV Traffic Safety Research Team Subscription
https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/MQt4nuX/TSRTRENDsignup

NHTSA presentation from the July 17th meeting of the Nevada Joint Interim Committee Meeting on Growth and Infrastructure and Health and Human Services meeting: Start at agenda item 3 at the 9:30

mark.
https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Video/

Nevada Census Profile
https://data.census.gov/profile/Nevada?g=040XX00US32

Nevada Census Population Change
https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/nevada-population-change-between-census-decade.html

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency – Transportation Equity Study
https://www.trpa.gov/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Equity-Study-with-Appendix.pdf