

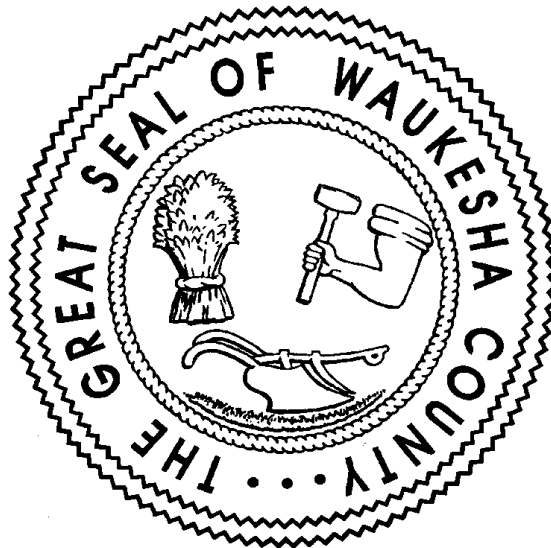


Medical Examiner Annual Report

---

# WAUKESHA COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT 2020

---



---

Prepared By: Allison Wiess, MPH

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**OVERVIEW** **2**

---

MISSION ..... 3

INVESTIGATION OF DEATHS ..... 4

MEDICAL EXAMINER STAFF ..... 5

FACILITY ..... 6

2020 MEDICAL EXAMINER ACTIVITY ..... 7

DEATHS BY MANNER ..... 8

NATURAL DEATHS ..... 9

ACCIDENTAL DEATHS ..... 11

SUICIDE DEATHS ..... 14

HOMICIDE DEATHS ..... 17

DRUG RELATED DEATHS ..... 18

ADDITIONAL OFFICE DATA ..... 20

## MISSION

The Waukesha County Medical Examiner's Office investigates deaths as mandated by Wisconsin State Statute 979.01 to ensure the safety, health and welfare of the community. Our office provides investigation, documentation, and medical evaluation of reportable cases. The Medical Examiner's Office, as defined by state statute, is not part of any police agency, Sheriff's Department, or hospital.

The Medical Examiner's Office achieves these goals by applying knowledge and experience in the field of death investigation and forensic pathology to the performance of comprehensive, professional investigations. Through the identification, documentation and accurate interpretation of relevant forensic scientific information, the Medical Examiner's Office clarifies the circumstances surrounding these deaths and may provide information for use in criminal and civil litigation. This information may also serve to protect public health and safety by identifying contagious diseases; by identifying environmental hazards in the workplace, home, and community; and, by tracking local mortality trends (trends in homicides, suicides, motor vehicle fatalities, drug and alcohol related deaths, etc.).

The Waukesha County Medical Examiner's Office is also committed to providing professional services to other Wisconsin counties through the performance of forensic autopsies, assistance with training and education, and consultation on medicolegal issues. It is a goal of the office to be an active force in standardizing, improving and professionalizing death investigation in the state of Wisconsin.

## INVESTIGATION OF DEATHS

Chapter 979.01 of the Wisconsin Statutes mandates for investigation of deaths under a number of circumstances. These include:

- (a) All deaths in which there are unexplained, unusual, or suspicious circumstances
- (b) All homicides
- (c) All suicides
- (d) All deaths following abortion
- (e) All deaths due to poisoning, whether homicidal, suicidal, or accidental
- (f) All deaths following accidents, whether the injury is or is not the primary cause of death (e.g. hip fractures in the elderly)
- (g) When there is no physician, or accredited practitioner of a bona fide religious denomination relying upon prayer or spiritual means for healing in attendance within 30 days preceding death
- (h) When a physician refuses to sign the death certificate
- (i) When after reasonable efforts, a physician cannot be obtained to sign the medical certification within 6 days after the pronouncement of death or sooner under circumstances which the medical examiner determines to be an emergency.

A death reported to the Medical Examiner's office is investigated by a Deputy Medical Examiner, a specialist in death investigation.

Chapter 979.10 also mandates a representative of the Medical Examiner's office shall view a body, make an inquiry into the cause and manner of death, and issue a permit before cremation can proceed. These examinations are performed primarily at local funeral homes by Deputy Medical Examiners.

The Medical Examiner's office also issues disinterment permits. These permits require a review of documentation submitted by funeral home or memorial park personnel prior to the authorization for disinterment.

## MEDICAL EXAMINER STAFF

### **Medical Examiner**

Lynda Biedrzycki, MD

### **Associate Medical Examiner**

Amy Sheil, MD

### **Deputy Medical Examiner Supervisor**

Kristine Klenz

### **Deputy Medical Examiners**

Andrea Sorce

Allison Wiess

Cristina Figueroa Soto

Derek Dougherty

Kathryn Dougherty

Sarah Barth

Tabitha Kukes

Pam McCarty

### **Deputy Medical Examiner / Pathology Assistants**

Jamie Rohn

Warren Becker

Dalelynn Modrak

### **Office Services Coordinator**

Nicole Bauer

### **Administrative Assistants**

Ashley Kirchenberg

Kayla Wodkowski

Melissa Ziegler

## FACILITY

### Autopsy:

- Capacity for 26 bodies
- Capacity for large decedents (two bariatric carts)
- Four autopsy stations (three regular, one isolation)
  - Allows for all doctors to work simultaneously
    - Multiple law enforcement agencies to witness cases
  - Isolation room allows tissue donation during autopsy procedures
    - Doctor may supervise
    - No delay in recovery

Isolation room allows segregation of infected, decomposed or other special cases

### Specimens:

- Refrigerated toxicology specimens held 1 year
- Frozen toxicology specimens held 5 years
- Gross tissue toxicology specimens held 5 years
- Slides and blocks held indefinitely

### Identification / Viewing:

- Segregated autopsy station with window for family viewing *if necessary*
  - Medical Examiner / Law enforcement agency to accompany family
- Law enforcement personnel may view procedure through window if desired

### Waiting Area:

- Secure waiting areas for law enforcement to pursue other work if desired

### Sally Port:

- Secure garage

### Mini Disasters:

- Ability to create work stations in autopsy area to process multiple victims
  - Property, X-ray, Photo, Identification, etc.

## 2020 WAUKESHA CO. MEDICAL EXAMINER ACTIVITY

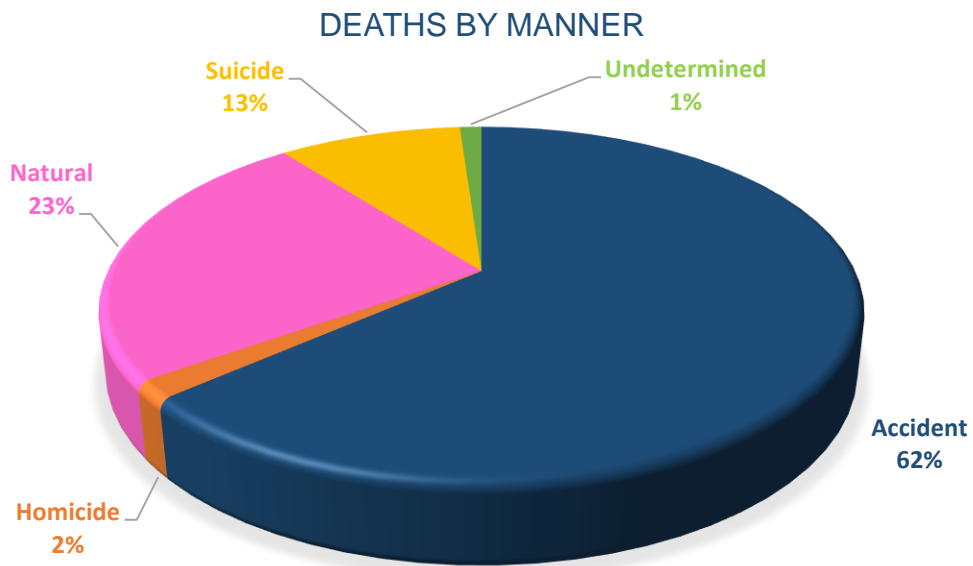
Category	Number
Total Population of Waukesha County (2020)	406,785
Total Deaths in Waukesha County (2020)	tbd
Cases Reported	1,684
Scenes*	550*
Referred Cases	82
Bodies Transported to the ME Office	565
Released Cases	1055
Autopsies	282
External Examinations	248
Non-Human Bone	4
Record Review Only	17
Total Cremation Permits Issued	2,625
Cremation Only	1,584
Cremation Exams	2,061
Disinterments	4
Autopsies performed for outside jurisdictions	105

Note: Some of these categories overlap. For example, all scenes are also cases, and most death certificates signed by the Medical Examiner's Office are also autopsies or external examinations. Additionally, not all bodies that were transported to the Medical Examiner's Office receive an examination or an autopsy.

\* In 2020, due to the ongoing pandemic, adjustments to our office protocols were made and not all scenes were responded to in person by an Investigator. Of the 550 total calls for scene deaths, 186 became phone pronouncements and an investigator did not respond to the residence.

## DEATHS CERTIFIED IN WAUKESHA CO. IN 2020 (BY MANNER OF DEATH)

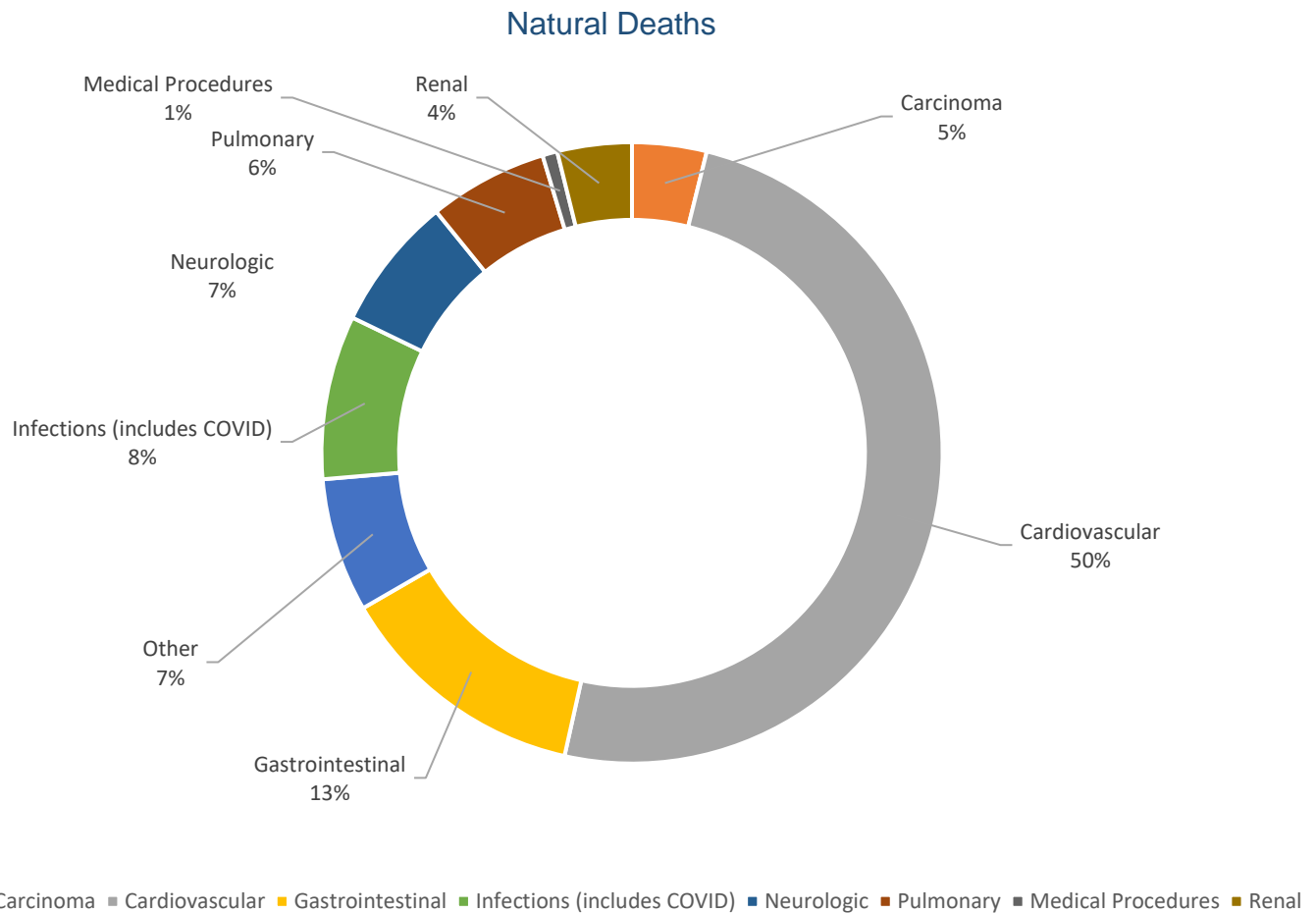
Manner	Number
Natural	130
Accident	347
Suicide	51
Homicide	9
Undetermined	6
<b>Total Death Certificates Signed</b>	<b>543</b>





## DEATHS BY MANNER: NATURAL

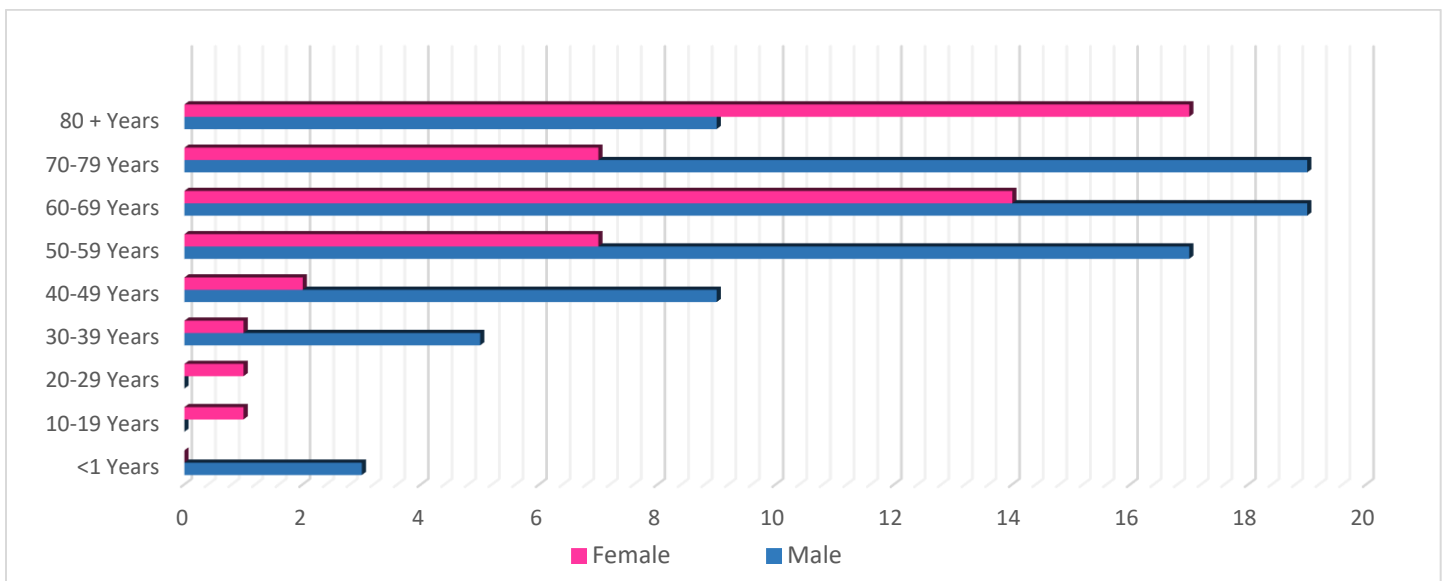
Waukesha County Medical Examiner’s Office classified 130 cases as “natural” in 2020. “Natural” is used when the death is caused solely by underlying disease. These deaths fall under the Medical Examiner jurisdiction when the person is not under the care of a health care provider, the death is considered sudden or unexpected, or when the circumstances surrounding the death are suspicious.



## Natural Data

Natural Deaths by Age and Gender:

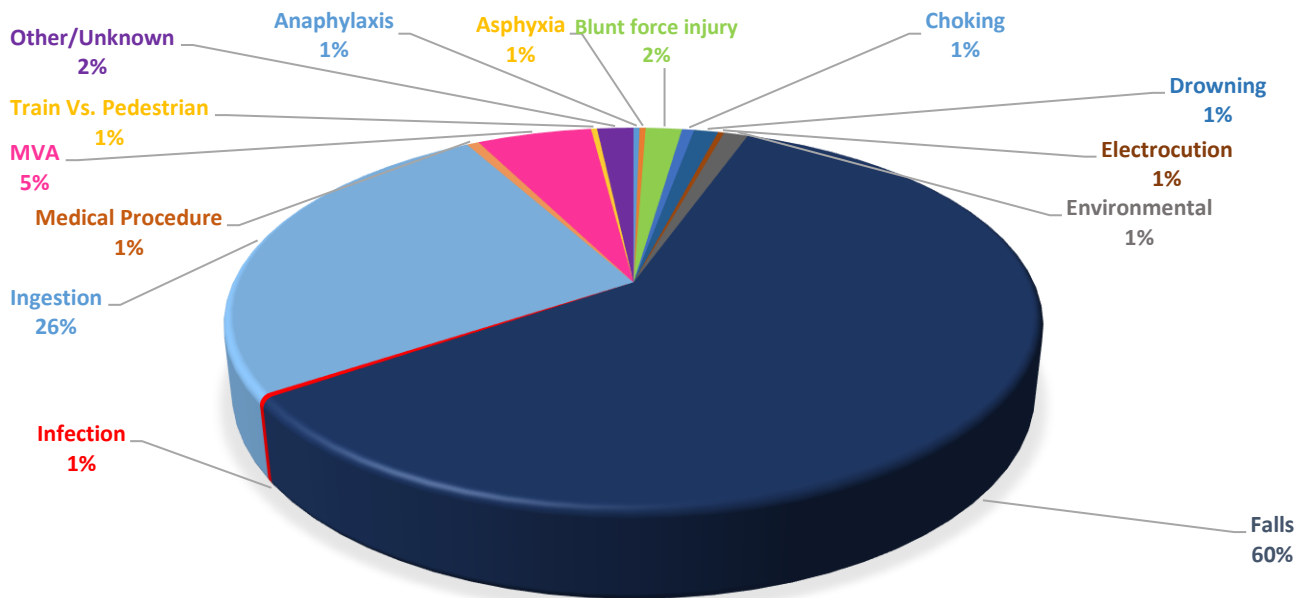
Type/Age in years		<1	1-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80+	Total
Carcinoma	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
	Male	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	3
Cardiovascular	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	2	7	19
	Male	0	0	0	0	1	4	10	12	13	5	45
Gastrointestinal	Female	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	1	7
	Male	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	4	1	0	10
Infection	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	4
	Male	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	2	7
Medical Procedure	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neurologic	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	4
	Male	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	5
Pulmonary	Female	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	4
	Male	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	4
Renal	Female	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	4
	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Other	Female	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	4
	Male	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>130</b>



## DEATHS BY MANNER: ACCIDENT

In 2020, the Waukesha County Medical Examiner’s Office classified 347 deaths as “accidental”. Accidental deaths are a result of an unintentional event, or chain of events. This category of classification includes: motor vehicle accidents, falls, drowning, accidental drug overdoses, medical procedures, etc.

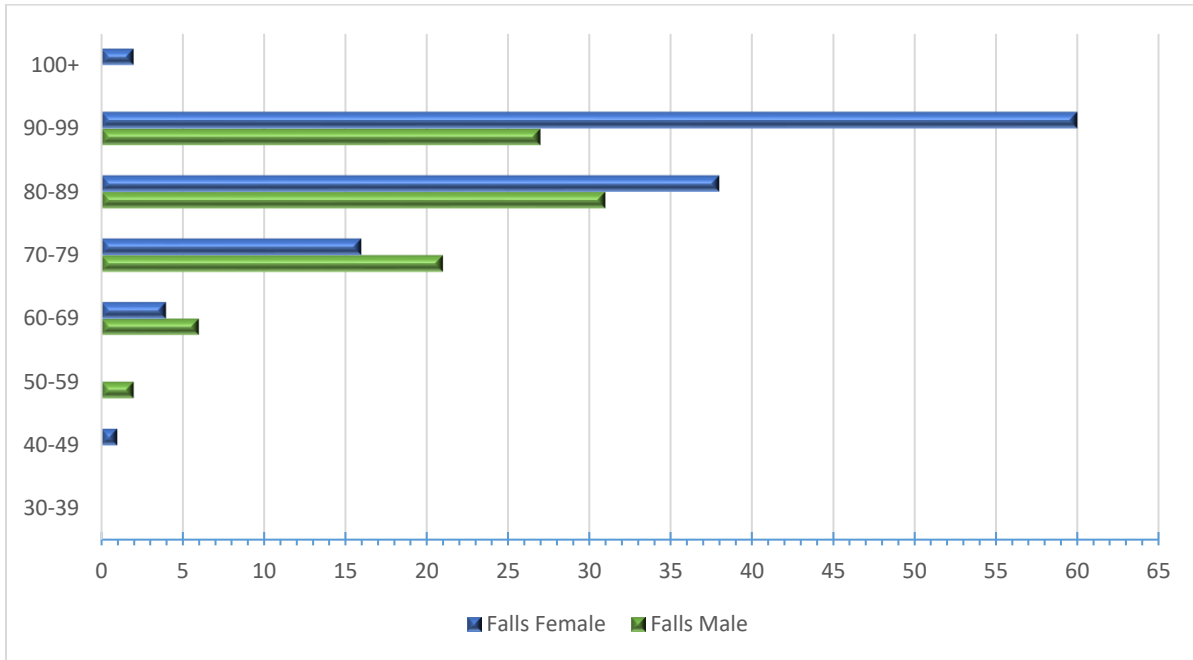
Type of Accident	Deaths
Anaphylaxis	1
Asphyxia	1
Blunt force injury	6
Choking	2
Drowning	4
Electrocution	1
Environmental	4
Falls	208
Infection	1
Ingestion	91
Medical Procedure	2
MVA	19
Train Vs. Pedestrian	1
Other/Unknown	6



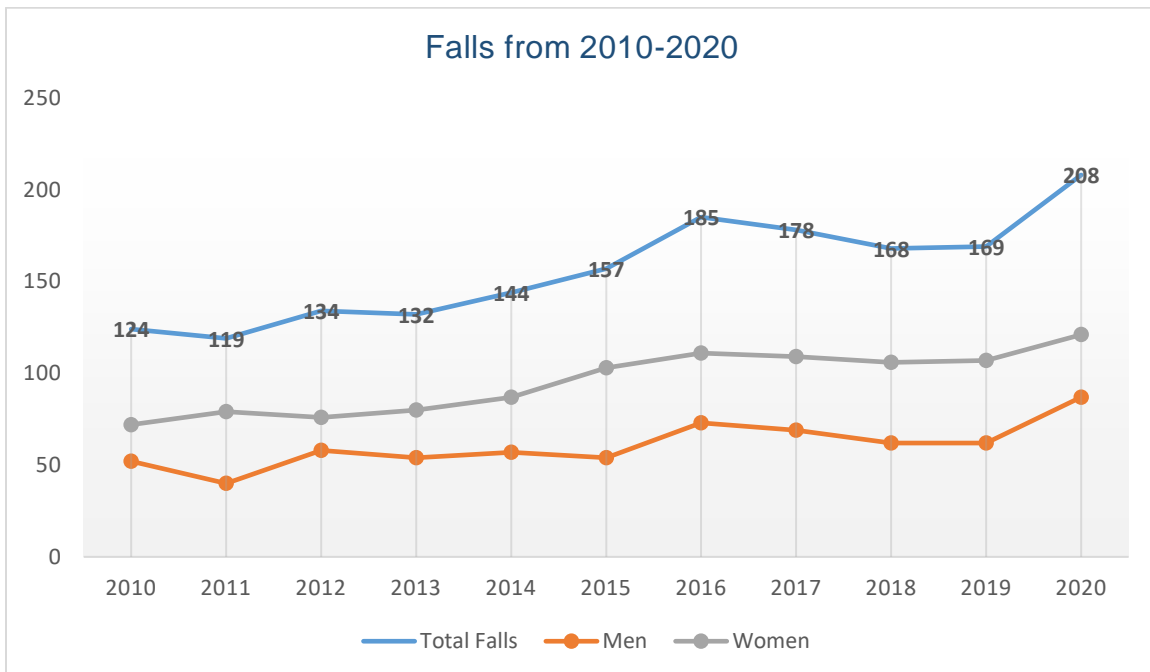
\*Total does not equal 100% due to rounding

## ACCIDENT DATA

Falls by Age/Gender

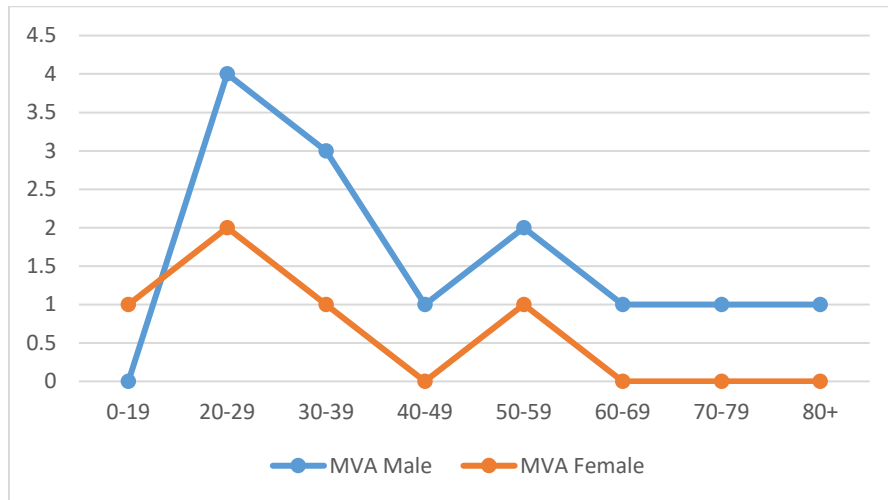


Falls from 2010-2020

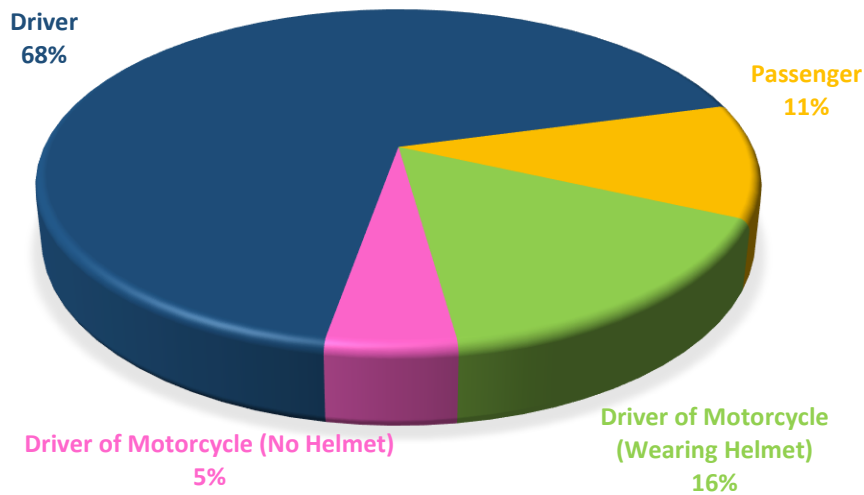


## ACCIDENT DATA

MVA by Age/Gender



MVA BY TYPE



MVA BY MUNICIPALITY

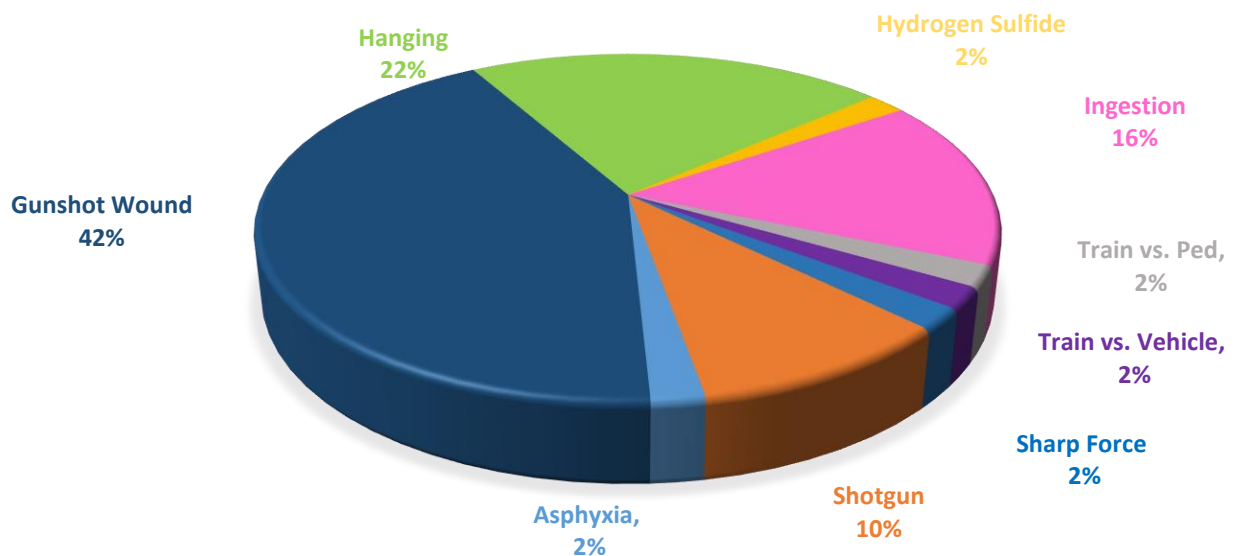
City of Brookfield.....	1
City of New Berlin.....	2
City of Pewaukee.....	3
City of Waukesha.....	3
Town of Delafield.....	1
Town of Lisbon.....	2
Town of Mukwonago.....	1
Town of Ottawa.....	1
Town of Vernon.....	2
Town of Waukesha.....	1
Village of Eagle.....	1
Village of Summit.....	1

## DEATHS BY MANNER: SUICIDE

Suicide is classified as the deliberate act of taking one’s own life. In 2020, the Waukesha County Medical Examiner’s Office certified 51 deaths as “suicide”, which accounted for 13% of the total deaths handled by the Waukesha County Medical Examiner’s Office. Firearm suicide cases represented 53% of all suicides. Approximately 61% of all suicides were completed by individual’s ages 40 to 69 years old.

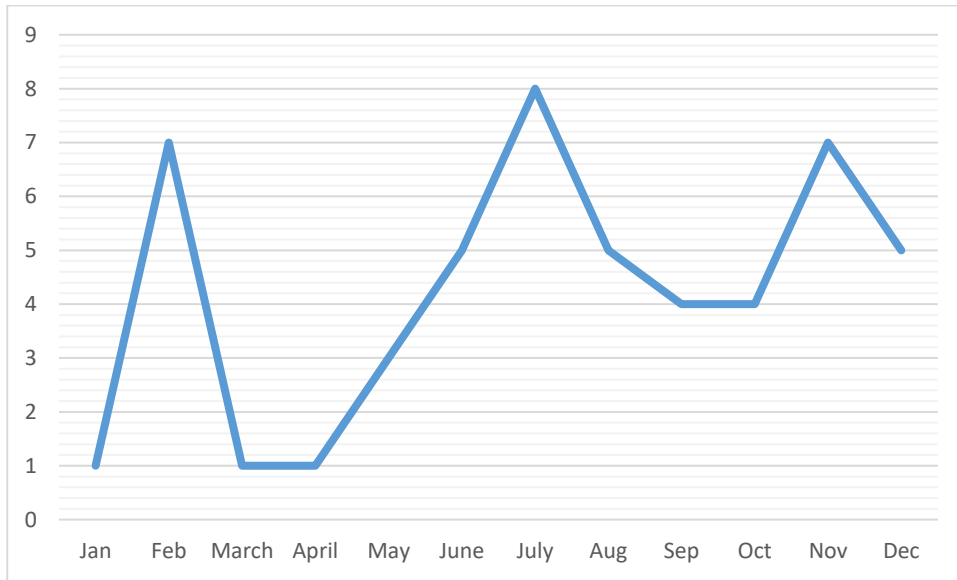
Type/Age		15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80 +
<b>Asphyxia</b>	Male	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Gunshot Wound</b>	Male	-	1	3	4	3	5	2	2
	Female	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
<b>Hanging</b>	Male	1	1	2	1	2	1	-	-
	Female	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-
<b>Hydrogen Sulfide</b>	Male	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Ingestion</b>	Male	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	1
	Female	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
<b>Motor Vehicle. Vs. Train</b>	Male	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Pedestrian Vs. Motor Vehicle</b>	Male	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sharp Force Injury</b>	Male	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Shotgun Wound</b>	Male	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	2
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Suicide Mode Breakdown

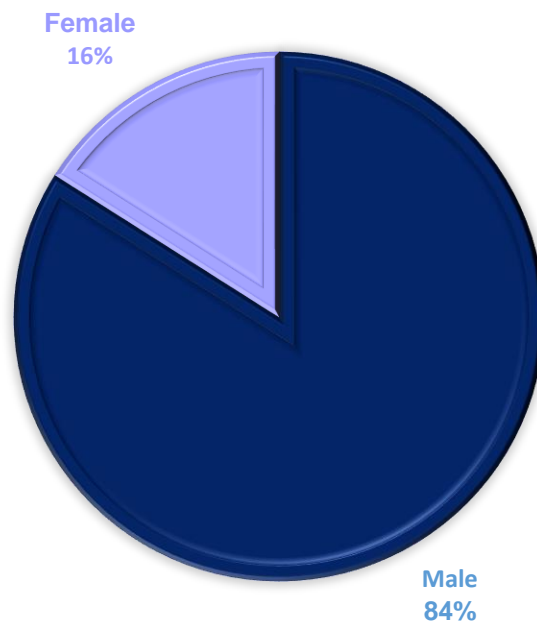


## SUICIDE DATA

Suicide by Month



2020 Suicide by Gender



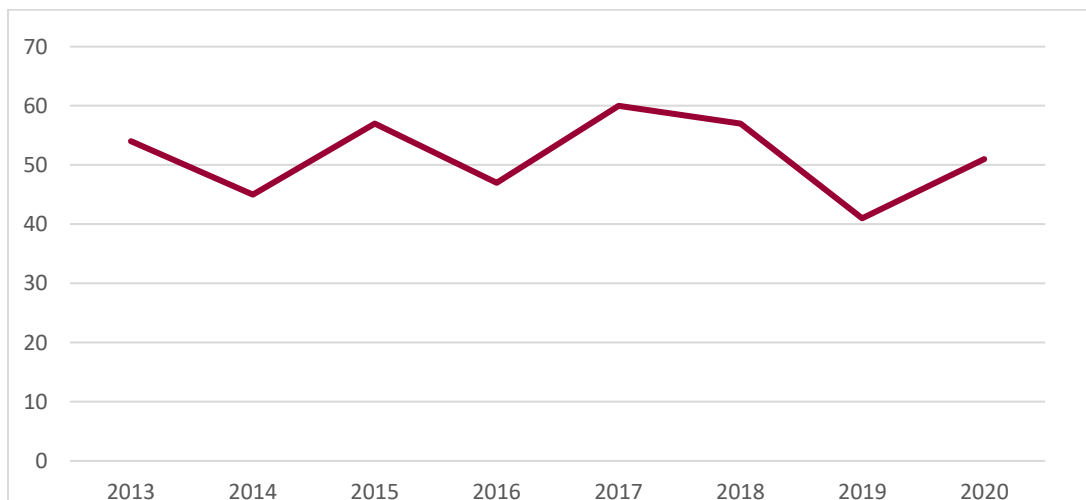
## SUICIDE DATA

### Suicide data 2013-2020

Category	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asphyxia	-	-	2	3	3	1	-	1
Blunt Force Injury	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Carbon Monoxide	1	1	2	5	1	6	-	-
Drowning	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Fall/Jump	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	-
Fire	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Gunshot/Shotgun Wound	27	23	30	23	27	21	25	27
Hanging	14	9	10	6	8	18	6	11
Incised Wounds	1	1	1	3	-	-	-	-
Ingestion/Inhalation	8	6	9	5	15	8	5	9
Motor Vehicle	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	2
Pedestrian vs. Train	2	-	1	2	1	-	3	-
Sharp Force Injury	-	-	1	-	2	2	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>51</b>

Category	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	44	34	45	35	46	41	30	43
Female	10	11	12	12	14	16	11	8
Age 19 years and under	1	3	4	2	3	7	3	1
Ages 20-40	9	10	14	6	11	14	10	13
Ages 41-64	34	25	31	26	37	32	18	24
Ages 65 and above	10	7	8	13	9	4	10	13

### Suicides From 2013-2020





## DEATHS BY MANNER: HOMICIDE

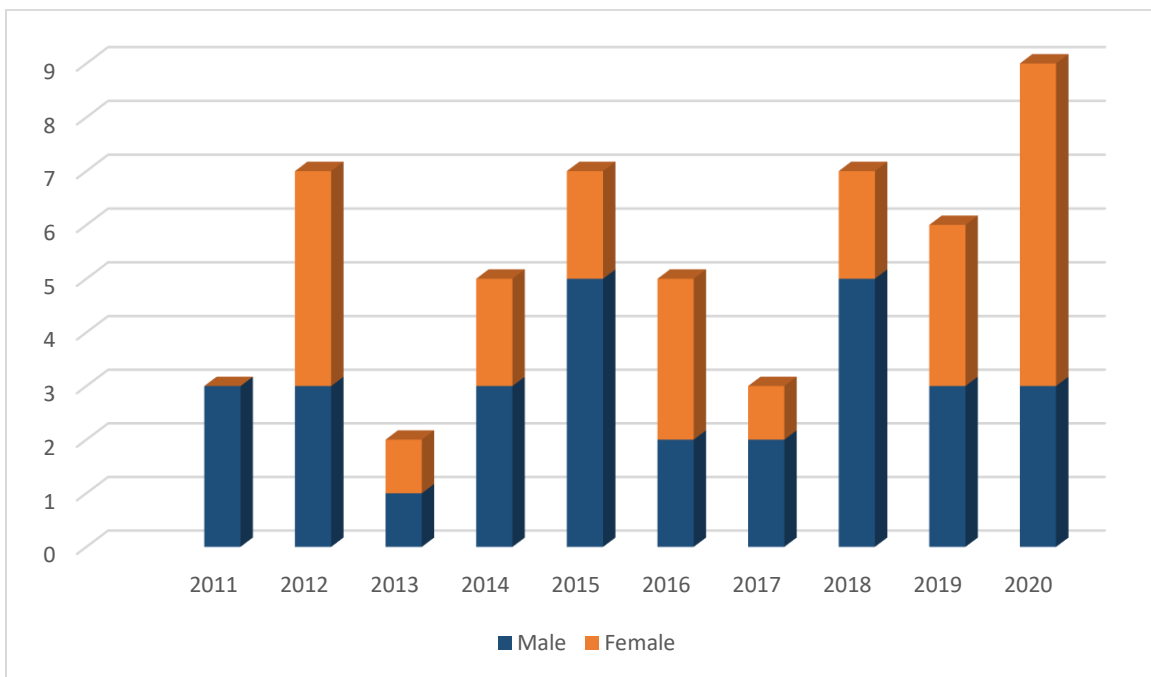
Homicide is defined as the death resulting from injuries inflicted by another person regardless of the intent. The medical examiner’s determination of homicide is based on the evidence provided at the time of the investigation and is separate from the legal definition, which would include intent.

In 2020, the Waukesha County Medical Examiner’s Office had a total of 9 cases certified as a homicide. This accounts for only 2% of all deaths investigated in 2020.

Mode of Homicide 2020

GSW	4
Blunt Force Injury	2
Sharp Force Injury	3

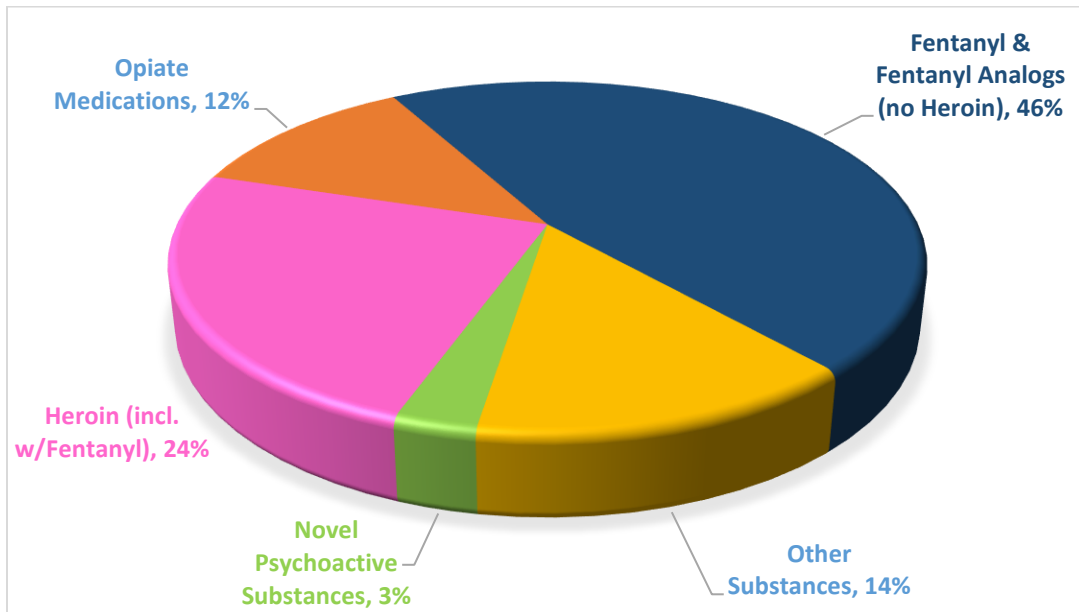
Homicide by Gender 2011-2020



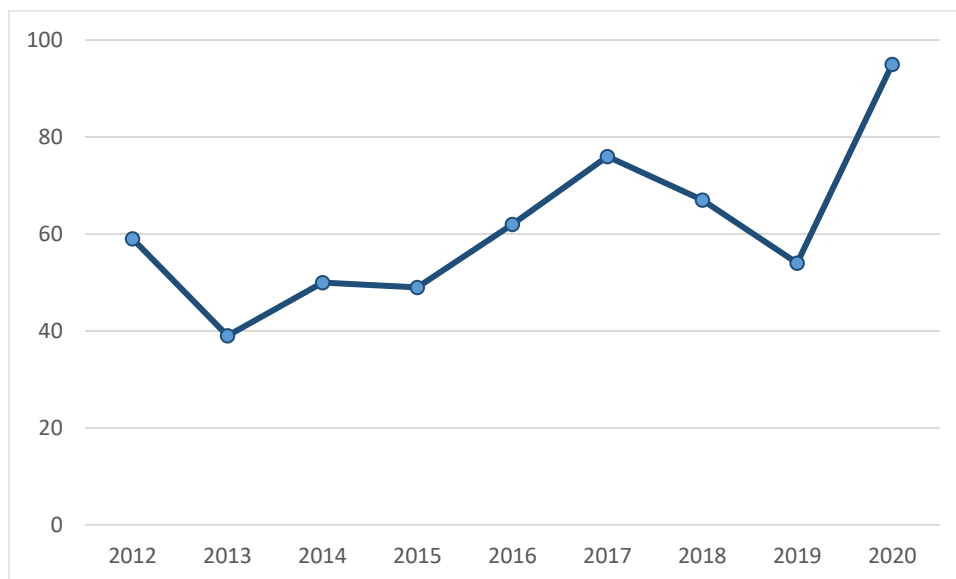
## DRUG RELATED DEATHS

In 2020, there were 95 drug related deaths. Of those 95 deaths, 87 were ruled accidental, 5 were suicides and 3 were unable to be determined. Additionally, 51% of the drug related deaths that occurred in 2020 were individuals between the ages 19-40.

Type of Substance Used

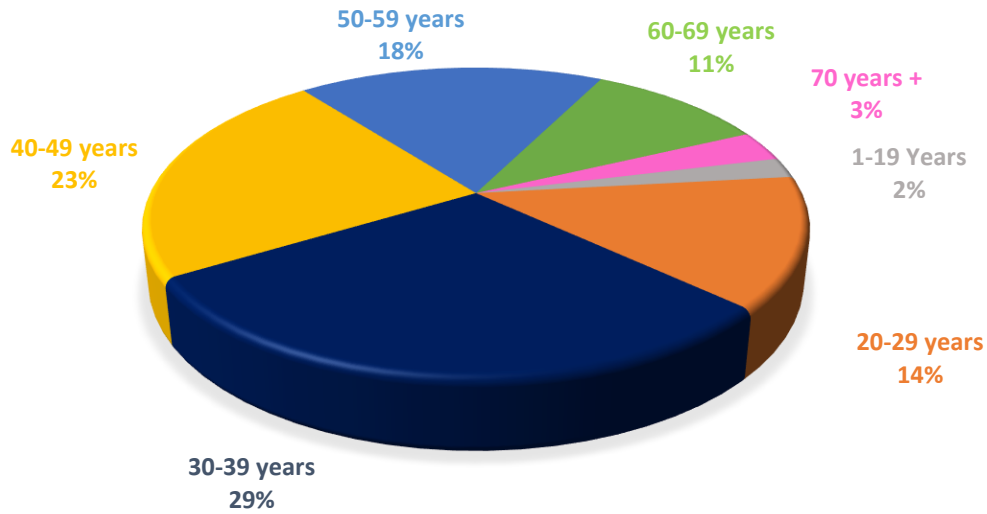


Drug Deaths from 2012-2020



## DRUG RELATED DEATHS

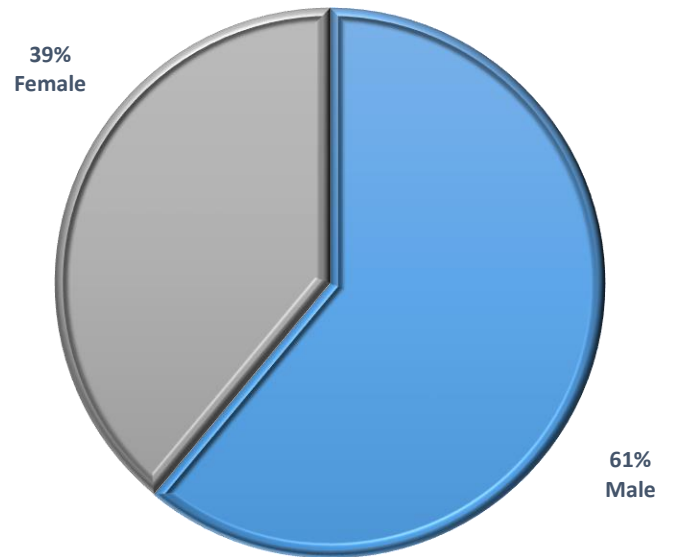
Drug Deaths by Age



Drug Deaths by Municipality

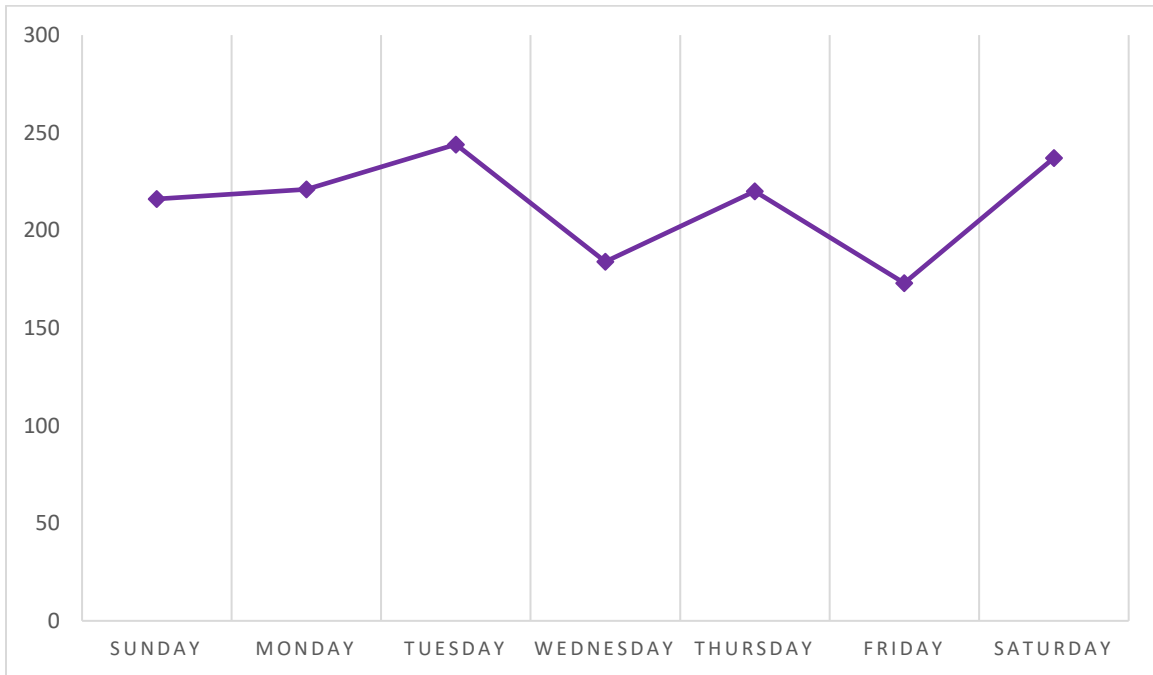
City of Brookfield	6
City of Delafield	2
City of Muskego	3
City of New Berlin	4
City of Oconomowoc	1
City of Pewaukee	1
City of Waukesha	44
Town of Brookfield	1
Town of Lisbon	1
Town of Mukwonago	1
Town of Oconomowoc	1
Village of Big Bend	1
Village of Butler	1
Village of Hartland	3
Village of Lannon	1
Village Menomonee Falls	10
Village of Mukwonago	2
Village of North Prairie	1
Village of Pewaukee	4
Village of Summit	2
Village of Sussex	4
Village of Waukesha	1

Drug Deaths by Gender

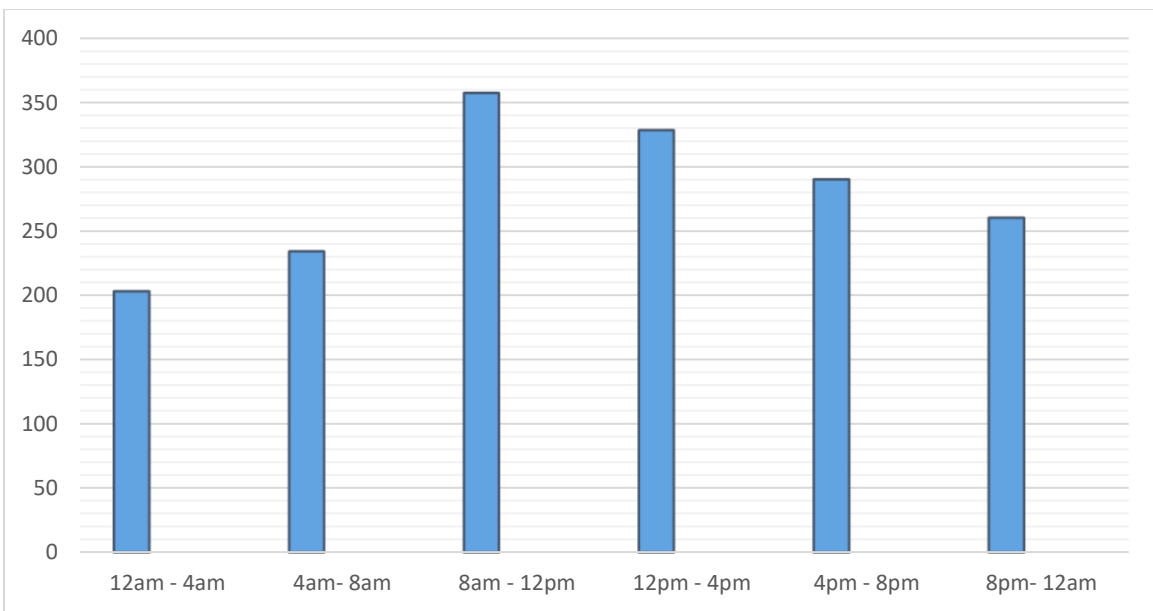


## ADDITIONAL OFFICE DATA

2020 Cases by Days of Week

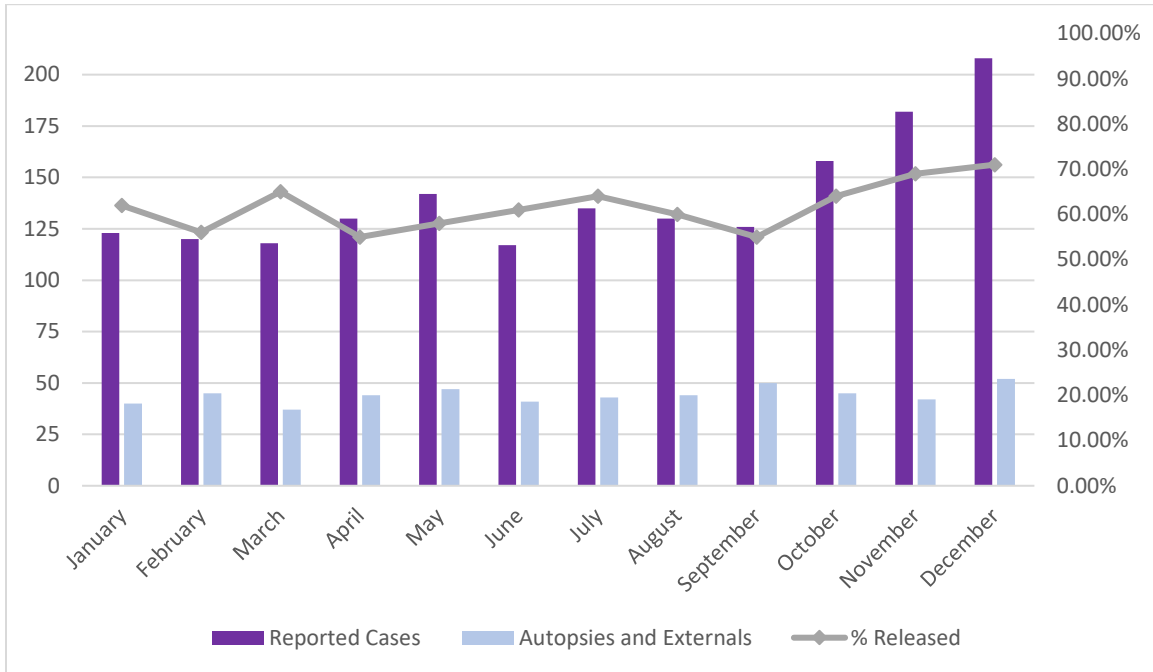


2020 Cases by Time



## ADDITIONAL OFFICE DATA

2020 Cases by Month



Autopsies and Externals 2008-2020

