

# MOHSS

## Montana Occupational Health & Safety Surveillance

Spring Newsletter 2024

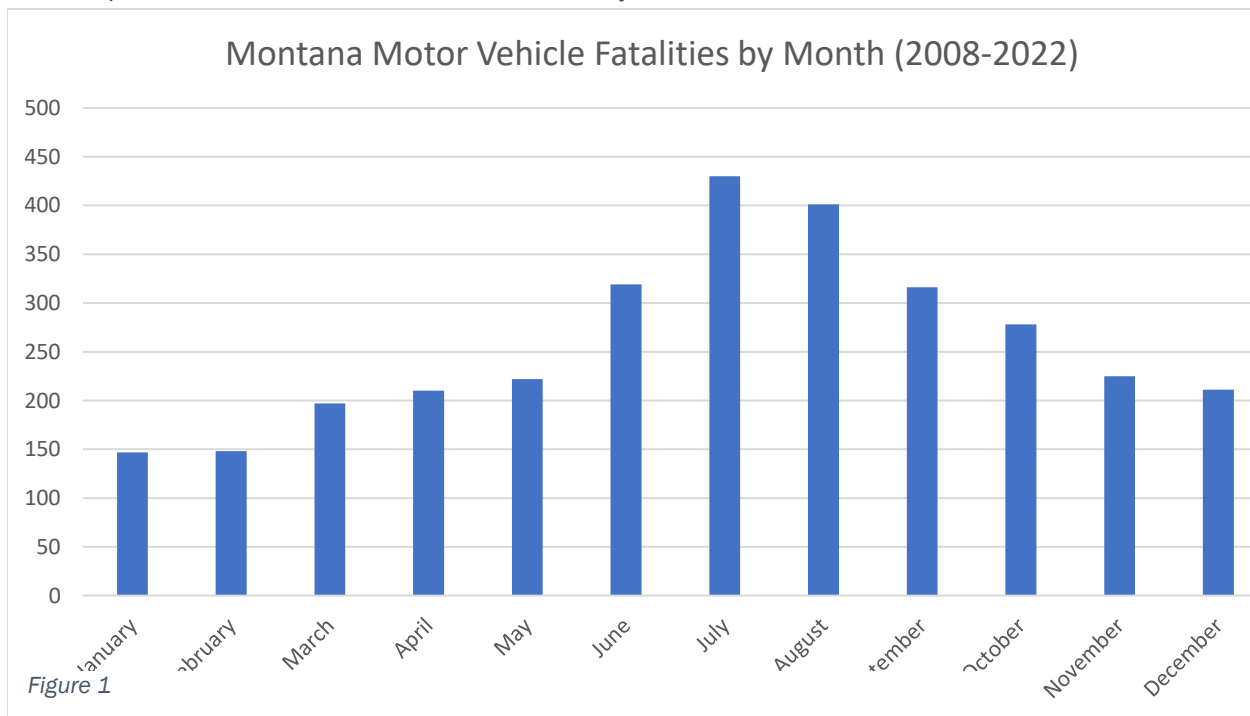
### Montana Driving Fatality Statistics

-Aaron Bender, Brooklyn Johns-Blassic

Spring in Montana can be a risky time to drive. The data being reported here is derived from the FARS (Fatality Analysis Reporting System) (1). According to data from The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the number of Montana traffic fatalities increases in the spring months and continues into the summer (Fig. 1). This is especially important for Montana workers that commute over distance to work. This report summarizes driving fatality data from 2008 to 2022 and highlights some important statistics regarding risk factors while driving in Montana.

#### Fatalities by Age

Age often plays a role in traffic fatalities. This applies nationally but also in the state of Montana. Perhaps not surprisingly, younger drivers are at a higher risk of traffic-related fatalities (Fig 2). This is likely due to inexperience behind the wheel as well as to distractions from electronic devices such as cell phones and modern in-car infotainment systems.



Staying alert and situationally aware is crucial to driving safety especially during the fluctuating road conditions during Montana springs.

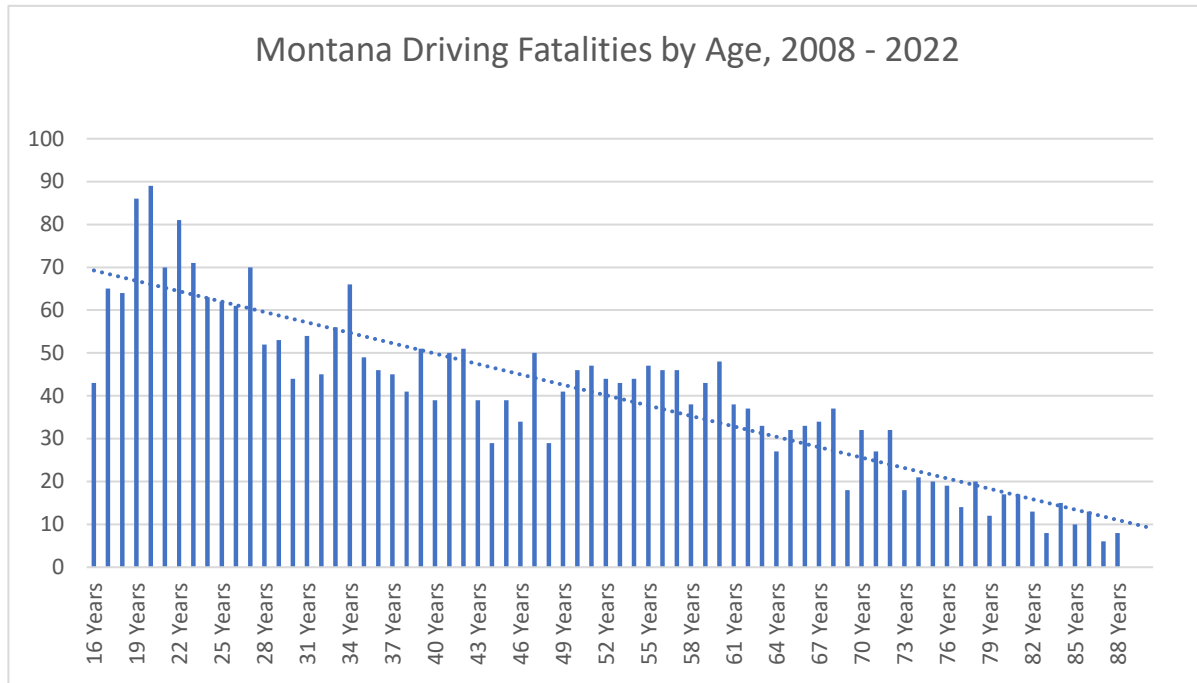


Figure 2

### Fatalities by Sex

Gender also correlates with fatality rates. Between 2008 and 2022, NHTSA has reported that men are over twice as likely to perish in traffic fatalities (Fig 3). This statistic may suggest that the increased deaths amongst males is due to males driving more than females. However, according to a recent report published in 2019 by the Federal Highway Administration, there were roughly equal percentages of male and female drivers in the state of Montana (1). That same report suggests that there are roughly equal numbers of male and female drivers nationwide. Reasons for the differential between male and female fatalities in Montana therefore cannot be explained by the numbers of men and women drivers on the road.

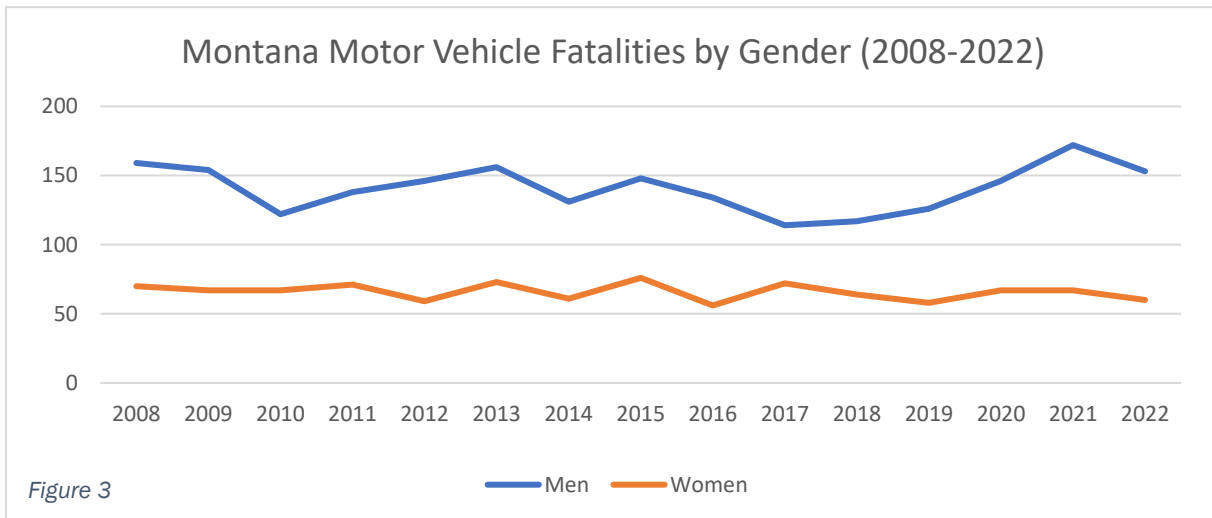


Figure 3

Certain Montana counties have higher numbers of traffic fatalities than others (Fig 4). Yellowstone and Flathead counties are the two highest counties in the state in terms of traffic deaths. This is most likely due not only to population, but also to EMS response times.

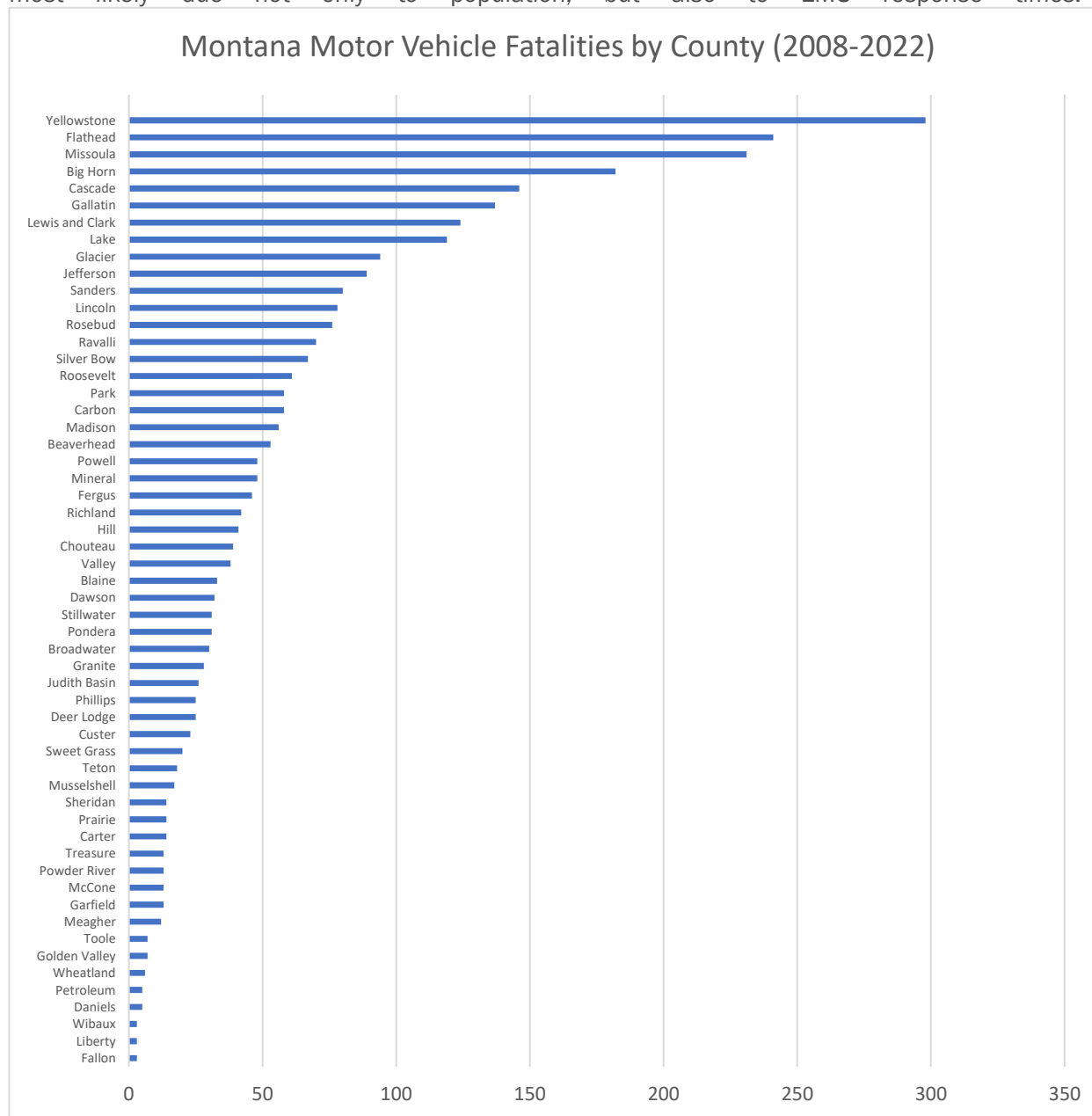


Figure 4

### Concluding thoughts

It is important to keep in mind that based on the size of Montana as well as the unpredictable weather during the spring months, it is crucial to plan trips using common sense. Check the forecast as well as the road conditions prior to setting out on a road trip. Be safe behind the wheel this spring.

- (1) <https://www.nhtsa.gov/research-data/fatality-analysis-reporting-system-fars>
- (2) <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2019/dl1c.cfm#foot1>.