

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

LAKE COUNTY, IL
Coroner's Office

Welcome to the 2021 Lake County Coroner's Office Annual Report

2021 will be remembered for many reasons.

For most of us, foremost will be the sobering recollection of 2021 being the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The reality of the pandemic was especially palpable at the Lake County Coroner's Office (LCCO). The staff, here, had a front row seat to the merciless consequences of this virus. Through it all, they have continued to serve the community with hard work, grace, and humility.

2021 continued to remind us of another pandemic, the opioid pandemic. In 2019, when I was running for office, myself and leaders across the state, were feverishly implementing plans and goals to tackle this issue that has taken thousands of loved ones. We were hopeful we could turn the corner on combatting narcotic overdoses. And while our efforts continued, the COVID-19 pandemic, which amplified times of isolation, exacerbated mental health issues, and antagonized personal financial setbacks, made these efforts that much more challenging. In 2021 these consequences were reflected in increased numbers, here at the coroner's office: the number of overdoses was 127 and suicides were 76.

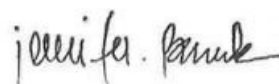
2021 was also the first year we at the LCCO have worked together as a team under my leadership. In January, we welcomed my Chief Deputy, Steve Newton. Chief Newton came to the office with extensive township and countywide work experience; he previously served as a Deputy in the coroner's office, later worked with the Lake County Sheriff's Office, and, most recently, served as a building inspector at the township level. Chief Newton has been an invaluable asset to our team, and I am so thankful he agreed to join us.

Later in the year, we on-boarded Alexa Murdoch as our new Administrative Assistant. Alexa also had previous temporary experience working at the LCCO. We were ecstatic when she was able to join us full-time. Finally, Deputy Joe Jabastin joined our Team. Deputy Jabastin is a long-time Lake County resident and came to us from the Grayslake Fire Department. He has completed his orientation and, I have no doubt, will continue our history of service to Lake County residents.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize our Autopsy Technician, Caroline Davis. In June, Caroline was mobilized to Africa with her Naval Reserves unit. We are thankful for the sacrifices she and all service members, around the world, make for us. Her commitment and dedication in this endeavor is yet another reflection of the stellar staff employed at the LCCO.

I continue to be indebted to the staff in this office. Day to day, they forward-face some of the most challenging societal circumstances. Without a doubt, 2021 underscored the need for us to continue to provide compassionate care to, and thorough investigations for, Lake County families. With that, we push onward to 2022.

Kind Regards,



Jennifer Banek, MS, CRNA
Lake County Coroner



LAKE COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE

The Lake County Coroner's Office serves a community of almost 700,000 people where there are over 6,000 deaths each year. The Coroner's Office investigates all deaths suspected to be non-natural including accidental deaths, suicides, homicides, and undetermined deaths. Additionally, the Coroner's Office investigates natural deaths lacking a physician to sign the death certificate. The Coroner's Office provides identification, performs autopsies, and carries out any other tasks in regard to the deaths investigated by the office.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Lake County Coroner's Office is to conduct honest and independent death investigations based on the facts and evidence, to protect and serve those who have gone before us, their families, and the general public.

DEDICATION

We acknowledge each case featured in this report represents the death of a person whose absence is grieved by family, friends, and our community. We dedicate this report to those individuals, their loved ones, and the citizens of Lake County we strive to serve with compassion every day.



What is the duty of the Coroner as mandated by Illinois Compiled Statute?

Chapter 55; 5/3-3007: Each Coroner shall be the conservative of the peace of his County, and in the performance of his/her duties shall have the same powers as the Sheriff.

Who reports deaths to the Coroner?

Section 5/3-3020: Every law enforcement official, funeral director, ambulance attendant, hospital director or administrator or person having custody of the body and any physician in attendance upon such a decedent at the time of his/her death, shall notify the Coroner promptly.

What are the responsibilities of the Coroner?

Among other duties, the responsibilities of the Coroner are to ensure that the proper scientific studies are performed:

- Autopsy
- Toxicology tests
- Microscopic examinations
 - Bacteriology
 - X-rays
- Fingerprinting
- Taking and gathering reports
- Notification of death to families
 - On-scene investigation
 - Photographing
 - Evidence collecting
- Dental examination and identification
- Meeting with survivors
- Presiding at inquests
- Issuance of Death Certificates and Cremation Permits

Additionally, we work in coordination with a variety of agencies:

- Medical offices and hospitals
- Funeral homes
- Law enforcement agencies
- Fire and rescue departments
- Suicide prevention organizations
- Grief support associations
- Harm reduction organizations

The Lake County Coroner's Office Staff



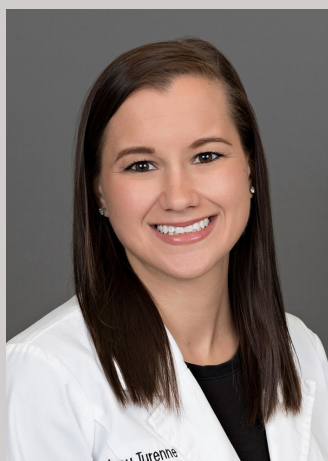
Jennifer Banek,
MS, CRNA
Coroner



Steve Newton
Chief Deputy Coroner



Eimad Zakariya, MD
Forensic Pathologist



Amy Turenne, MS
Forensic Toxicologist



Alex Reynoso
Administrative Assistant



Alexa Murdoch
Administrative Clerk



Caroline Davis,
D-ABMDI
Autopsy Technician

The Lake County Coroner's Office Staff

Investigators



Tammy Mayer, D-ABMDI
Senior Deputy Coroner



Mike Reid, D-ABMDI
Deputy Coroner



Steve Carroll, D-ABMDI
Deputy Coroner



Robert James Jr, F-ABMDI
Deputy Coroner



Sarah Pendley, D-ABMDI
Deputy Coroner



Kiersten Reif, D-ABMDI
Deputy Coroner



Emmanuel "Joe" Jabastin
Deputy Coroner

2021 LCCO New Hires

Steve Newton, *Chief Deputy Coroner*

A life-long resident of Lake County, Steve returned to the Coroner's Office in January 2021 as the Chief Deputy Coroner for Coroner Banek's administration. He attended the College of Lake County where his focus of study was on Criminal Justice and Fire Science. Steve's public service career began in 1992 as a firefighter/paramedic before he joined the Lake County Coroner's Office in 2000 as a Deputy Coroner. Steve has worked 26 of the last 30 years in public service and has successfully completed numerous training courses related to Death Investigation, Emergency Management, and other public service-related fields.



Joe Jabastin, *Deputy Coroner*

A long-time resident of Lake County, Joe began his career with the Lake County Coroner's Office in October 2021. He also works as a Firefighter/Paramedic at Grayslake Fire Protection District. Joe served with the United States Marines Corps with two tours in Afghanistan. Joe graduated from Southern Illinois University with a Master's in Science, majoring in Public Safety Administration and minoring in Emergency Management.



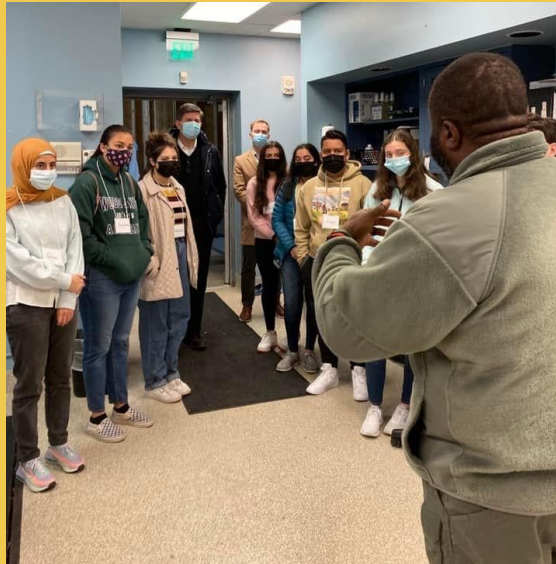
Alexa Murdoch, *Administrative Clerk*

Alexa began her career at the Lake County Coroner's Office as an intern through the Workforce program. She was elated when she was offered the position of Administrative Clerk in October of 2021. Alexa attended the College of Lake County where she earned her Associates of Arts degree in business before continuing on to earn her Associates of Applied Science in Mortuary Science at Worsham College. Upon completing her apprenticeship, she obtained her license as a Funeral Director & Embalmer in the state of Illinois. Alexa lives with her husband, Gregory, in Lake County.



2021 Community Outreach

Although 2021 presented many of the same challenges we experienced during the pandemic in 2020, we looked for ways to continue our outreach by connecting with members of our community. We were fortunate enough to participate in the following events among many others by representing our office and engaging with a variety of individuals and organizations: STEAM scholars tour, ILETSB Women in Criminal Justice presentation, Shop with a Sheriff event, Cook County Medical Examiner's Ecumenical Burial.



ORGAN DONATION

Gift of Hope is the organ and tissue donor network that operates in Lake County. Gift of Hope's mission is "to save and enhance the lives of as many people as possible through organ and tissue donation." The Lake County Coroner's Office continued their close partnership with Gift of Hope throughout 2021 by turning tragedies into opportunities to save and improve lives. In 2021, Gift of Hope had 1033 tissue referrals of which 109 cases became tissue donors and 22 became organ donors.



2021 Coroner's Inquests

Coroner Inquests were the standard for every case until the law changed in 2007, giving the Coroner the ability to determine Cause and Manner of Death without a jury. In 2017, Inquests were resurrected at the Lake County Coroner's Office for all officer-involved deaths, deaths in custody, and any deaths in which the manner of death is questionable. In 2021 the Lake County Coroner's Office completed three Coroner's Inquests to determine the manner of death in each case.

2021 INQUESTS	CASE TYPE	JURY-RULED MANNER OF DEATH
04/15/2021	In-Custody	Suicide
04/15/2021	Officer-Involved	Homicide
07/08/2021	Suspicious Healthcare Death	Undetermined

What is a Coroner's Inquest?

A Coroner's inquest is neither a civil nor a criminal trial proceeding. It is simply an inquiry or investigation into the manner and cause of death of an individual. The purpose of the inquest is to present pertinent information concerning the victim's death for the jury to arrive at a manner of death. Upon completion of the testimony, the jury will deliberate in private. When the jury has concluded their deliberation, they will issue a verdict through the Foreman as to the manner of death (Natural, Homicide, Suicide, Accident, or Undetermined). The Coroner will summon to the Inquest those individuals who have information concerning the incident. This often includes, but is not limited to, the person who found the deceased, witnesses and parties involved in the incident, police officers and investigators, and, in some cases, a direct relative. Reports such as Autopsy, Toxicology, Accident Investigation Reports, and diagrams may be presented at the time. All information and testimony at the Inquest is recorded and/or transcribed verbatim in the inquest transcript. The testimony presented at the inquest is sworn and under oath.

2021

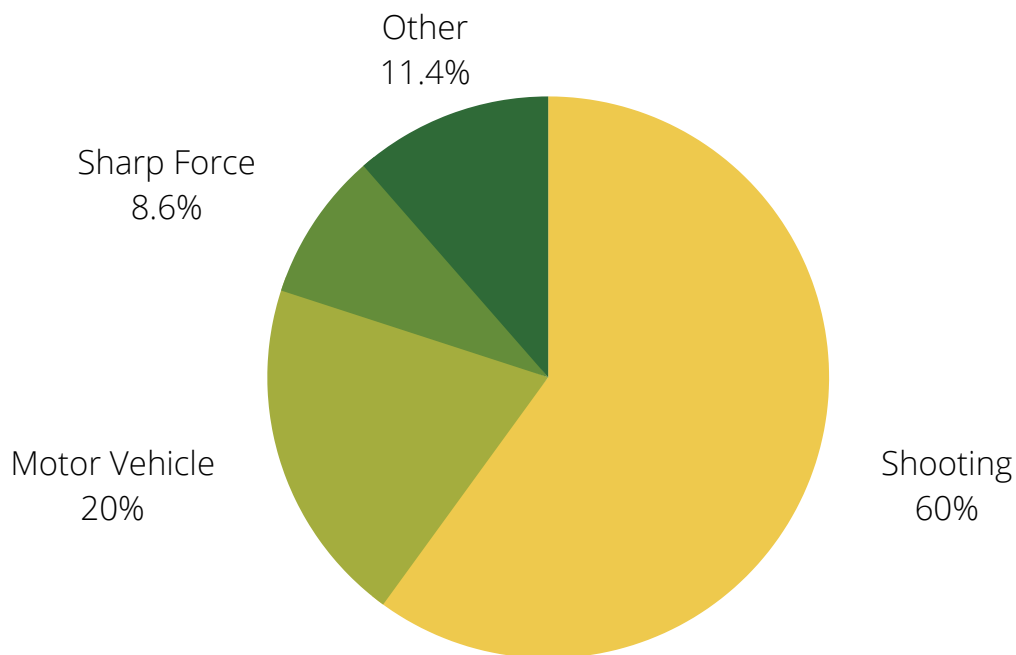
NUMBERS & STATISTICS



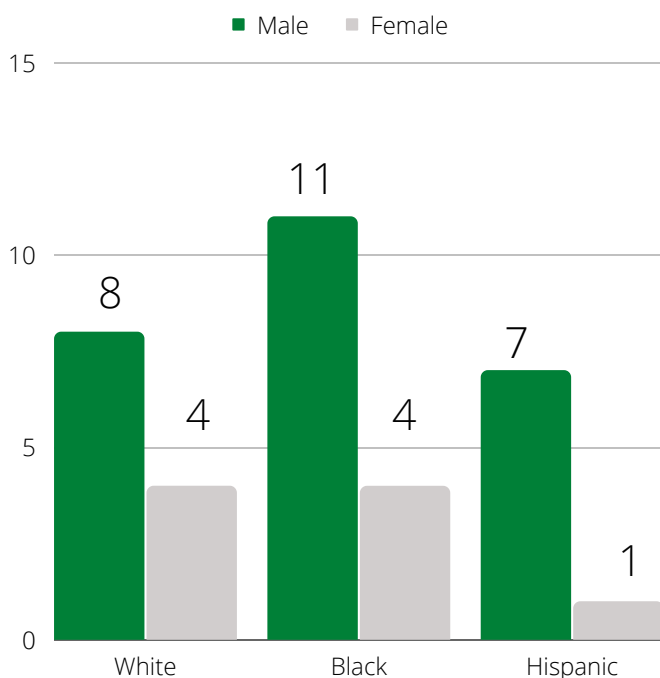
01/01/2021 – 12/31/2021							
LCCO OFFICE ACTIVITIES							
DEATH CALLS REPORTED TO LCCO							
TOTAL DEATH REPORTS			RELEASED TO MEDICAL		ACCEPTED CORONER CASES		
5530			4861		669		
CORONER CASE MANNERS OF DEATH							
HOMICIDE		SUICIDE	ACCIDENT		NATURAL	UNDETERMINED	
35		76	242		308	8	
CORONER CASE NATURAL DEATH TYPES							
NEUROLOGIC	GASTRO- INTESTINAL	PULMONARY	CARDIAC	LIVER	KIDNEY	CANCER	OTHER CAUSES
14	5	17	190	10	6	10	56
TOXICOLOGY REPORT STATS							
CORONER CASES-TOXICOLOGY TESTING			URINE DROP TOXICOLOGY TESTING (Non-Coroner Cases - Samples from Outside Agencies)				
464			1694				
AUTOPSY CASES							
FULL (Full Autopsy with Report Signed by Pathologist)		LIMITED (Partial Autopsy with Report Signed by Pathologist)			MEDICAL RECORD REVIEW (No Autopsy with Report Signed by Pathologist)		
246		232			125		
CORONER CASE DEMOGRAPHICS							
AGE		0-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+
		36	72	73	89	121	278
RACE		WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	HISPANIC	OTHER	
		457	107	17	86	2	
SEX		FEMALE	MALE				
		225	444				

Manner of Death: Homicide

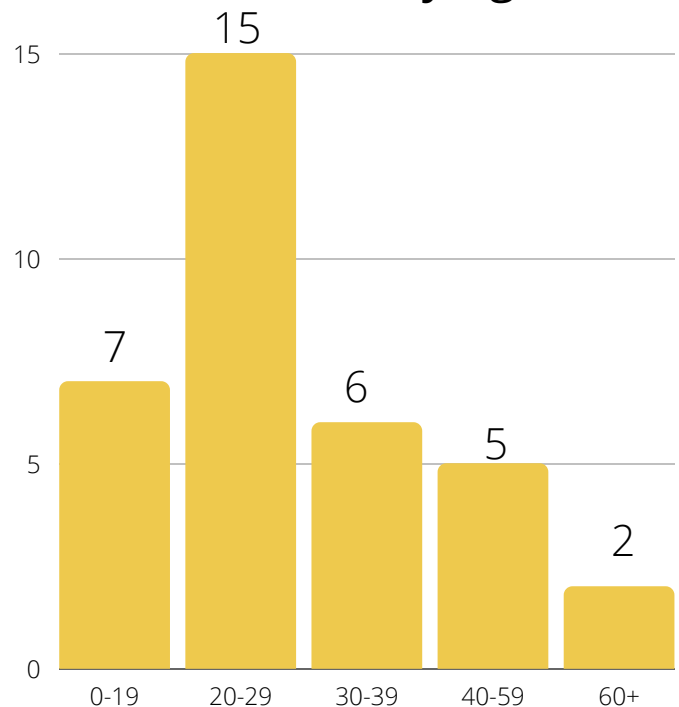
In 2021, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 35 homicide deaths. A homicide is a death resulting from a voluntary action performed by another person. It is not necessarily a murder which indicates intent and is determined through the legal process.



Homicides by Race and Gender

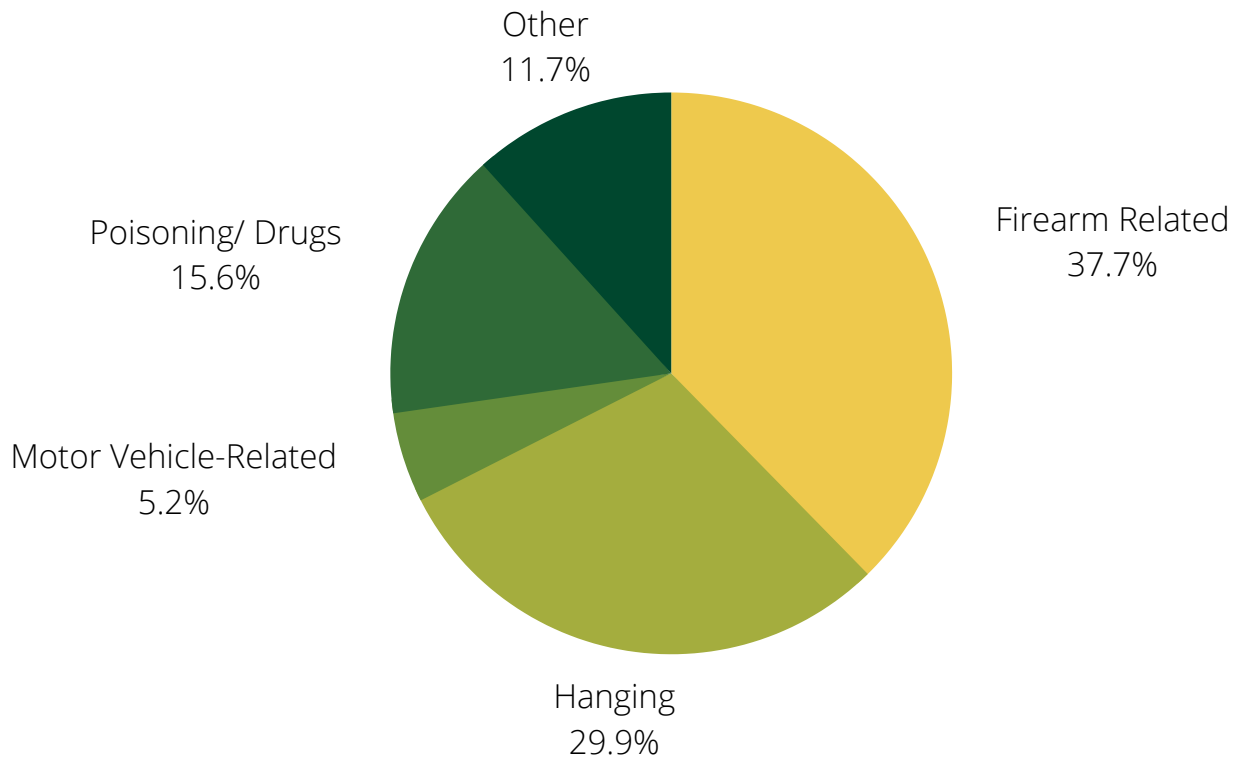


Homicides by Age

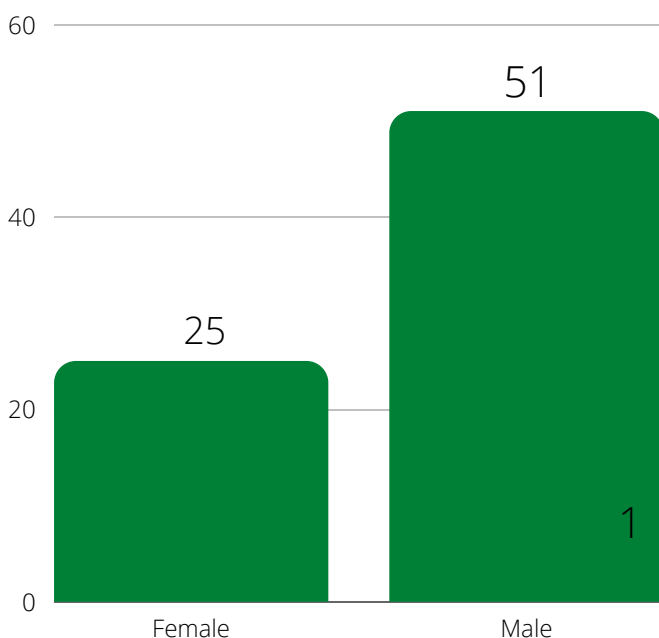


Manner of Death: Suicide

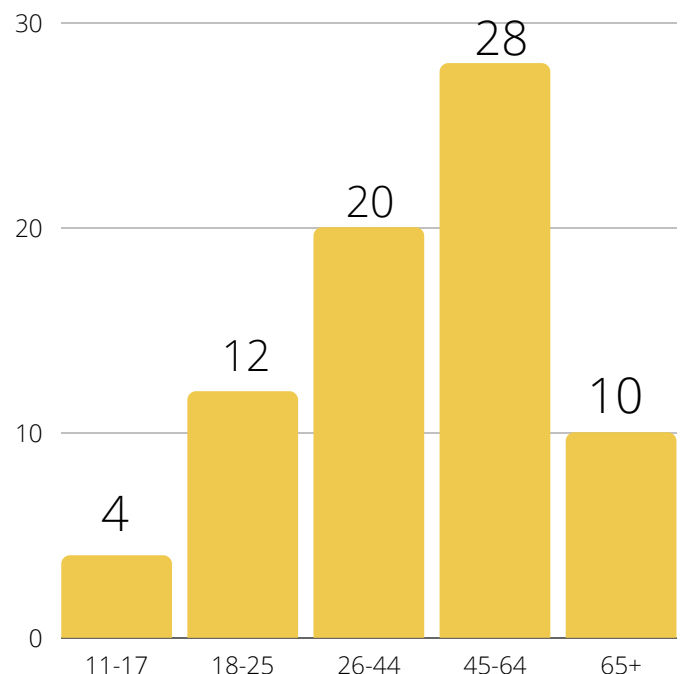
In 2021, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 76 suicide deaths. A suicide is a death resulting from a self-inflicted injury which ends one's life.



Suicides by Gender

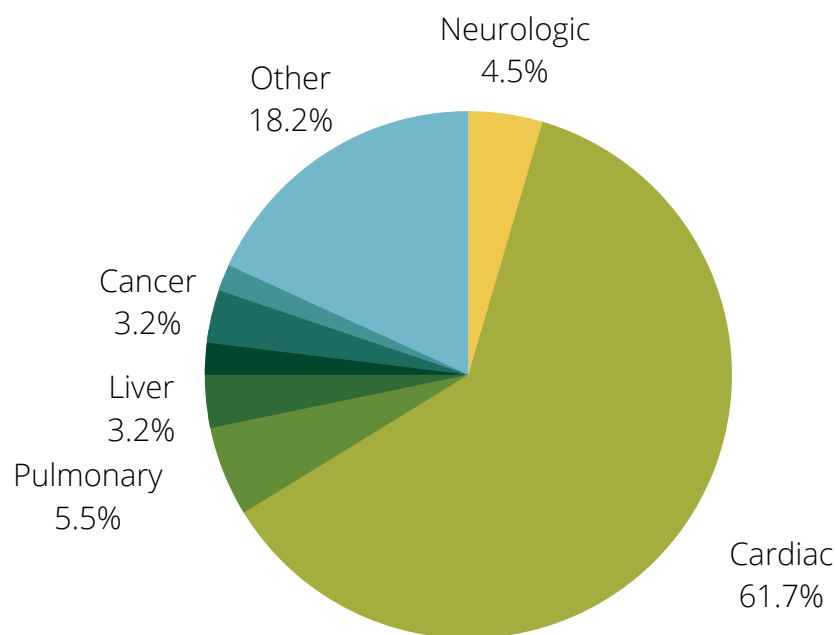


Suicides by Age

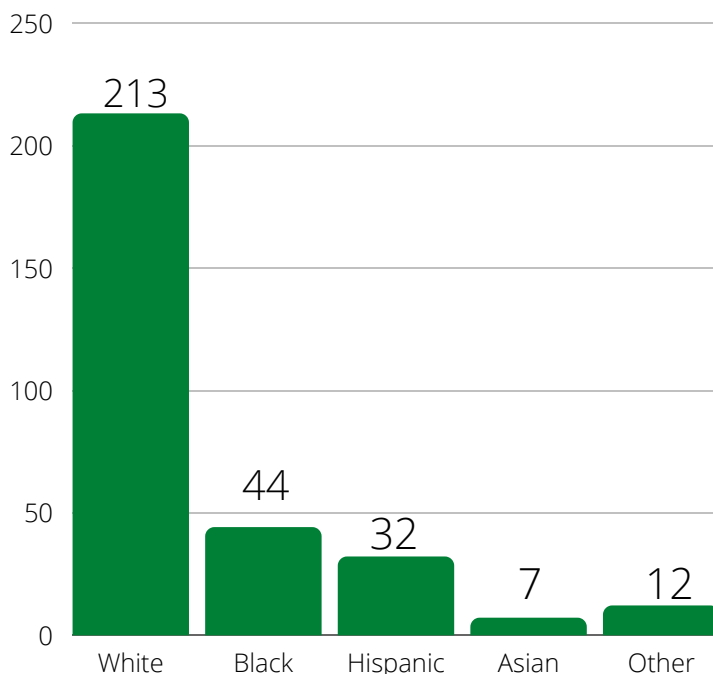


Manner of Death: Natural

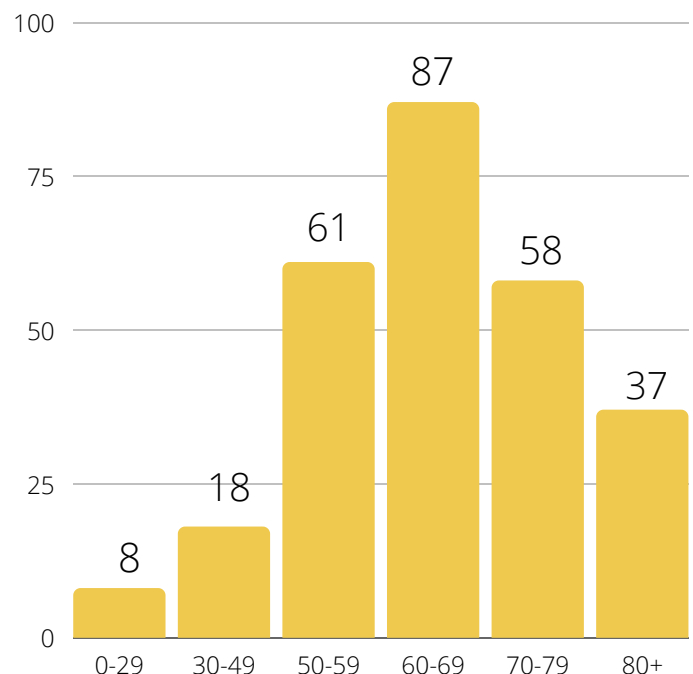
In 2021, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 308 natural deaths. A natural death occurs due to spontaneous or naturally occurring disease or degenerative process. A natural death falls under the Coroner's jurisdiction when it is unexpected, there was no physician with knowledge of the fatal condition, or when circumstances surrounding the death are suspicious.



Coroner's Case Natural Deaths by Race

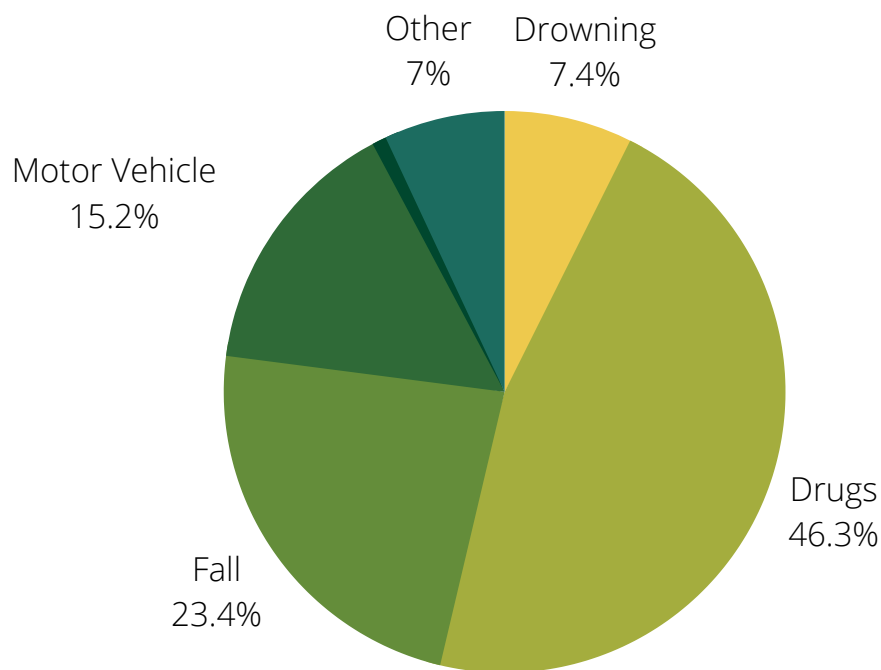


Coroner's Case Natural Deaths by Age

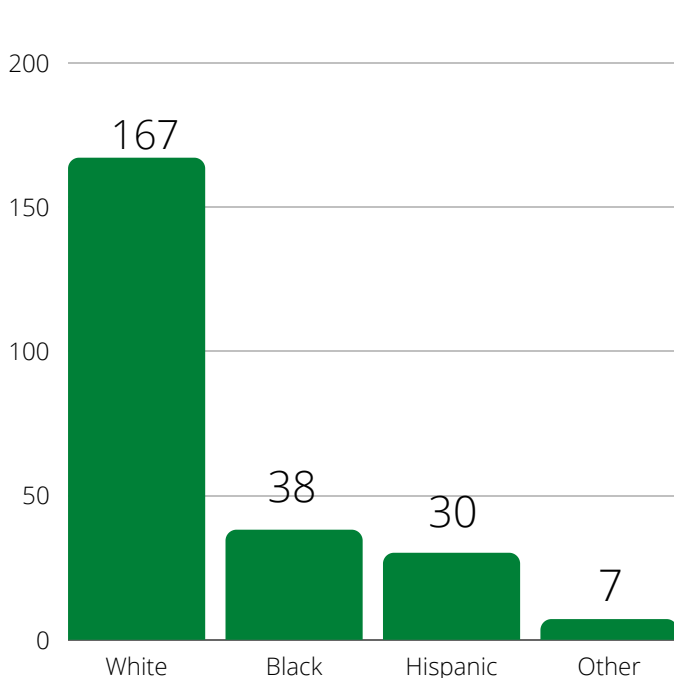


Manner of Death: Accident

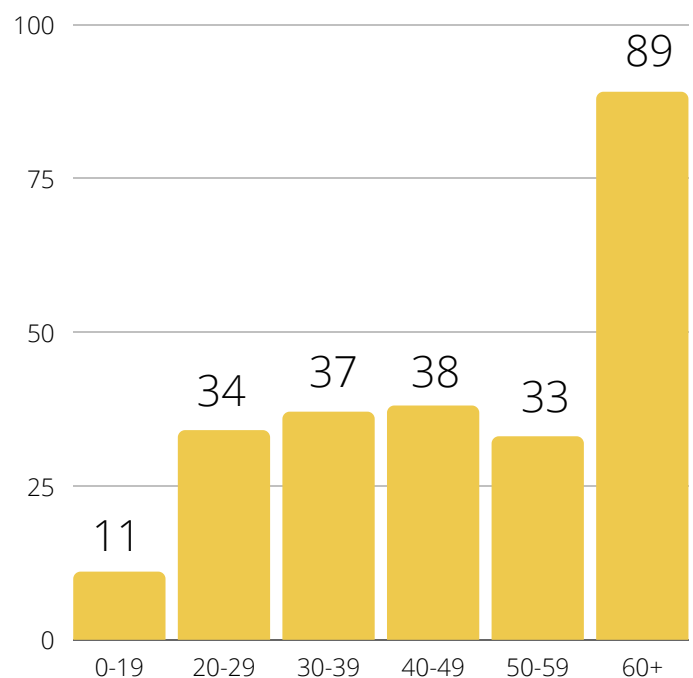
In 2021, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 242 accidental deaths. An accidental death occurs due to unnatural causes when there is no evidence of intent to cause harm and the fatal outcome was unintentional.



Accidental Deaths by Race



Accidental Deaths by Age



Manner of Death: Undetermined

In 2021, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 8 undetermined deaths. A death is categorized as undetermined when the information pointing to one manner of death is no more compelling than one or more other competing manners of death when all available information is considered.

Race	Sex	Age	Month of Death
Hispanic	Male	58 years old	January
White	Female	47 years old	March
White	Female	3 months old	March
Black	Female	35 years old	April
Hispanic	Female	6 months old	April
White	Male	26 years old	August
Hispanic	Female	41 years old	September
Black	Female	56 years old	September

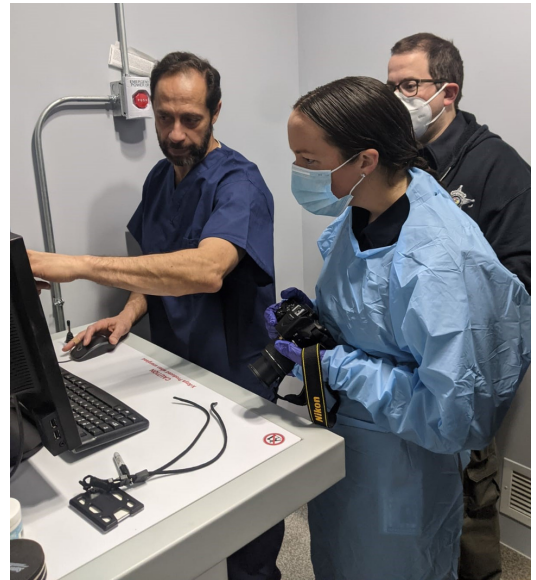
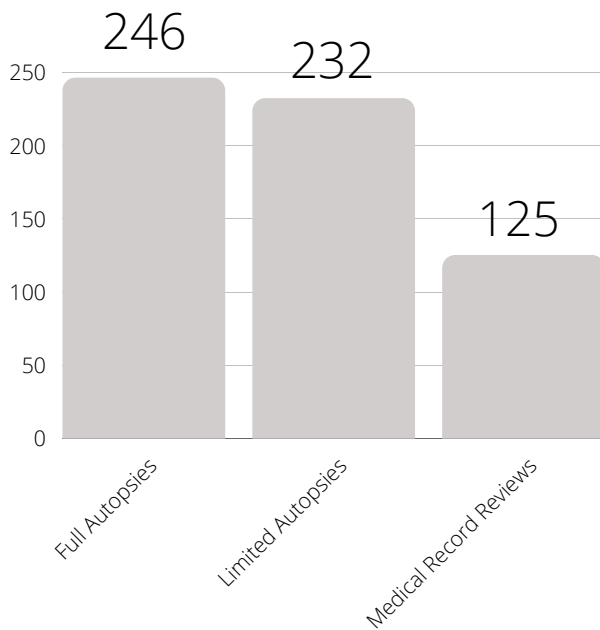
Infant Deaths

In 2021, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 6 infant deaths.

Race	Sex	Age	Month of Death	Manner of Death
White	Female	3 months old	March	Undetermined
Hispanic	Male	10 months old	April	Natural
White	Male	18 months old	April	Accident
Hispanic	Female	6 months old	April	Undetermined
White	Female	9 days old	June	Accident
Black	Male	12 months old	November	Homicide

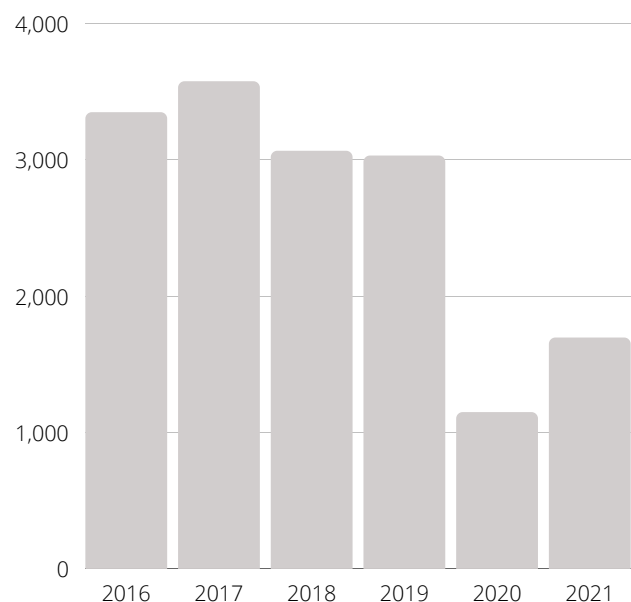
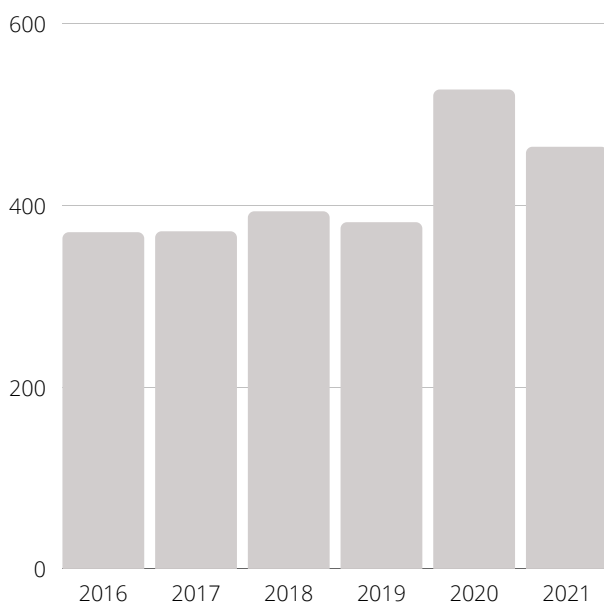
Autopsies

In 2021, the Lake County Coroner's Office performed 478 autopsies under the direction of our full-time pathologist, Dr. Zakariya. An examination is considered "full" when a complete examination is performed both internally and externally. A limited autopsy is performed when only certain internal organs are observed by the pathologist. Additionally, Dr. Zakariya completes all of our office's medical record reviews when a physical examination is determined to be unnecessary or impossible based on the circumstances.



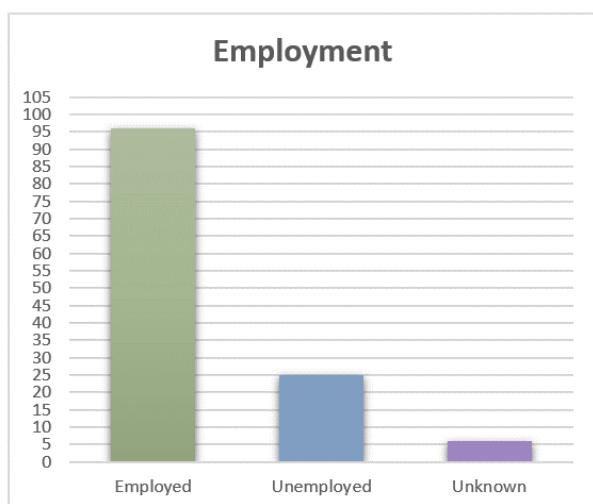
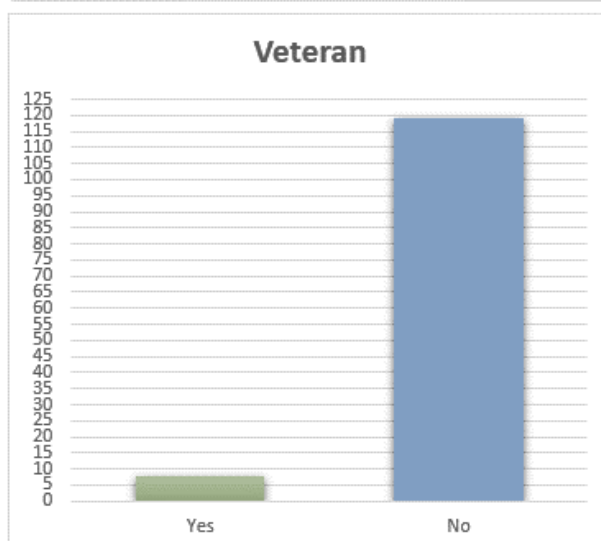
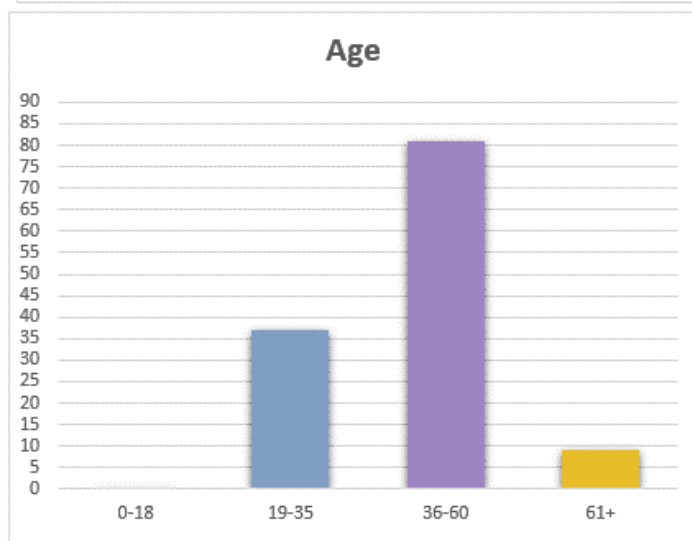
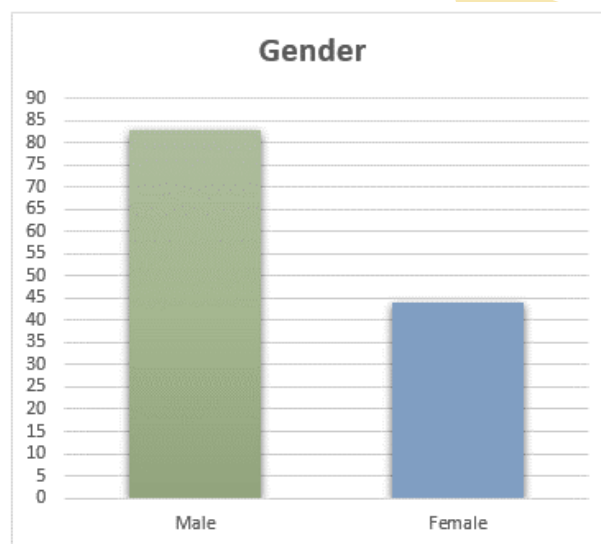
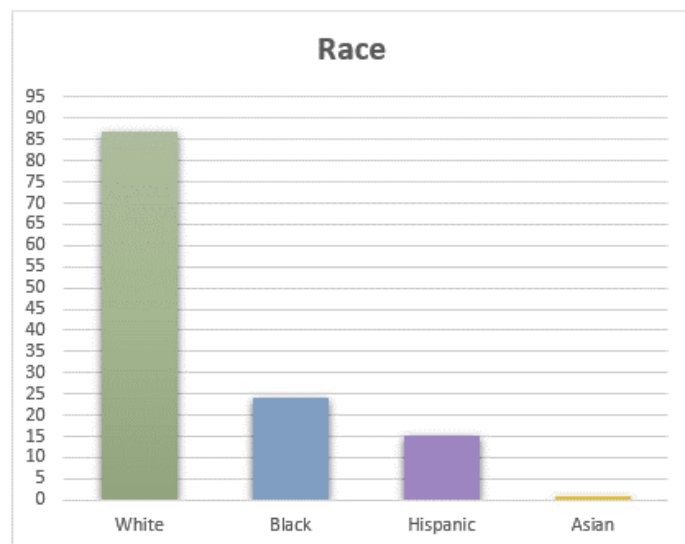
Toxicology

In 2021, the Lake County Coroner's Office toxicology lab processed 464 Coroner's cases and 1694 tests for outside agencies.



Drug Stats

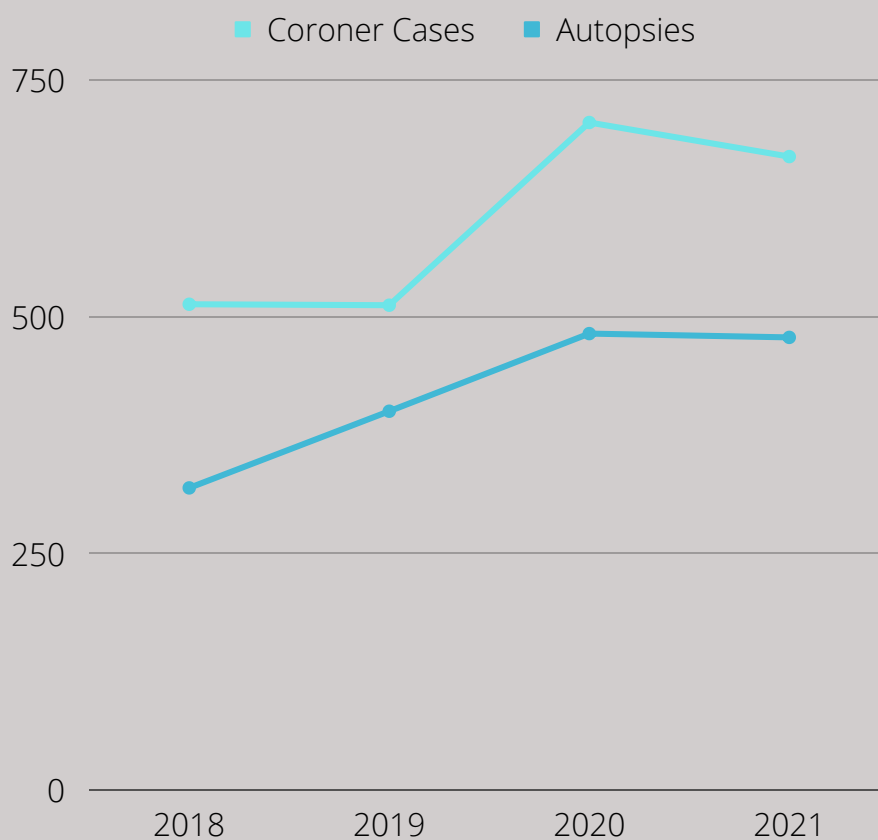
In 2021, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 127 drug overdose deaths which included a combination of suicides, homicides, and accidental deaths.



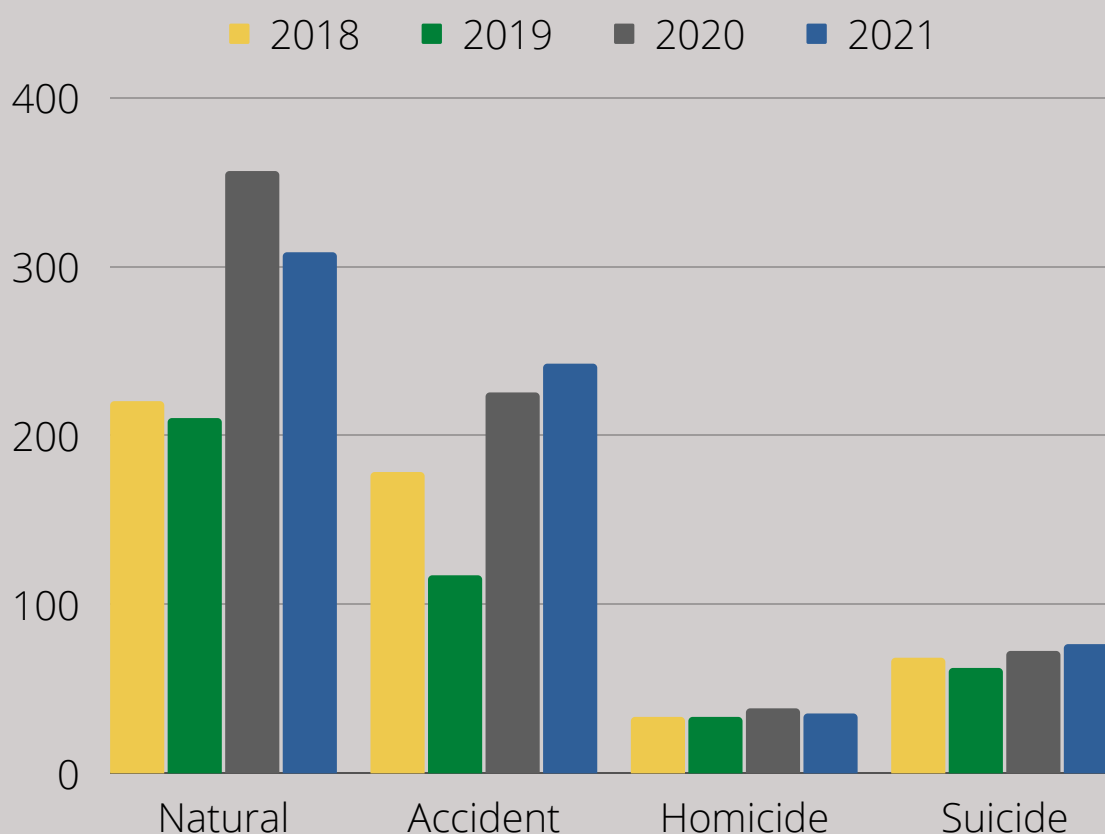
Drug Stats

<u>TOTAL</u>	
Count	Description
7	Fentanyl
43	Fentanyl + Non OPI
4	Fentanyl + Heroin
16	Fentanyl + Heroin + Non OPI
2	Fentanyl + Hydrocodone + Non OPI
1	Fentanyl + Methadone
1	Fentanyl + Methadone + Non OPI
1	Fentanyl + Methadone + Heroin + Non OPI
1	Fentanyl + Oxycodone + Non OPI
2	Heroin + Hydrocodone
1	Heroin + Methadone
1	Heroin + Oxycodone
1	Heroin + Non OPI
3	Hydrocodone + Non OPI
1	Methadone
1	Methadone + Non OPI
3	Opiate Non-Specific + Non OPI
1	Oxycodone
3	Oxycodone + Non OPI
34	Non OPI
127	TOTAL OVERDOSE DEATHS

Four Years of Data and Trends



Coroner Case Manners of Death



2021: The Faces of LCCO



2021: The Faces of LCCO



The image shows the exterior of a two-story brick building, which is the Lake County Coroner's Office. The building has a central entrance with a set of concrete steps leading up to a glass door. The door has the number '26' on it. Above the door is a large window with multiple panes. To the left of the entrance, there is a small plaque that reads 'DEMO ETHICA CORONERS OFFICE COUNTY OF LAKE -1995-'. To the right of the entrance, there is another window. The building is made of red brick and has a flat roof. A large yellow circle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing text.

**The Lake County
Coroner's Office**

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