

Cass County Coroner



2024 Annual Report

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

Last Revised: March 12, 2025

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Message to the Board of Commissioners and Citizens of Cass County

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 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 Cass County.

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Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's Office

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:

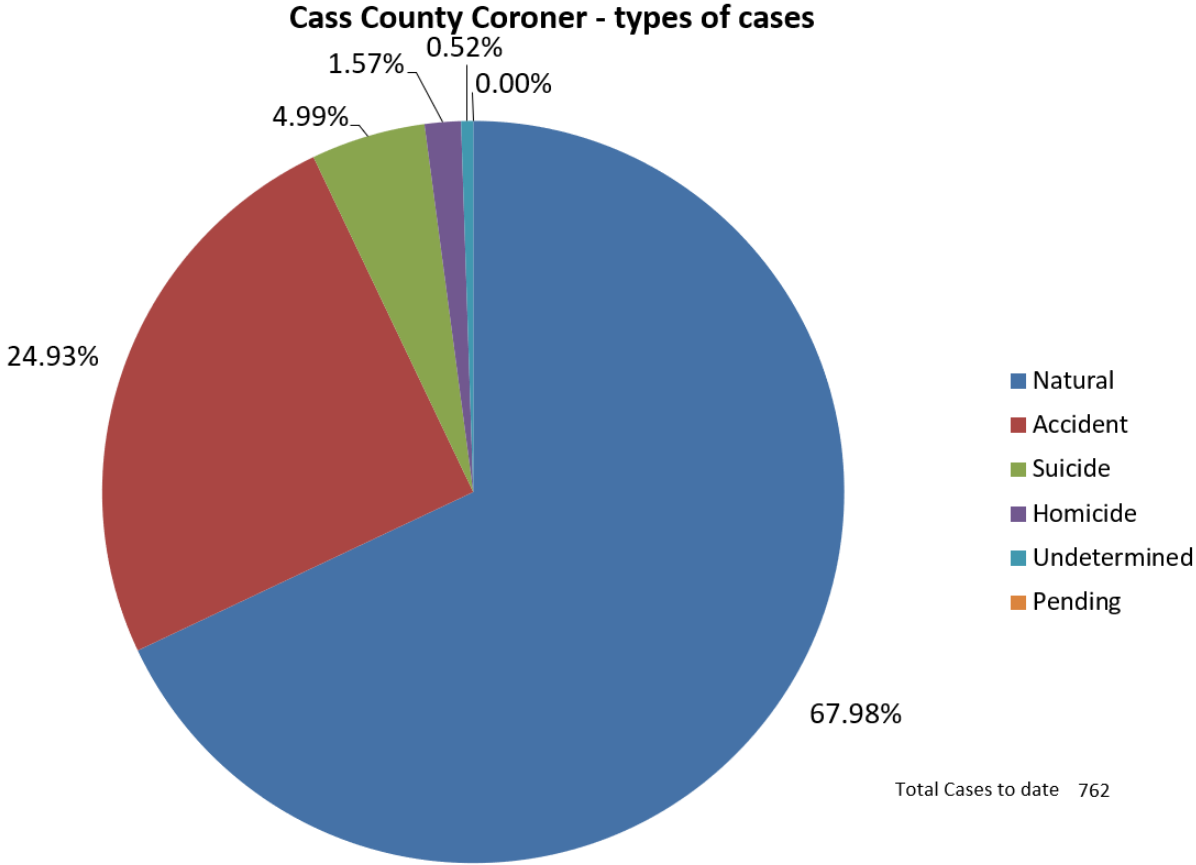
- **Obvious or suspected homicidal, suicidal or accidental injury**
- **Firearm injury**
- **Severe, unexplained injury**
- **Occupant or pedestrian motor vehicle injury**
- **An injury to a minor**
- **Fire, chemical, electrical, or radiation**
- **Starvation**
- **Unidentified or skeletonized human 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**
- **Any other suspicious factor.**

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

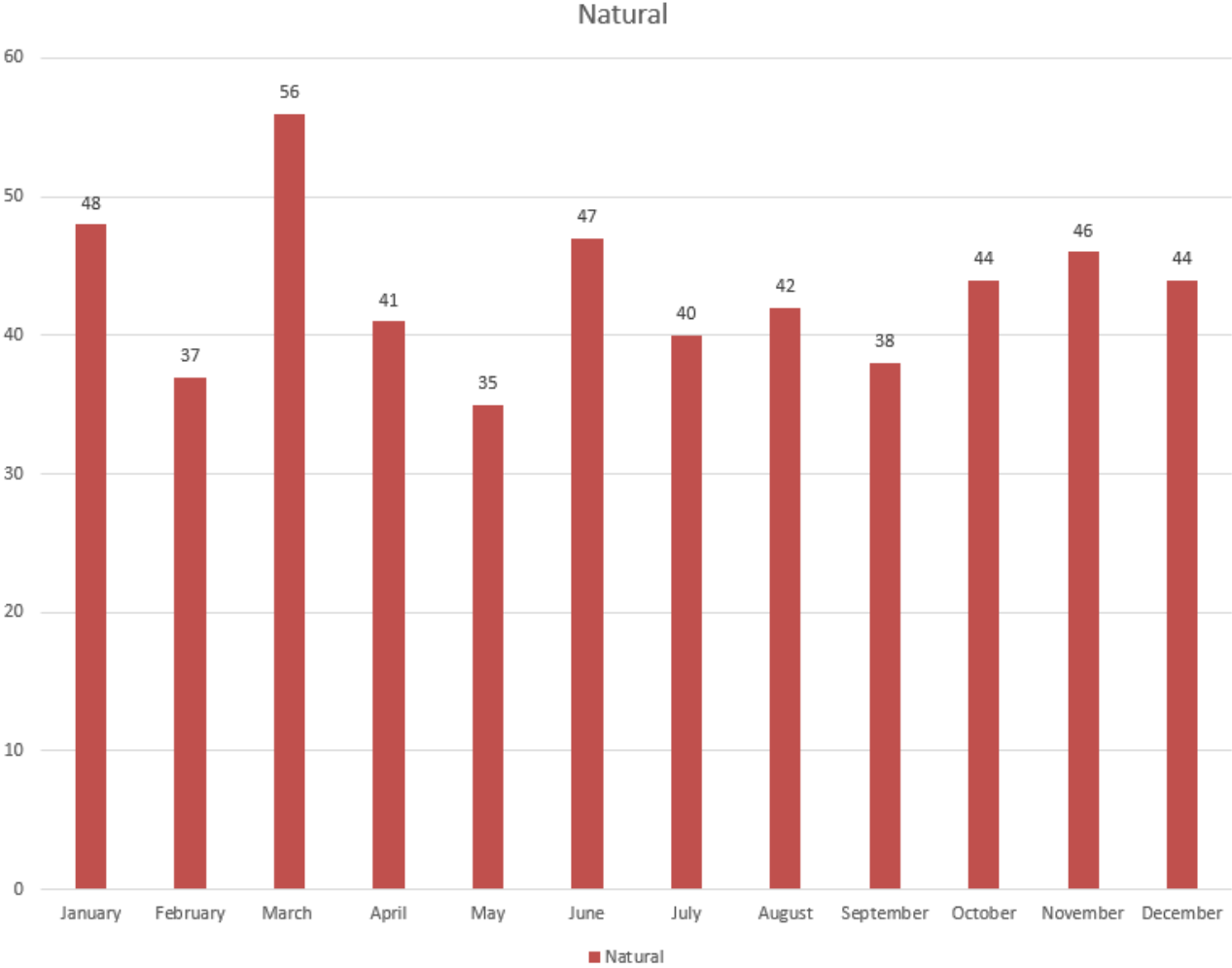
2024 Cass County Coroner Cases

Cass County Population	196,362
Cases Reported to the Cass County Coroner's Office	
A. Number of deaths reported to the coroner's office	762
1. Number of cases involving an autopsy	125
2. Number of accidental deaths	190
3. Number of suicides	38
4. Number of homicides	12
5. Number of undetermined deaths	4
B. Number of cremation authorizations	232
C. Number of cases involving law enforcement	322
1. Number of deaths investigated by Fargo Police	179
2. Number of deaths investigated by West Fargo Police	42
3. Number of deaths investigated by Cass County Sheriff	19
D. Number of reported deaths of a minor	20
E. Number of deaths involving drugs	51
F. Number of deaths involving alcohol	53
G. Number of unreported deaths	20
H. Number of non-reportable deaths	174
I. Number of deaths originating in other North Dakota counties	41
J. Number of deaths originating in Minnesota counties	140
K. Number of deaths originating in South Dakota counties	1
L. Number of transport assists by ambulances	4
M. Number of body removals by Cass County Coroner staff	168
N. Number of lift/removal assists by fire departments	27
O. Number of deaths reported by local hospitals	280
P. Number of cases reported by hospice	95
Q. Number of full-time staff	4
R. 2024 Department Budget	\$745,907
S. 2024 End-of-Year Budget Balance	\$682,160 (91% spent)

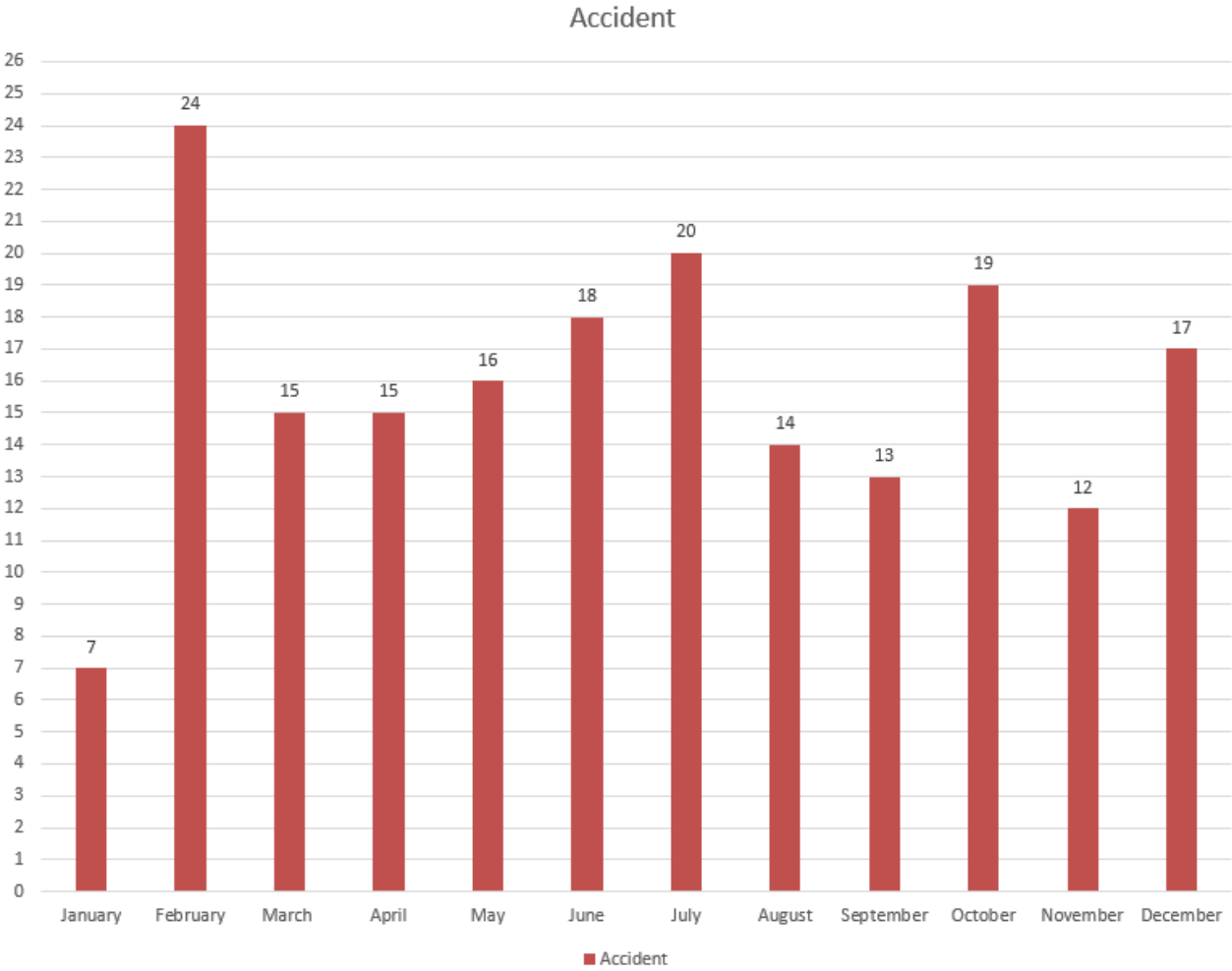
Manner of Death



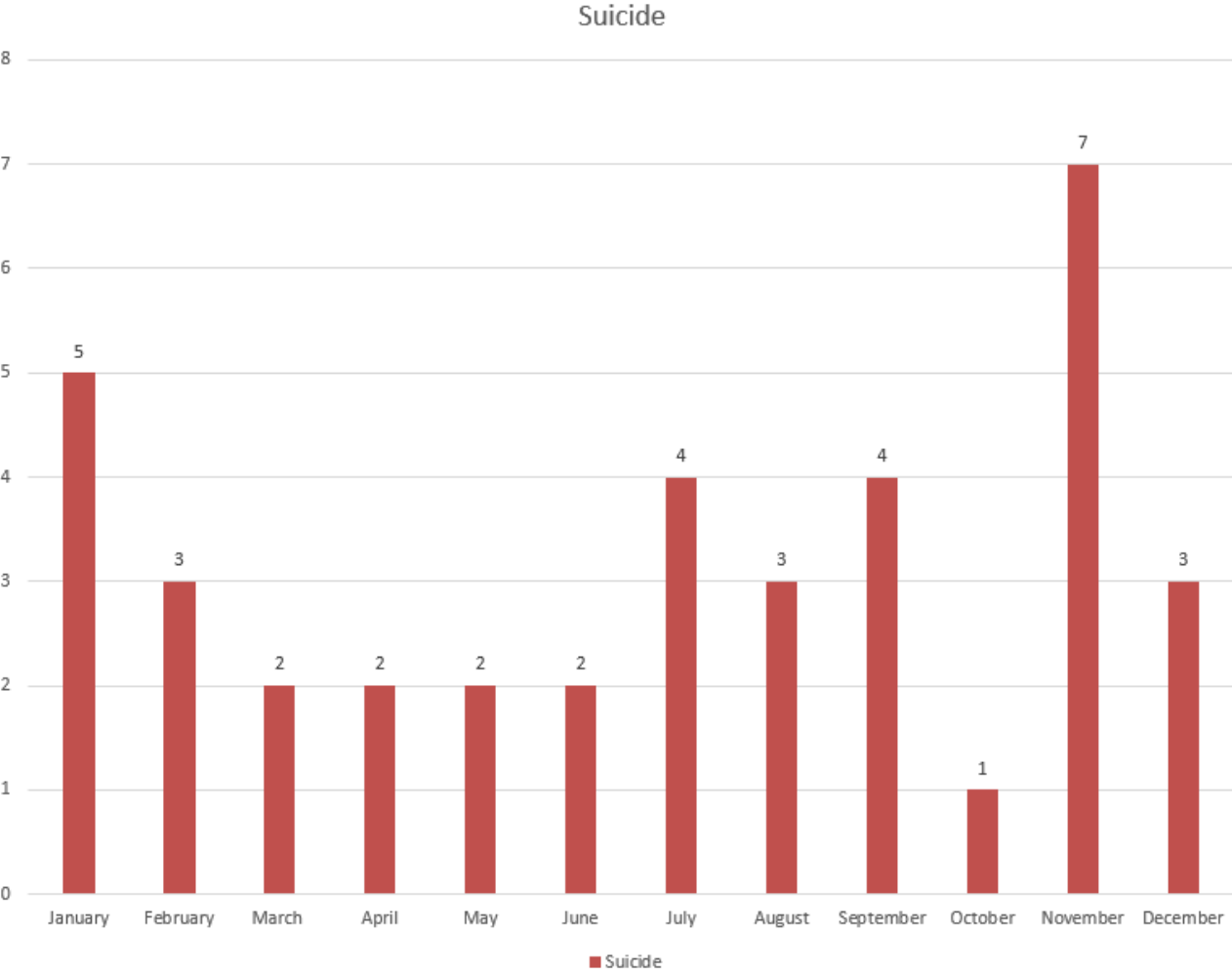
Natural Deaths



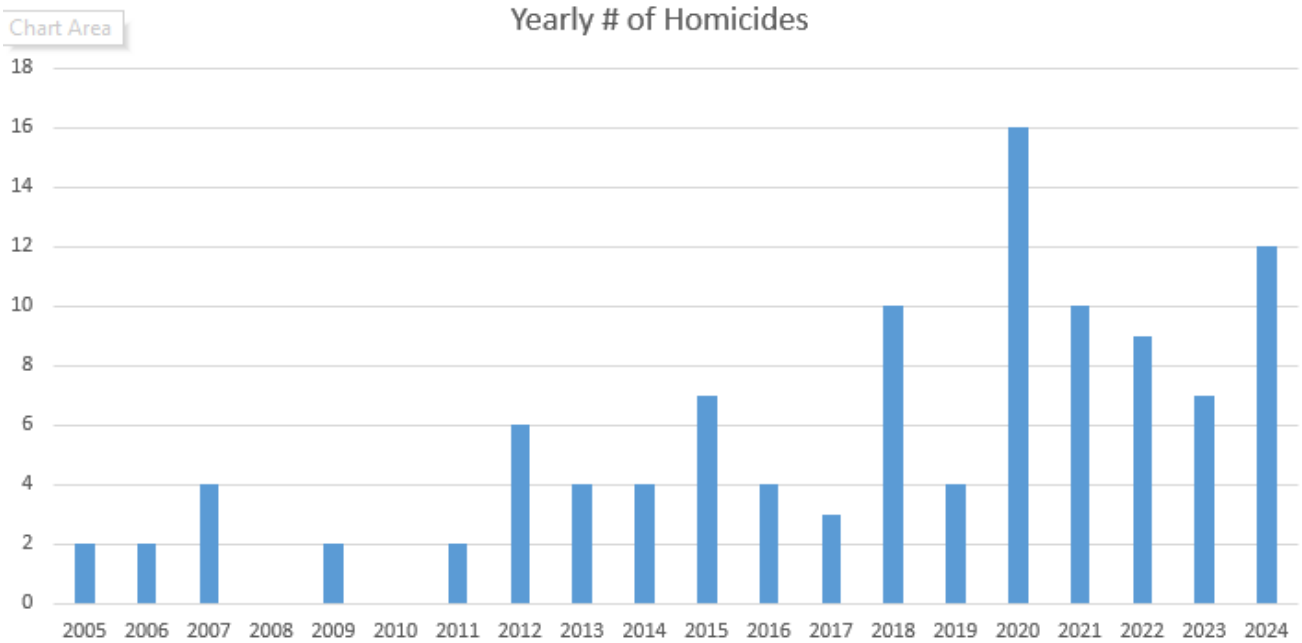
Accidental Deaths



Deaths by Suicide



Deaths by Homicide



* Denotes zero homicides reported in 2008 and 2010.

2024

Gender

Male - 11

Female -

1

Law Enforcement

Jurisdiction Fargo Police

Department - 6 West Fargo

Police Department - 1

BCI (outside of Cass County)

- 1

Minnesota Law Enforcement Agencies - 4

Method

Gunshot wounds

-8

Blunt force
injury/assault--1

Stabbing - 2

Age range (months, years)

>18 - 1

18-24 - 2

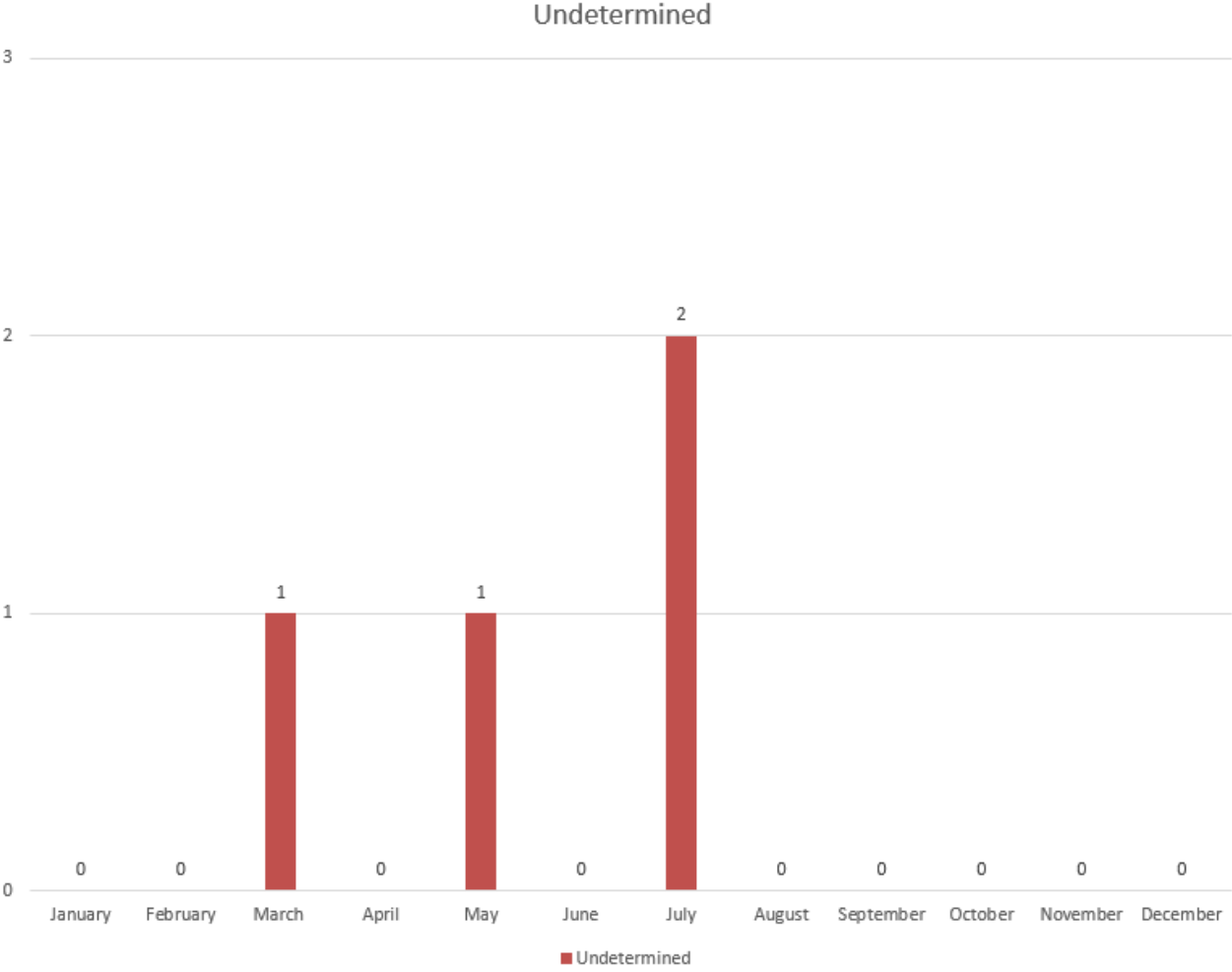
25-34 - 4

35-44 - 2

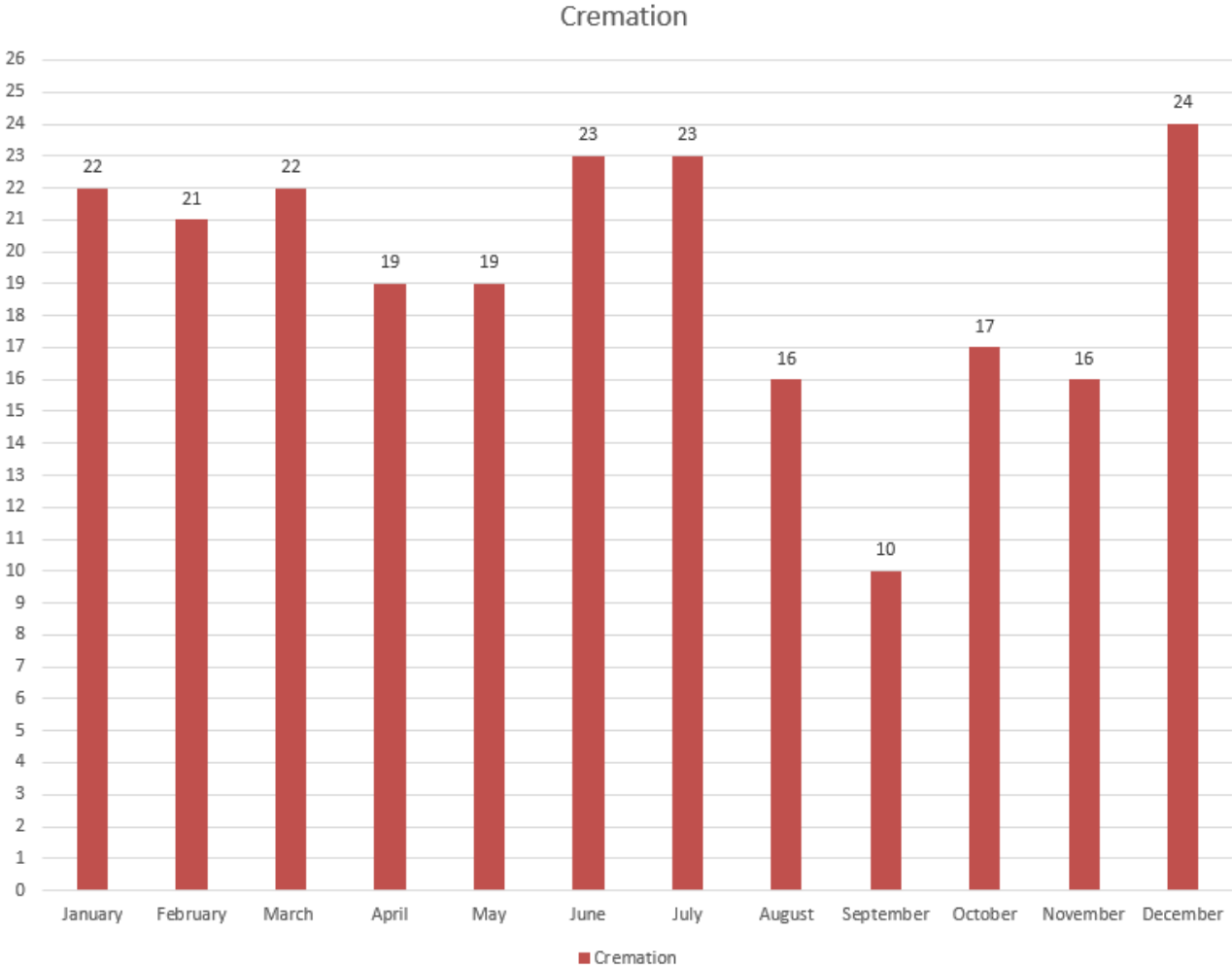
45-54 - 1

>55 - 2

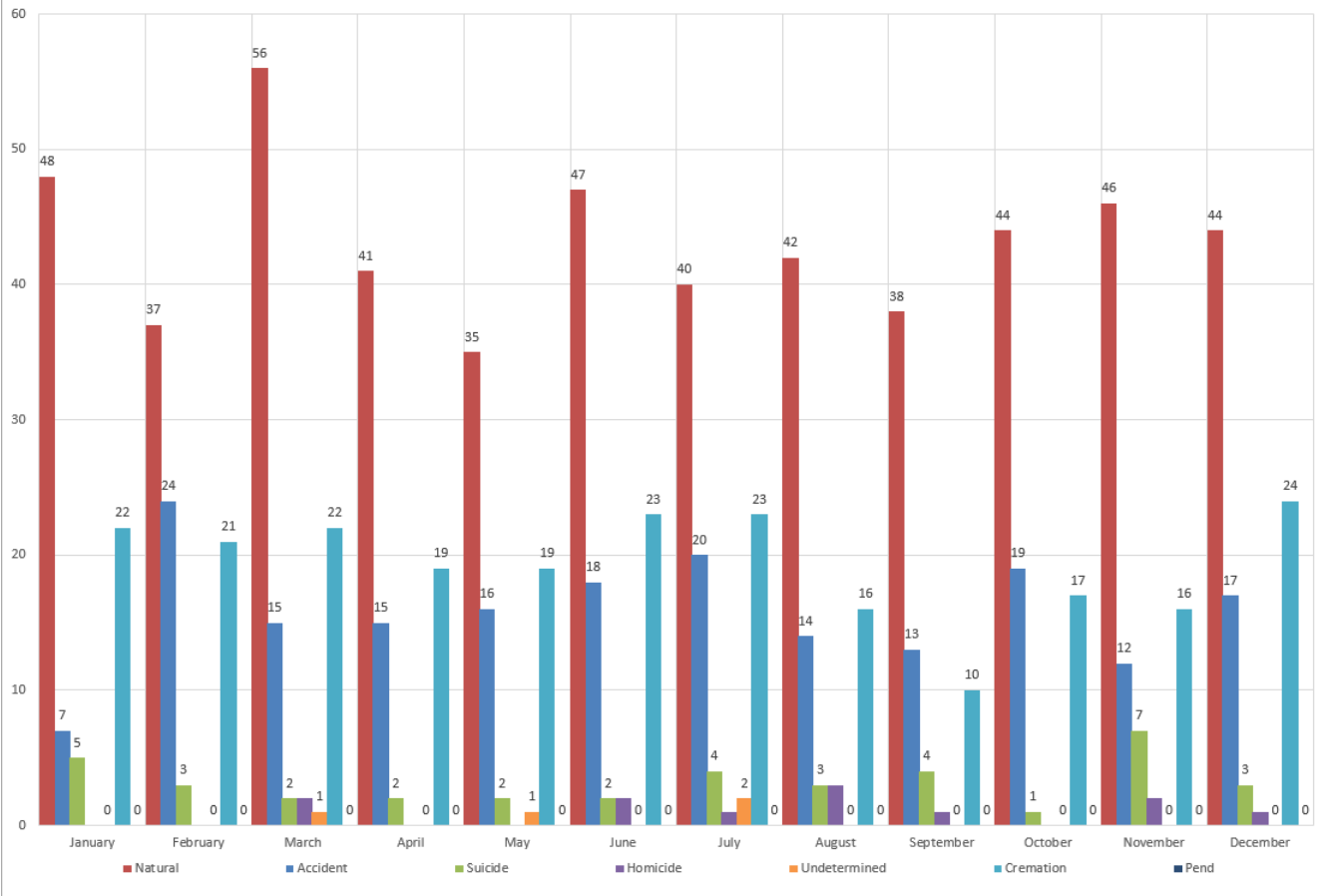
Undetermined Deaths



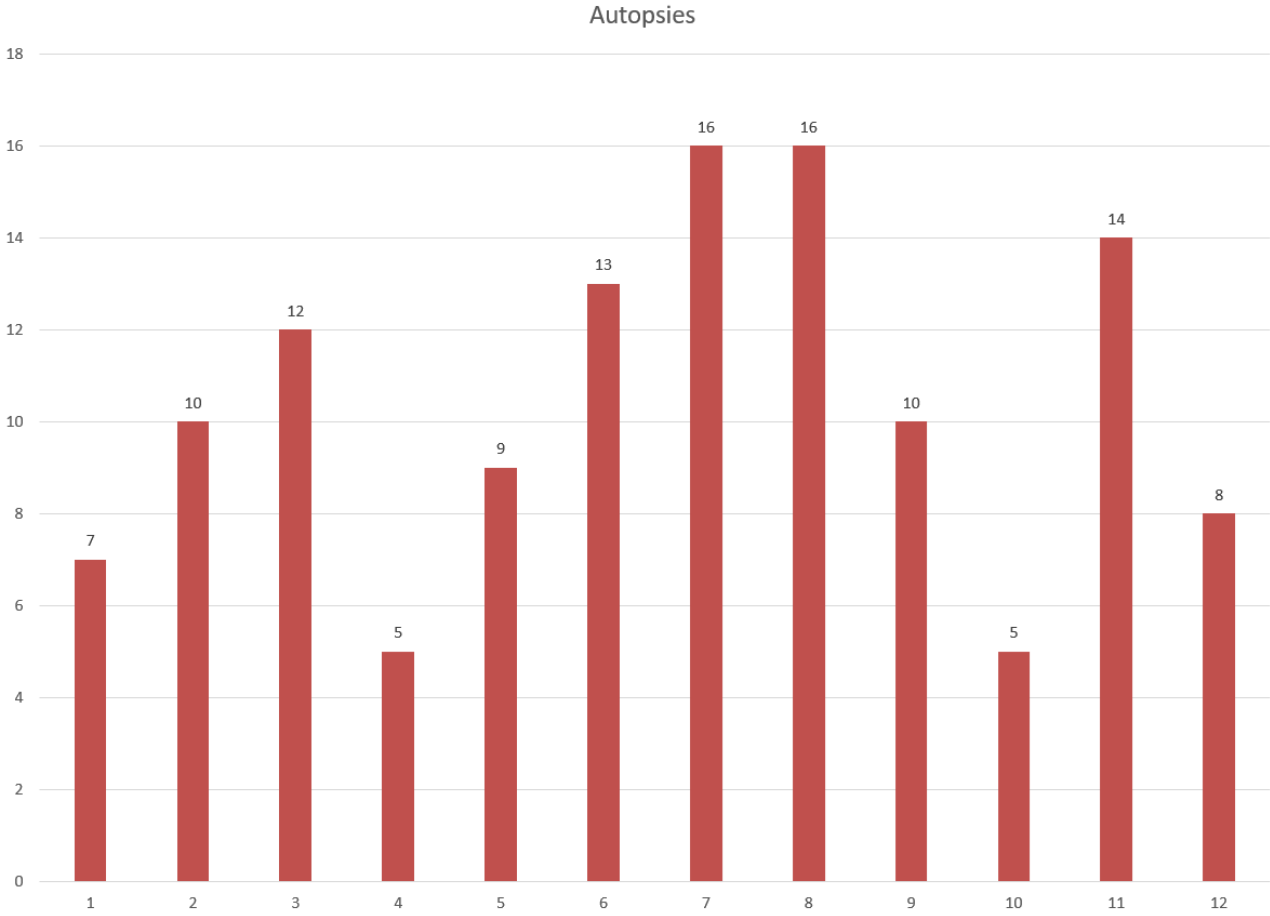
Cremations for Review



Summary of 2024 Deaths by Month

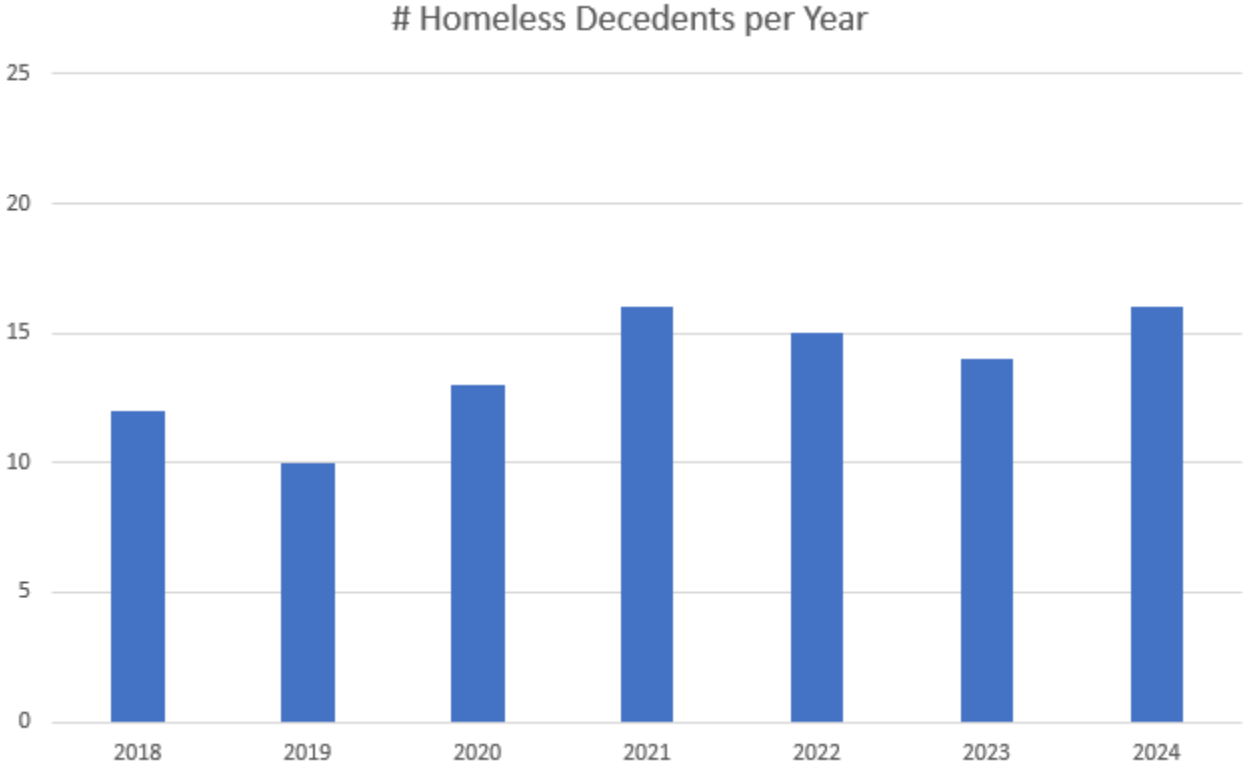


Number of Autopsies per Year



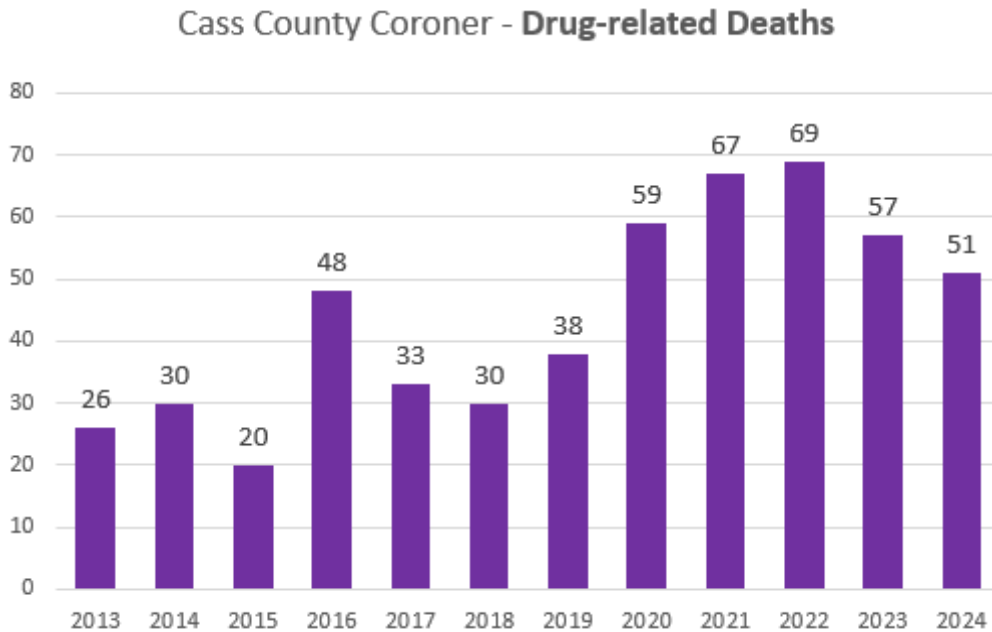
Autopsies are performed by forensic pathologists at UND Forensic and Pathology Services in Grand Forks, North Dakota and the North Dakota State Medical Examiner in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Number of Homeless Deaths per Year



Homeless deaths are considered decedents who did not have a permanent address. The death may have occurred at another residence, hospital, shelter, etc.

Drug-related Deaths



Substances of abuse included fentanyl and fentanyl analogs, methamphetamine, hydrocodone, methadone, cocaine, oxycodone, phenylpropanolamine, xylazine, tramadol, zolpidem, alprazolam, amitriptyline, cyclobenzaprine, diazepam, gabapentin, diphenhydramine, verapamil, codeine, heroin, amphetamine, topiramate and ethyl alcohol.

Death by Gender:

Male - 33

Female - 18

Race:

Caucasian - 31

Native American

11 Black - 8

Hispanic - 1

By Manner:

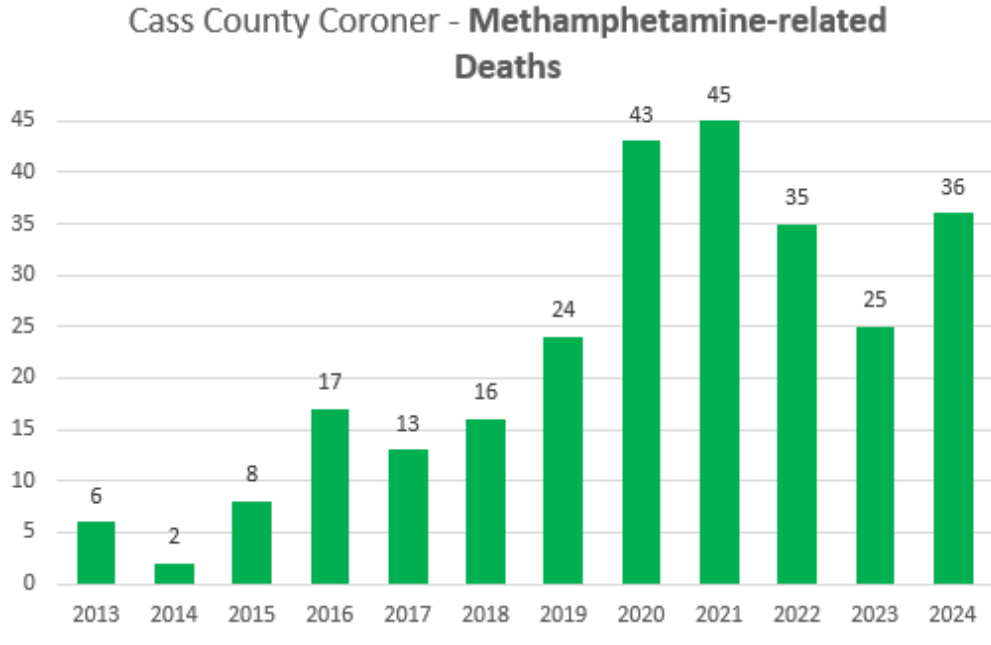
Accident - 34

Suicide - 9

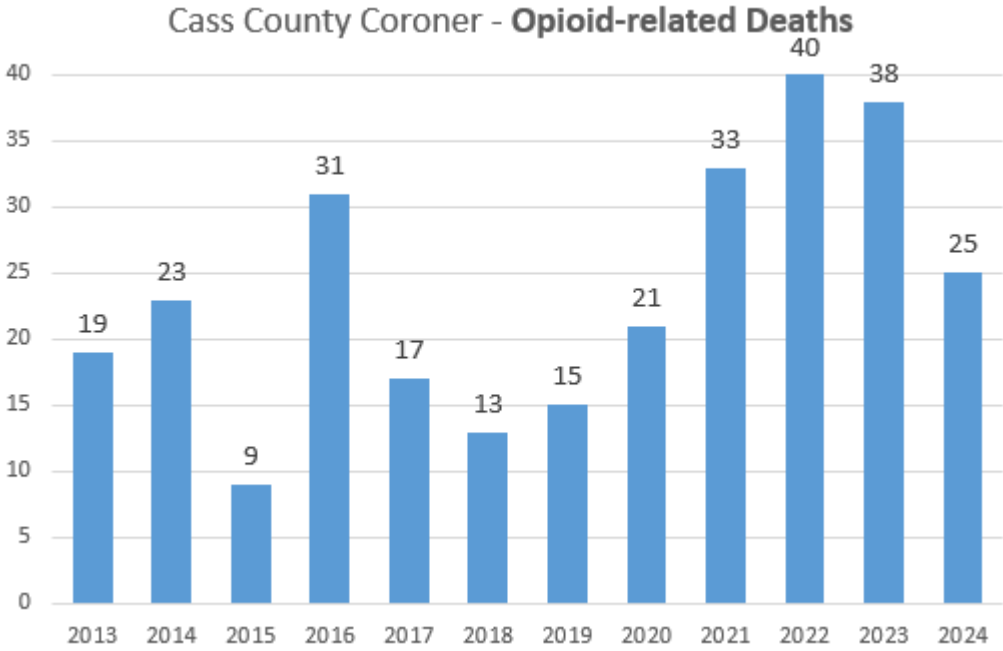
Natural - 6

Homicide - 2

Deaths Involving Methamphetamine

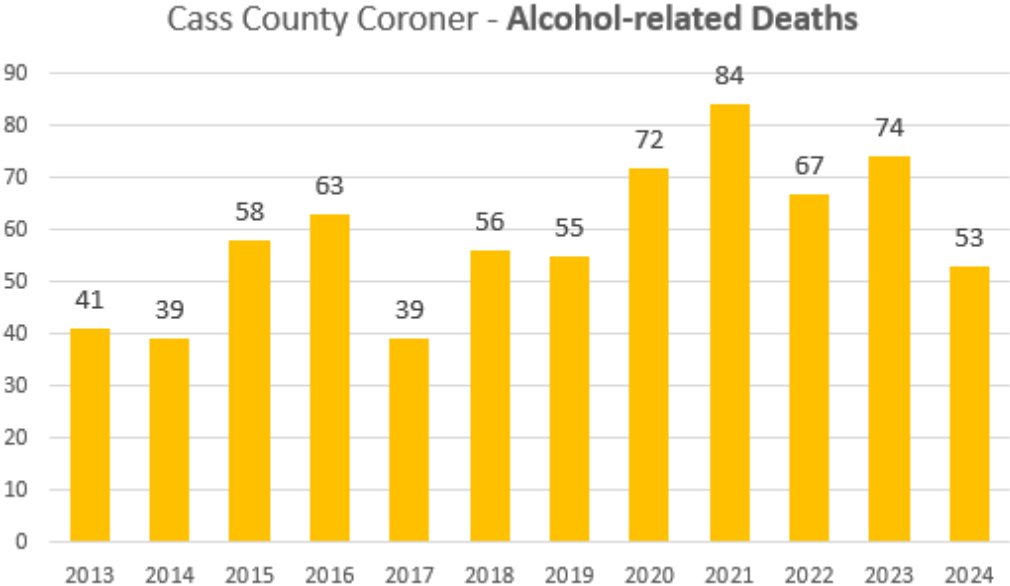


Deaths Involving Opioids



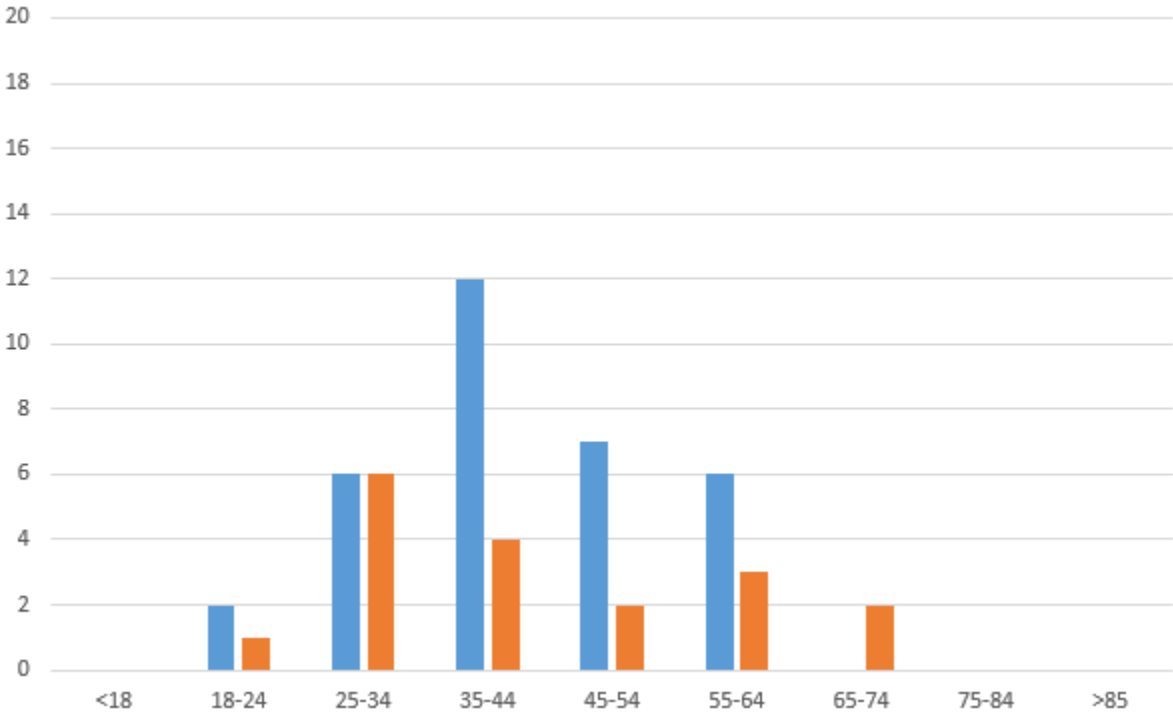
Opioids include fentanyl, hydrocodone, oxycodone, methadone, heroin and Tramadol.

Deaths Involving Alcohol

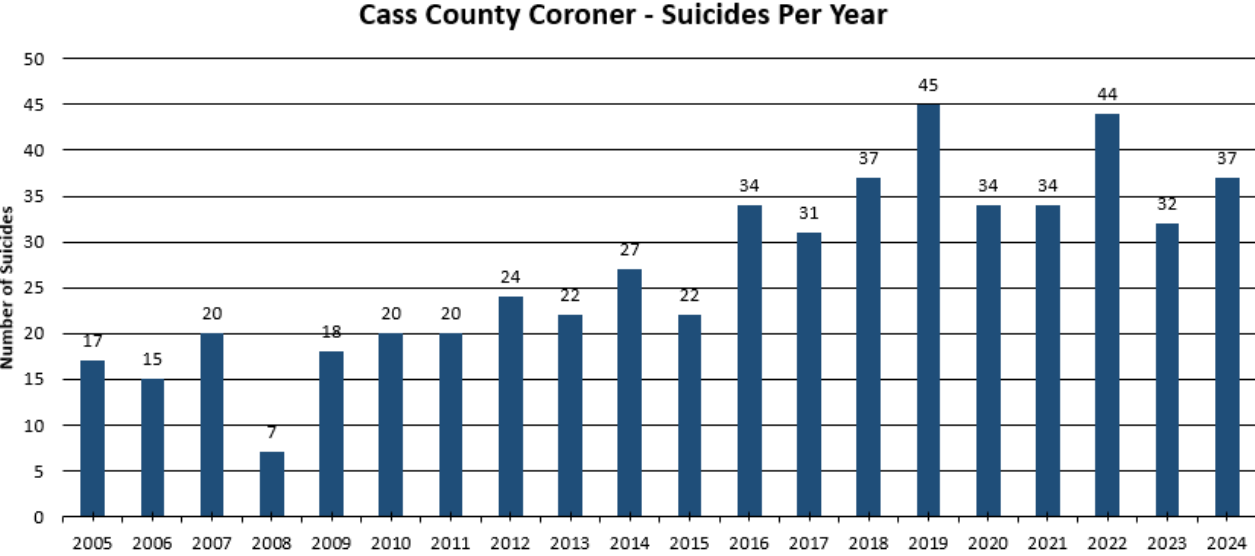


Alcohol-related deaths include complications due to chronic alcoholism, alcohol toxicity, those who die by suicide and deaths involved in motor vehicle crashes.

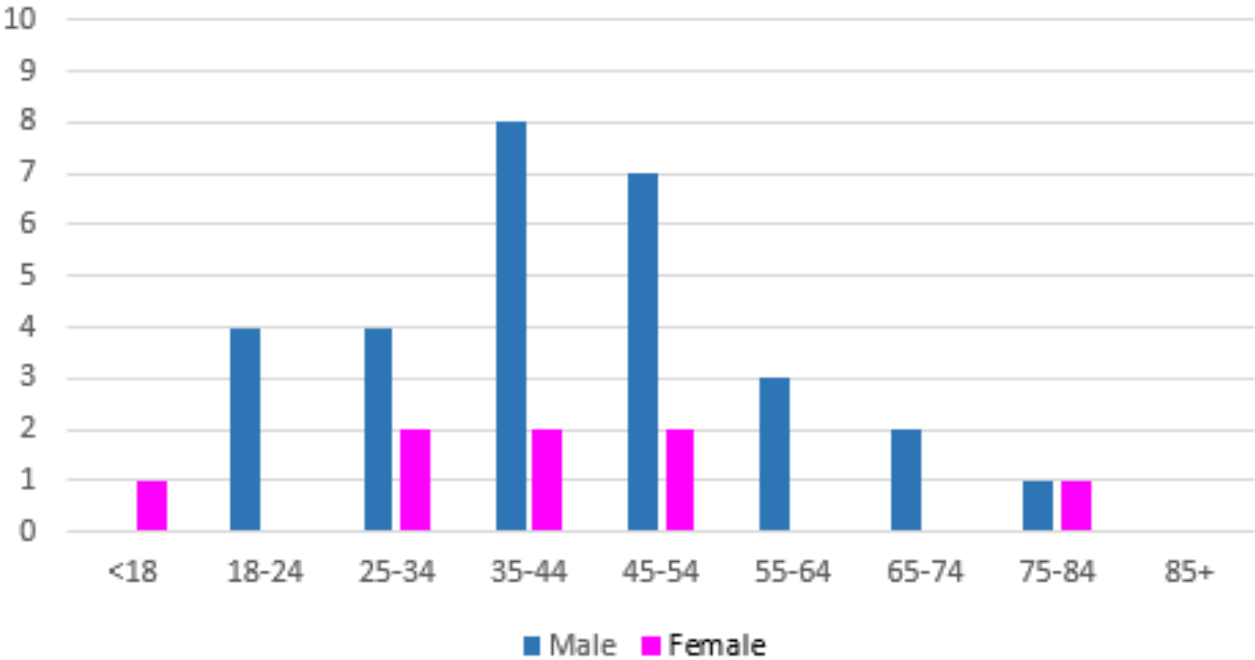
Drug-related Deaths by Age Group



Suicides per Year



Suicide by Age



Additional Statistics for Suicides



2024 Deaths Investigated by Law Enforcement Agency

Law Enforcement Agency unattended death investigation in Cass County
2024

