

# **Cass County Coroner**



## **2023 Annual Report**

Cass County Coroner's Office  
1220 25th Street South  
Fargo, 58103

Last Revised: March 14, 2024

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# Message to the Board of Commissioners and Citizens of Cass County

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The Cass County Coroner's Office investigates sudden, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths that occur in Cass County. The coroner's office certifies death after investigation and postmortem examination and issues the death certificate as required by law. Complete findings of the death investigation are distributed to families and law enforcement agencies as appropriate.

The main duties of the Cass County Coroner's Office are to determine the cause and manner of death and certify deaths that are reported to the office. The cause of death is the disease process or injury that resulted in death. There are thousands of diseases and injuries that may result in death. The manner of death is a classification in which a determination is made regarding whether the death resulted from natural causes, homicide, suicide, or an accident. On occasion, the manner of death is classified as indeterminate.

With the skill and experience of the Cass County Coroner's Office, we believe the quality of death investigations in Cass County are among the best in the State. The death scene investigation reports filed by the investigators are very thorough and supply comprehensive information to medical examiners and law enforcement agencies.

Our coroner, deputy coroners and death investigator also extend their duties to the living by answering questions and addressing concerns regarding deaths within the county. Cass County Coroner staff frequently make personal contact with family members of a deceased and assist them by providing appropriate answers regarding the circumstances of the death. Coroner staff are supplied with a pamphlet for distribution to families. The information provides answers to common questions and facts about autopsies and also provides resource information pertaining to grief counseling.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Cass County Board of Commissioners for their support of the Coroner's Office and the services we provide to the citizens of the Cass County.

## Coroner Staff

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# **Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's Office**

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North Dakota Century Code Chapter 11-19.1 - Medical County Coroner - mandates that specific types of death be referred to the county coroner (see list below). These deaths include sudden and unexpected deaths, accidental deaths, and violent deaths. The coroner has the authority under this code to order an autopsy any time it is deemed necessary to determine or confirm the cause and manner of death.

## **Deaths Reportable to the Coroner:**

- Obvious or suspected homicidal, suicidal or accidental injury;
- Firearm injury;
- Severe, unexplained injury;
- Occupant or pedestrian motor vehicle injury;
- An injury to a minor;
- Fire, chemical, electrical, or radiation;
- Starvation;
- Unidentified or skeletonized human remains;
- Drowning;
- Suffocation, smothering , or strangulation;
- Poisoning or illegal drugs;
- Prior child abuse or neglect assessment concerns;
- Open child protection service case on the victim;
- Victim is in the custody of the department of health and human services, county correctional facility, the department of corrections and rehabilitation or other correctional facility, or law enforcement;
- Unexplained death or death in an undetermined manner;
- Suspected sexual assault; or
- Any other suspicious factor.

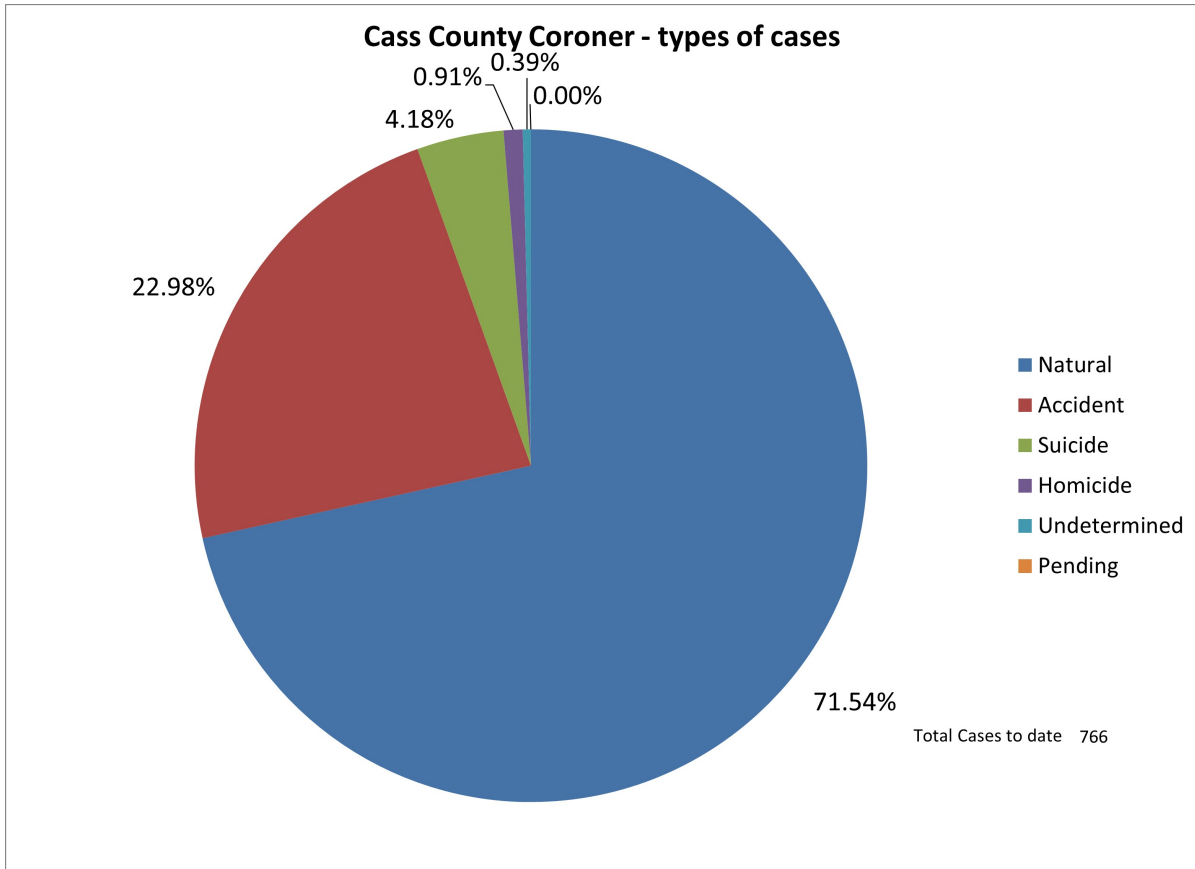
The coroner would generally order an autopsy for any of the reportable deaths listed above.

# 2023 Cass County Coroner Cases

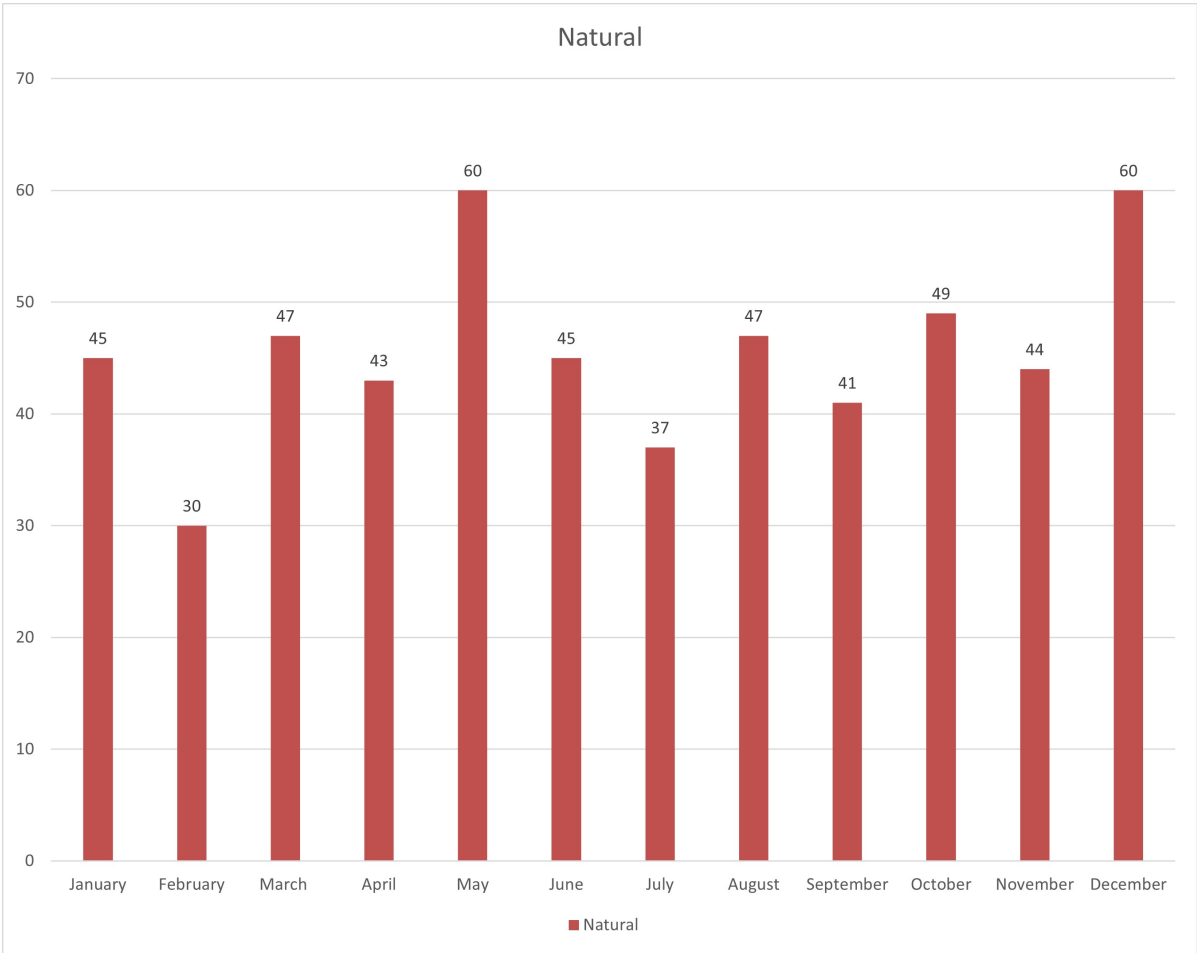
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Population	192,734
Cases Reported to the Cass County Coroner's Office	
A. Number of deaths reported to the coroner's office	766
1. Number of cases involving an autopsy	106
2. Number of accidental deaths	172
3. Number of suicides	32
4. Number of homicides	7
5. Number of undetermined deaths	3
B. Number of cremation authorizations	222
C. Number of cases involving law enforcement	269
1. Number of deaths investigated by Fargo Police	203
2. Number of deaths investigated by West Fargo Police	40
3. Number of deaths investigated by Cass County Sheriff	26
D. Number of reported deaths of a minor	27
E. Number of deaths involving drugs	52
F. Number of deaths involving alcohol	74
G. Number of unreported deaths	21
H. Number of non-reportable deaths	188
I. Number of deaths originating in other North Dakota counties	35
J. Number of deaths originating in Minnesota counties	86
K. Number of deaths originating in South Dakota counties	7
L. Number of transport assists by ambulances	20
M. Number of body removals by Cass County Coroner staff	168
N. Number of lift/removal assists by fire departments	52
O. Number of deaths reported by local hospitals	215
P. Number of cases reported by hospice	74
Q. Number of full-time staff	4
R. 2023 Department Budget	\$546,454
S. 2023 End-of-Year Budget Balance	\$473,207 (86% spent)

# Manner of Death

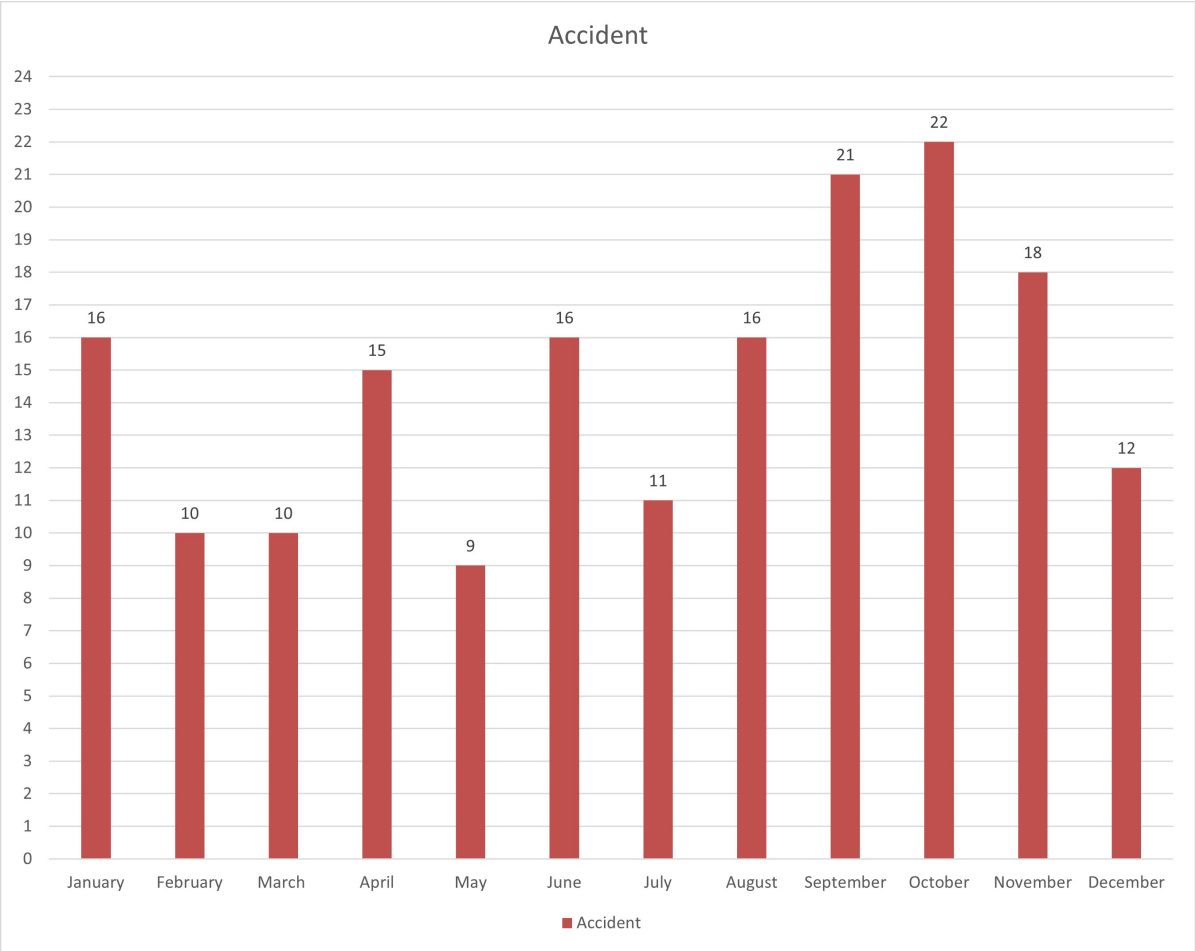


# Natural Deaths



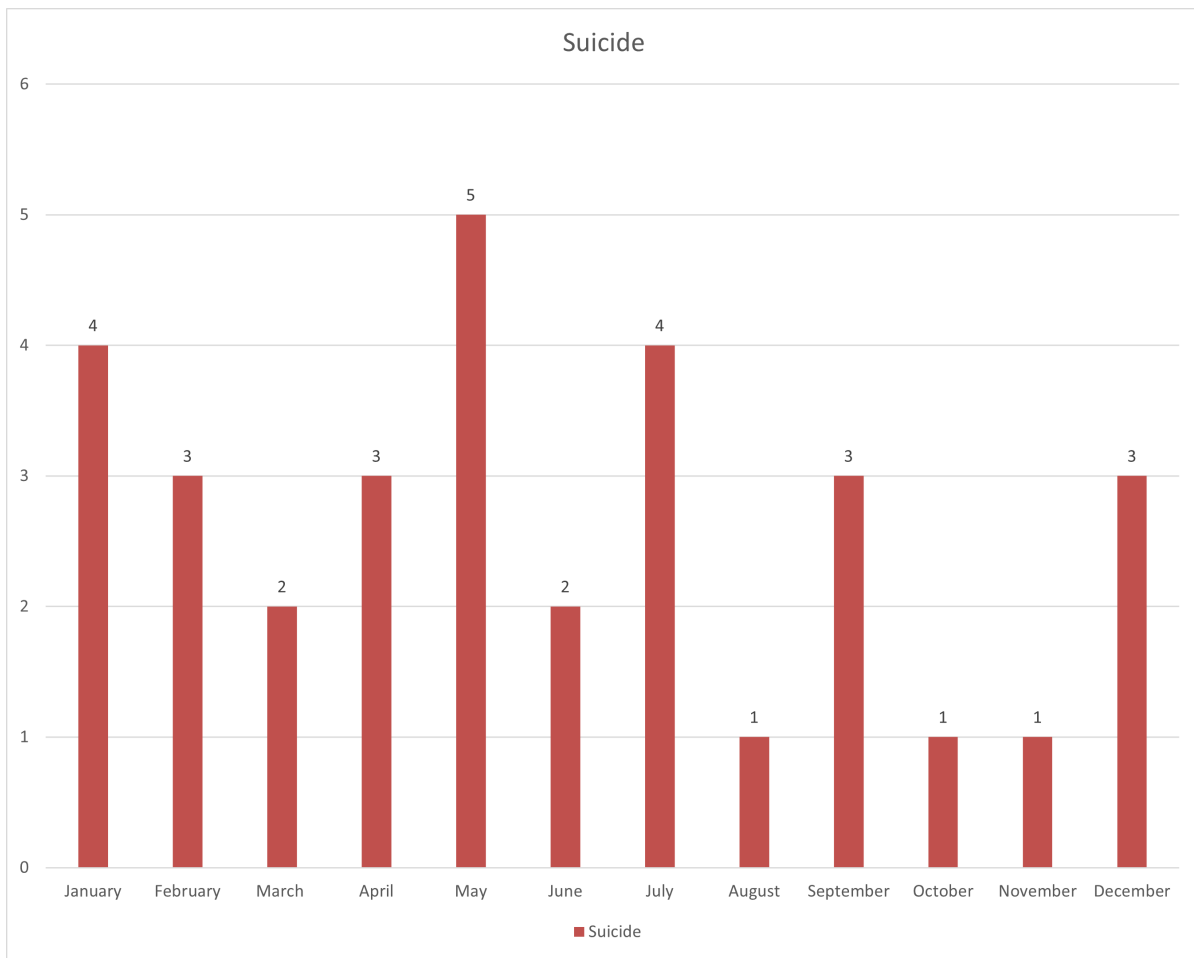


# Accidental Deaths

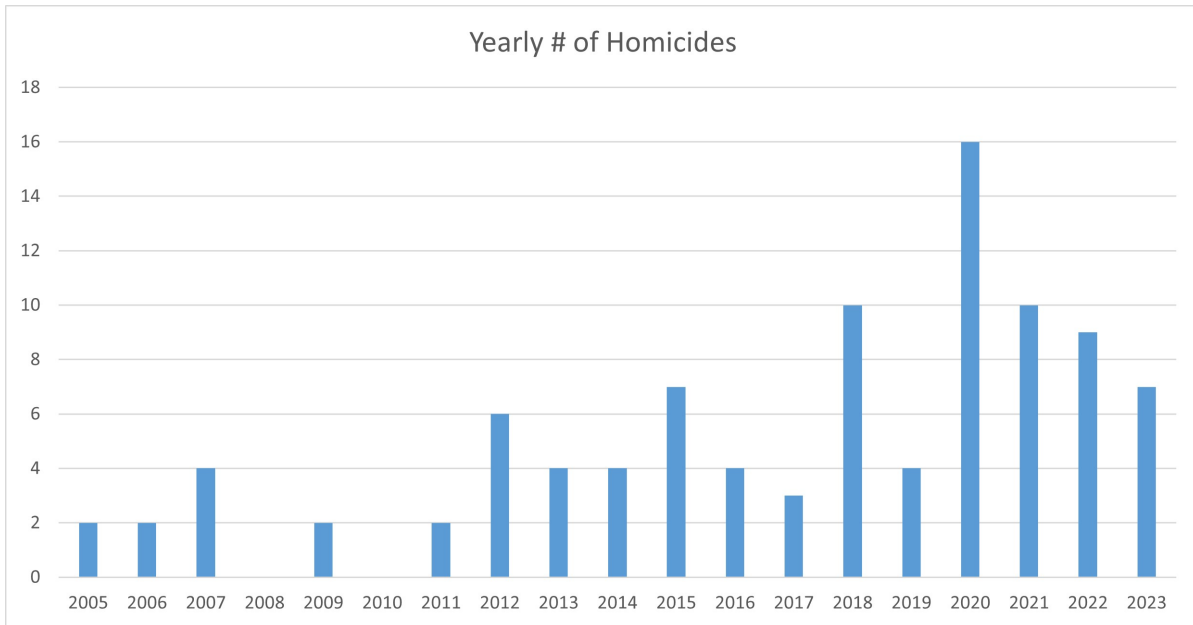


# Deaths by Suicide

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# Deaths by Homicide



\* denotes zero homicides reported in 2008 and 2010.

**Gender**

Male - 6  
Female - 1

**Law Enforcement Jurisdiction**

Fargo Police Department - 1  
West Fargo Police Department - 1  
BCI (outside of Cass County) - 3  
Minnesota Law Enforcement Agencies - 2

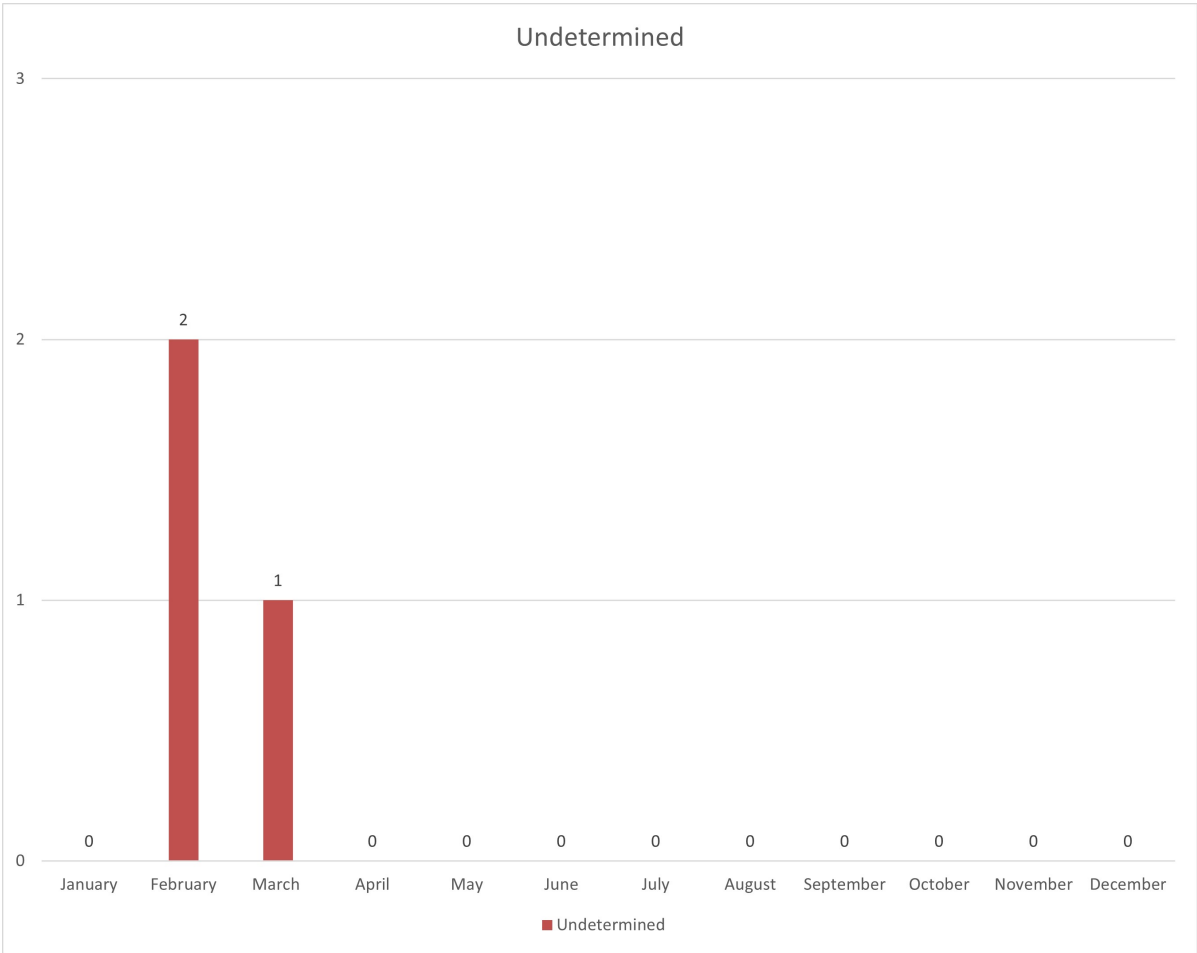
**Method**

Gunshot wounds - 3  
Drug overdose - 1  
Blunt force injury/assault - 3

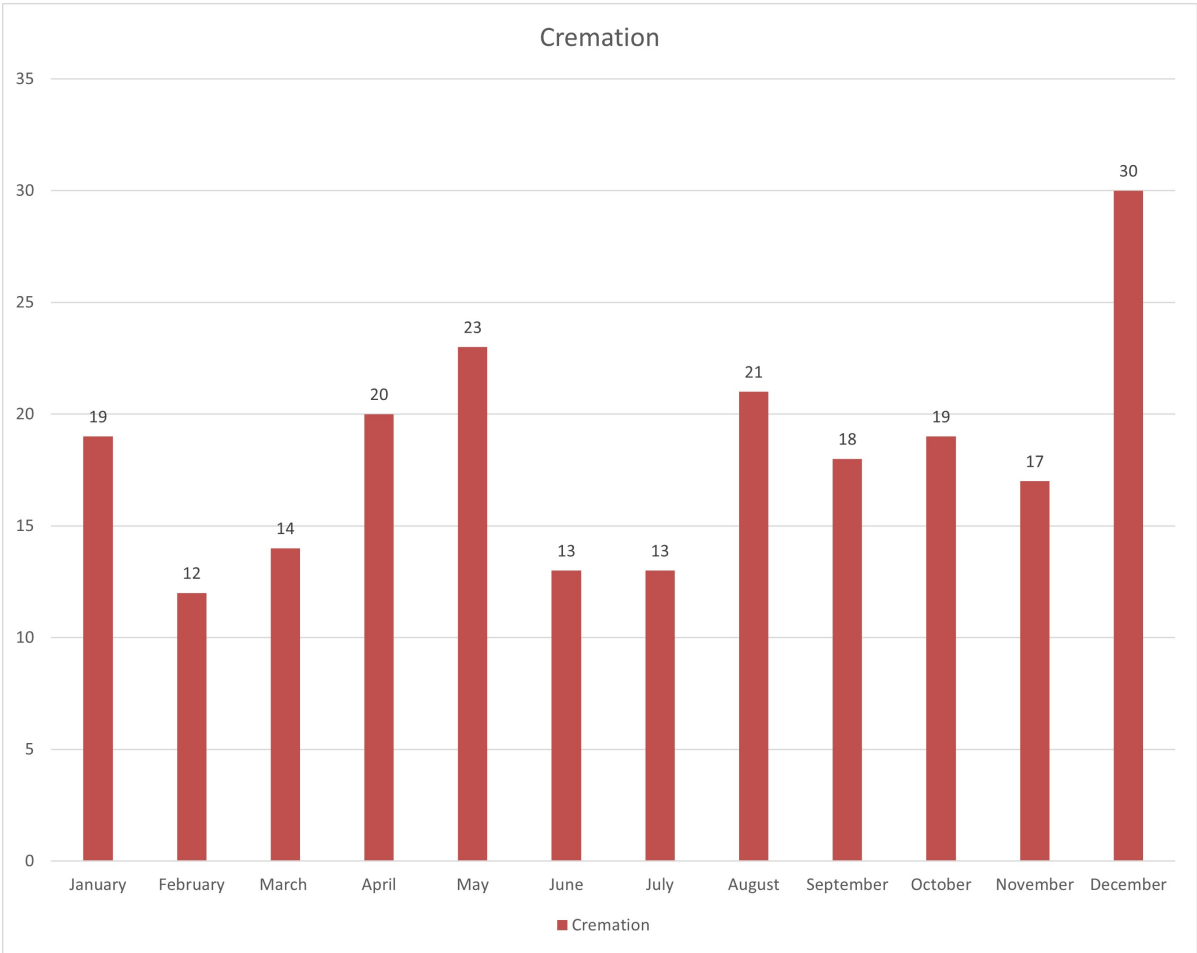
**Age range (months, years)**

>18 - 4  
18-24 - 1  
25-34 - 0  
35-44 - 1  
>45 - 0

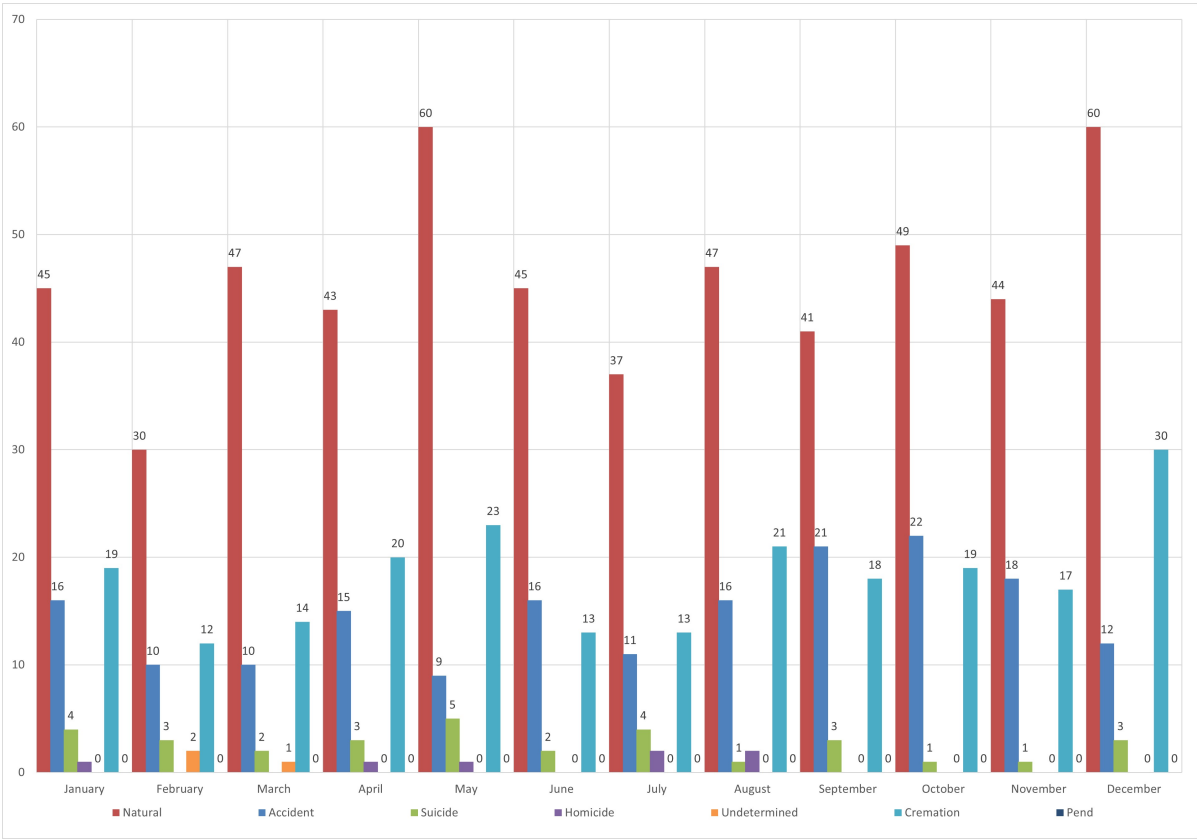
# Undetermined Deaths



# Cremations for Review

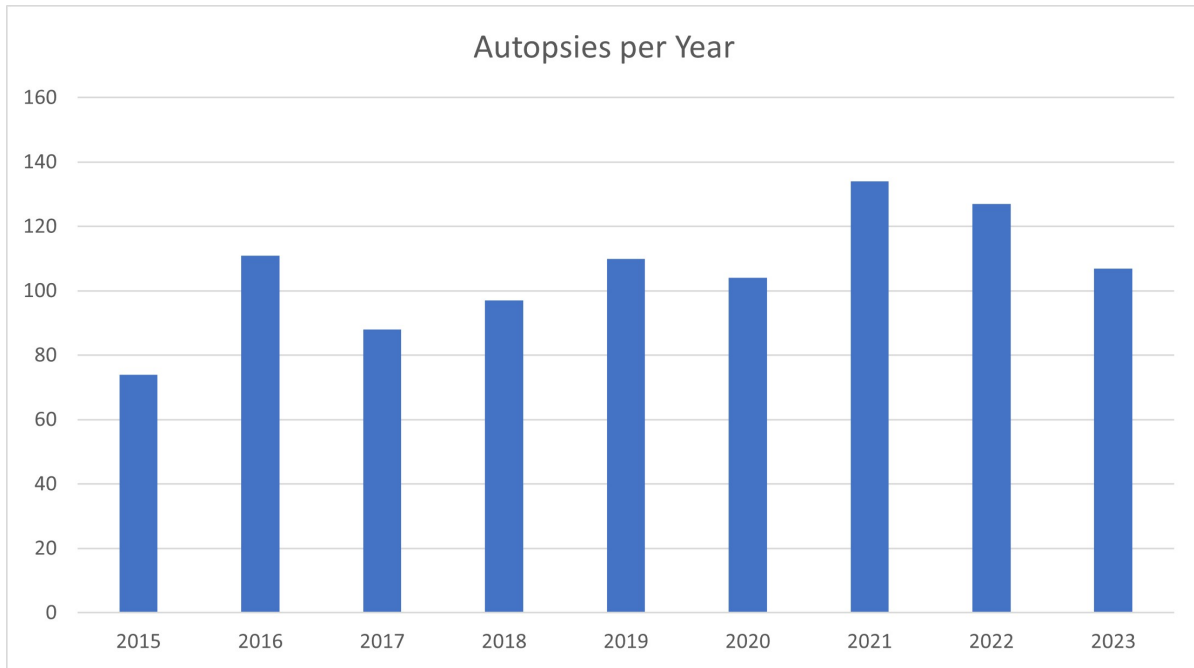


# Summary of 2023 Deaths by Month



## Number of Autopsies per Year

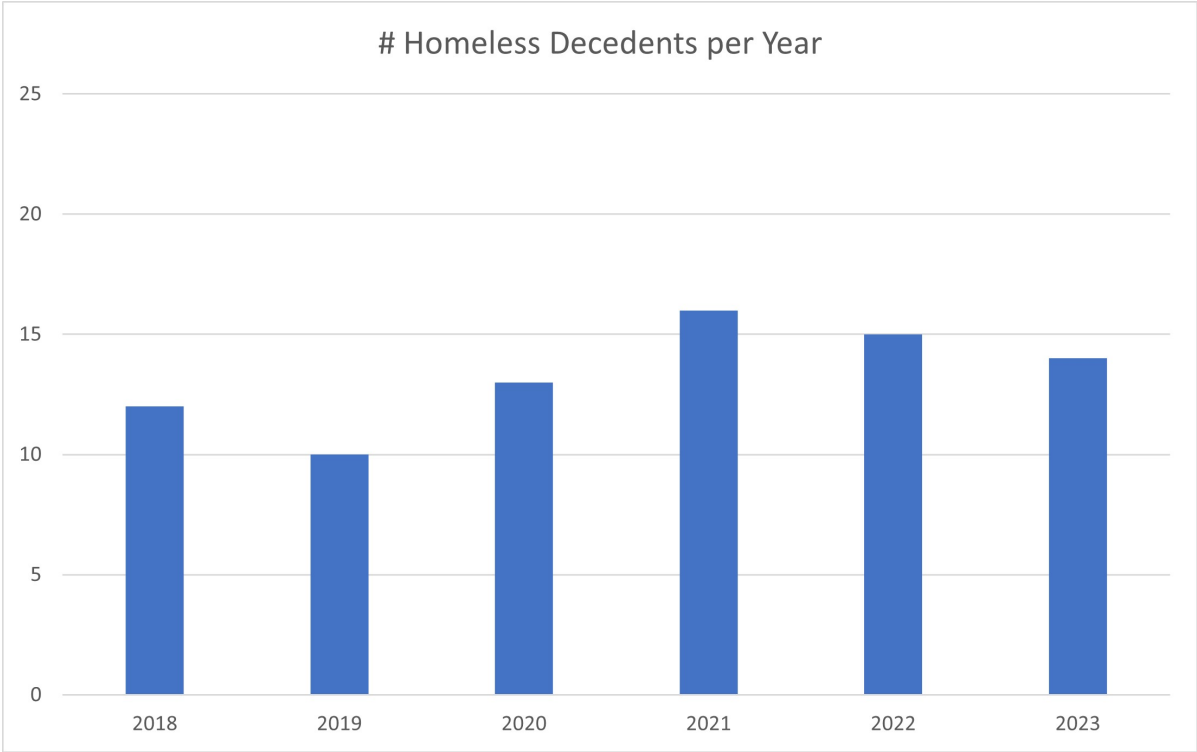
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Autopsies are performed by forensic pathologists at UND Forensic and Pathology Services in Grand Forks, North Dakota and the North Dakota State Medical Examiner in Bismarck, North Dakota.

# Number of Homeless Deaths per Year

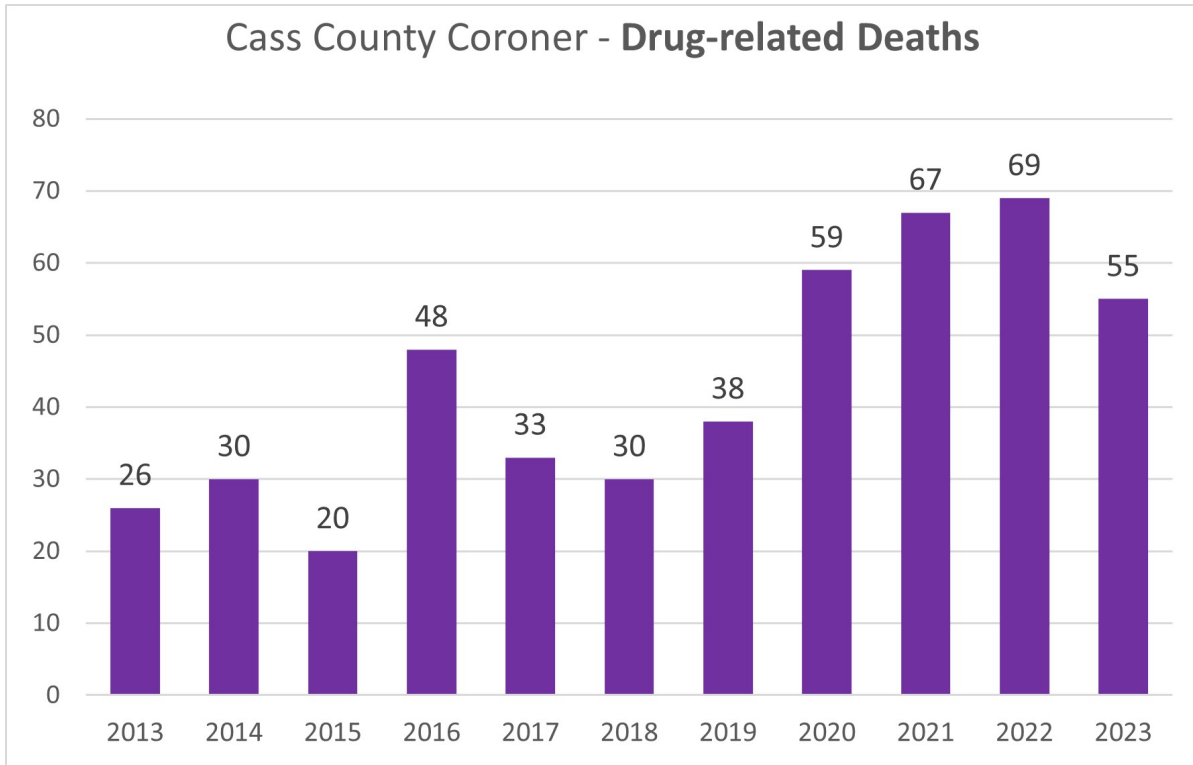
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Homeless deaths are considered decedents who did not have a permanent address.



# Drug-related Deaths



Substances of abuse included fentanyl and fentanyl analogs, methamphetamine, loperamide, bupropion, methadone, Seroquel, cocaine, trazodone, bromazepam, xylazine, oxycodone, 4-ANPP, alprazolam, THC, alcohol and difluoroethane.

## **Death by Gender:**

Male - 36

Female - 19

## **Race:**

Caucasian - 39

Native American - 9

Black - 6

Asian - 1

## **By Manner:**

Accident - 43

Suicide - 7

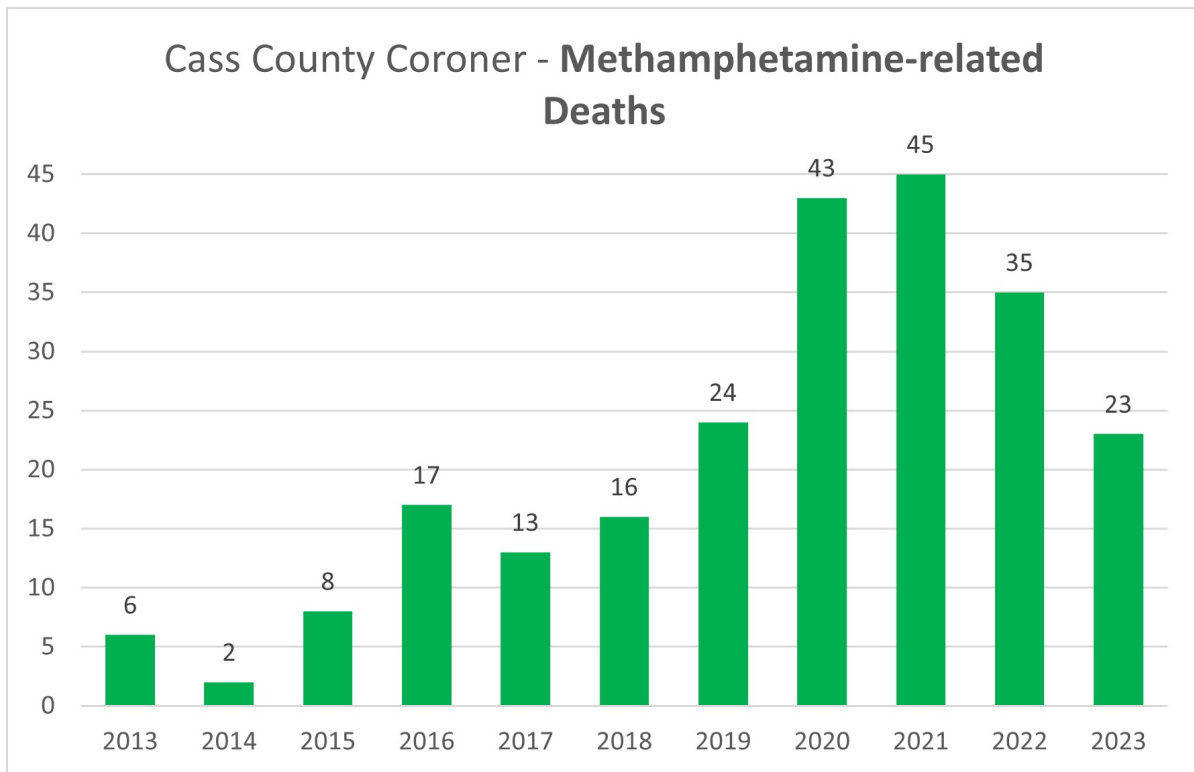
Natural - 3

Undetermined - 1

Homicide - 1

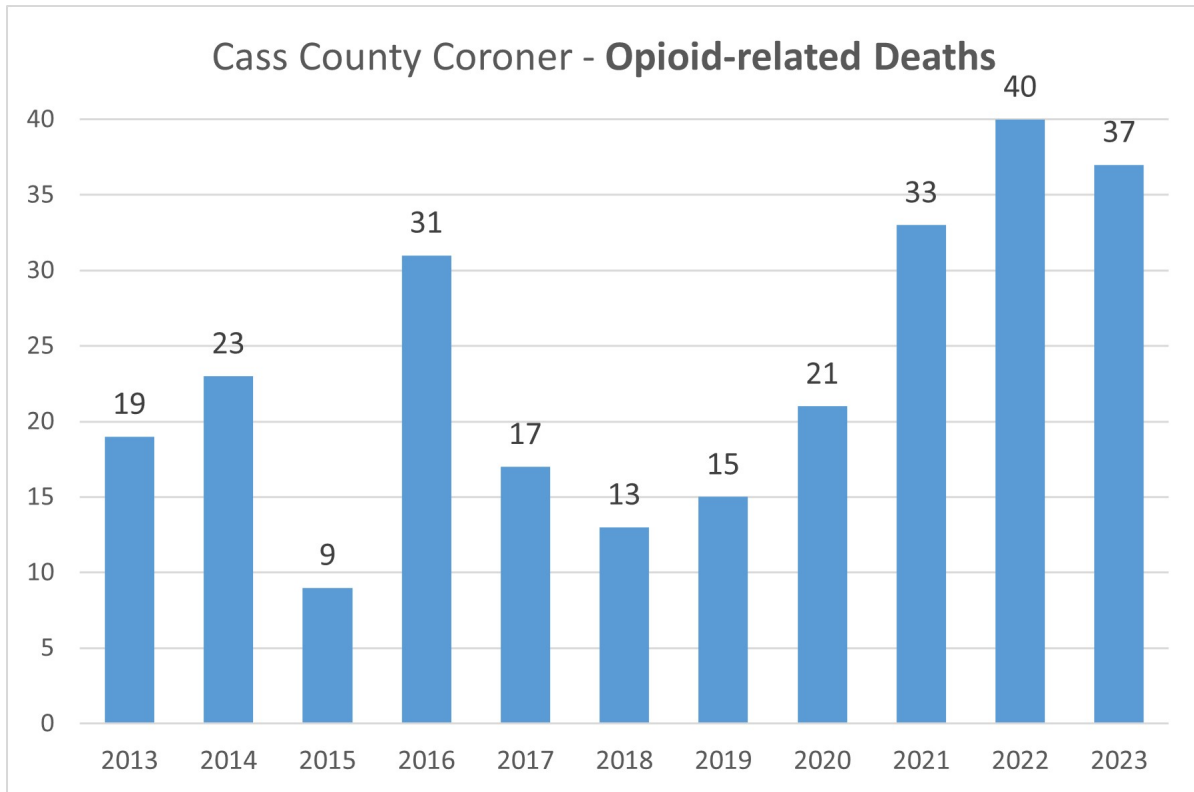
# Deaths Involving Methamphetamine

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# Deaths Involving Opioids

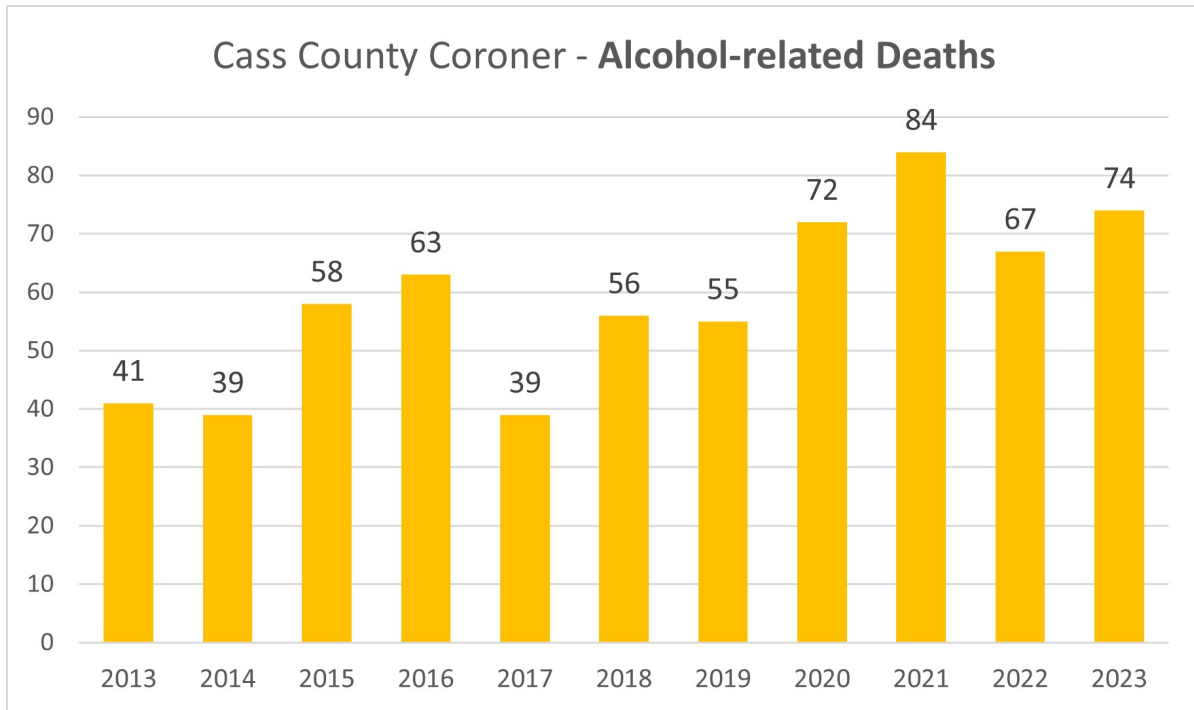
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Opioids include fentanyl, loperamide, methadone, beta-hydroxy fentanyl, fluorofentanyl and norfentanyl.

# Deaths Involving Alcohol

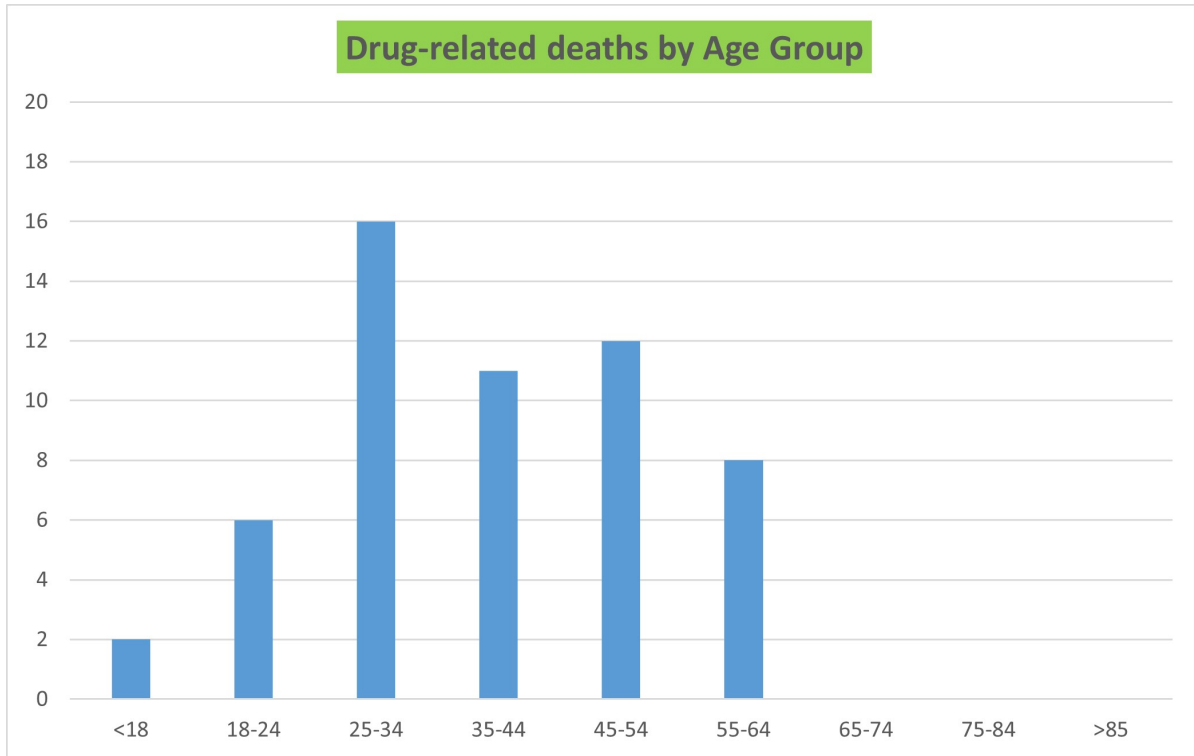
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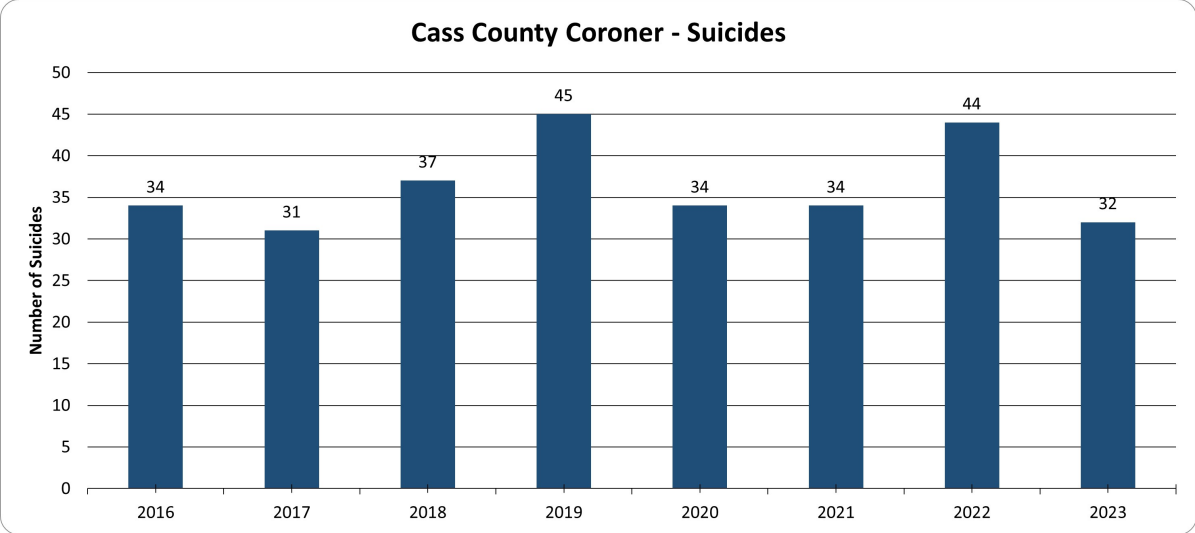
Alcohol-related deaths include complications due to chronic alcoholism, alcohol toxicity, those who die by suicide and deaths involved in motor vehicle crashes.

# Drug-related Deaths by Age Group

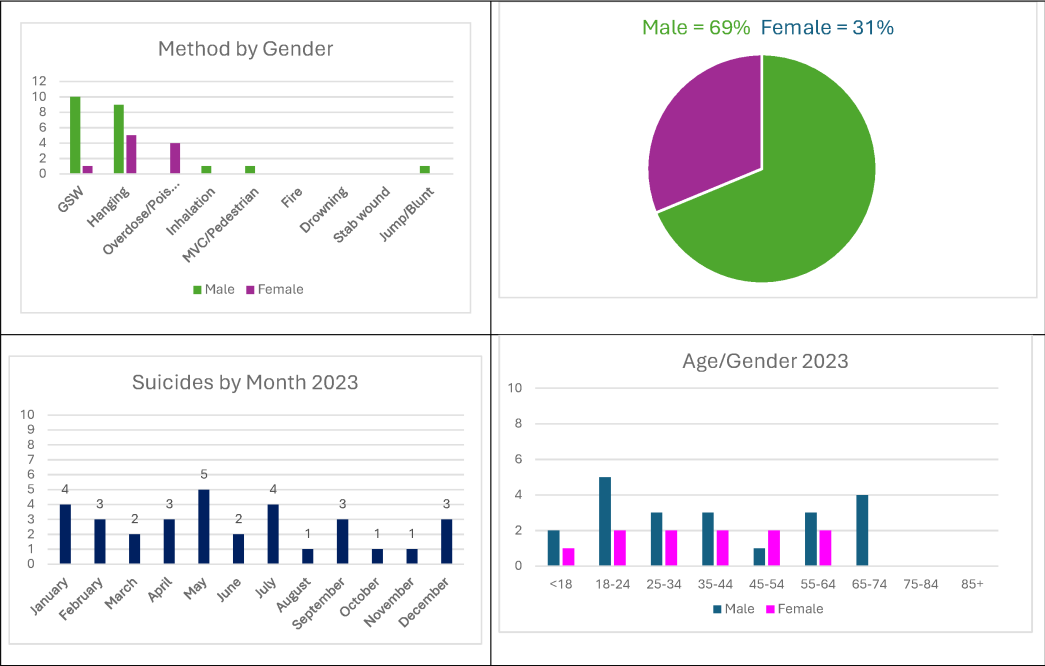
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# Suicides per Year

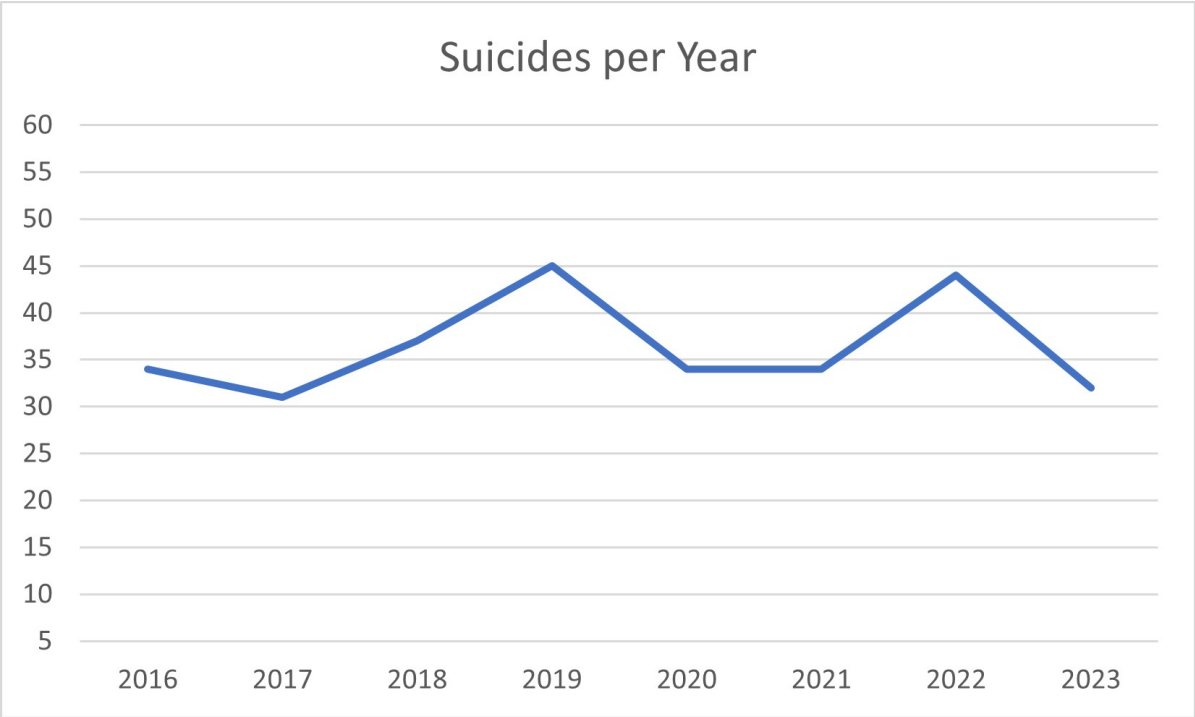


# Suicide Graphs



# Additional Statistics for Suicides

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# 2023 Deaths Investigated by Law Enforcement Agency

