



# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

LAKE COUNTY, IL

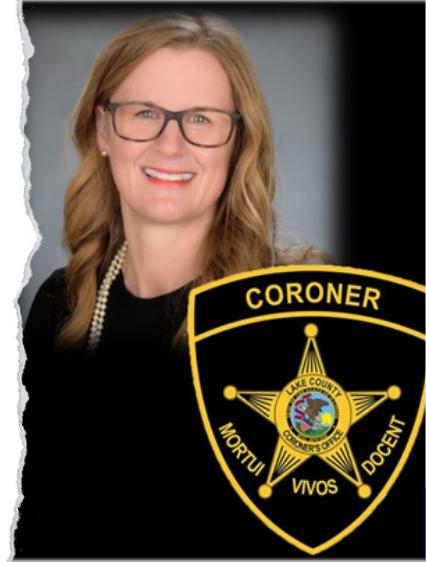
*Coroner's Office*  
*Coroner Jennifer Banek*

# Welcome to the 2022 Lake County Coroner's Office Annual Report

**Mortui Vivos Docent** in Latin means, "The dead teach the living."

It is a sober reminder of our dedication to the thoroughness of the investigations at the coroner's office and our commitment to partner with other leaders to work towards a safer Lake County,

Unfortunately, in 2022, tragedy hit Lake County particularly hard.



## Some notables in 2022 include:

- Overdoses and specifically, opioid overdoses, continue to increase. Unfortunately, any forward progress we had made in the opioid epidemic was significantly deterred over the past 2 years by the isolationism that resulted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lake County saw 131 overdoses of which 92 of those involved Fentanyl. Every month, staff from the Lake County Coroner's Office attend meetings with the Lake County Opioid Initiative (LCOI) to help identify trends and suggest solutions. We also partner with the Lake County Health Department (LCHD) to pinpoint any concerning issues that may need addressing in the health care community. Certainly, these numbers are alarming, and we are working with others to find creative solutions to a deadly problem.
- We continue to monitor and report the presence of xylazine in overdoses. Xylazine is a barbiturate that is used in veterinary medicine. It is a tranquilizer that is being added to many street drugs. This year in Lake County there were 7 deaths where xylazine was identified and, in all of those cases, fentanyl was also found. Because xylazine is not an opioid, it will not respond to the reversal drug, naloxone, thus increasing the fatality risk.
- The rate of suicides has increased in Lake County. Again, COVID-19 increased isolation, restricted resources, and increased personal and employment stressors, all adding to the increasing propensity of struggles with mental health and suicide. The Lake County Coroner's Office provides monthly reports to the Lake County Suicide Prevention Task Force (LCSPTF), ensuring they have the most current data available so they can work to avail resources to the community where they are most needed.
- On July 4, 2022, 7 people died, 48 others were wounded, and an entire community was injured as a result of an alleged assailant with an assault rifle on a rooftop during a parade celebration. The rounds from this weapon destroyed these victim's lives, their families, and those who loved them. Those tragic deaths were added to the list of approximately 762 fatal victims of mass shootings across the United States in 2022. On January 10, 2023, Illinois passed the Protect Illinois Communities Act which bans the sale and distribution of assault-style rifles and high-capacity magazines, effective immediately. We must continually seek data-driven and common sense solutions that will help ensure the safety of our communities.

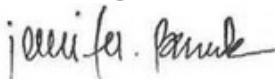
# Welcome to the 2022 Lake County Coroner's Office Annual Report

On an administrative note,

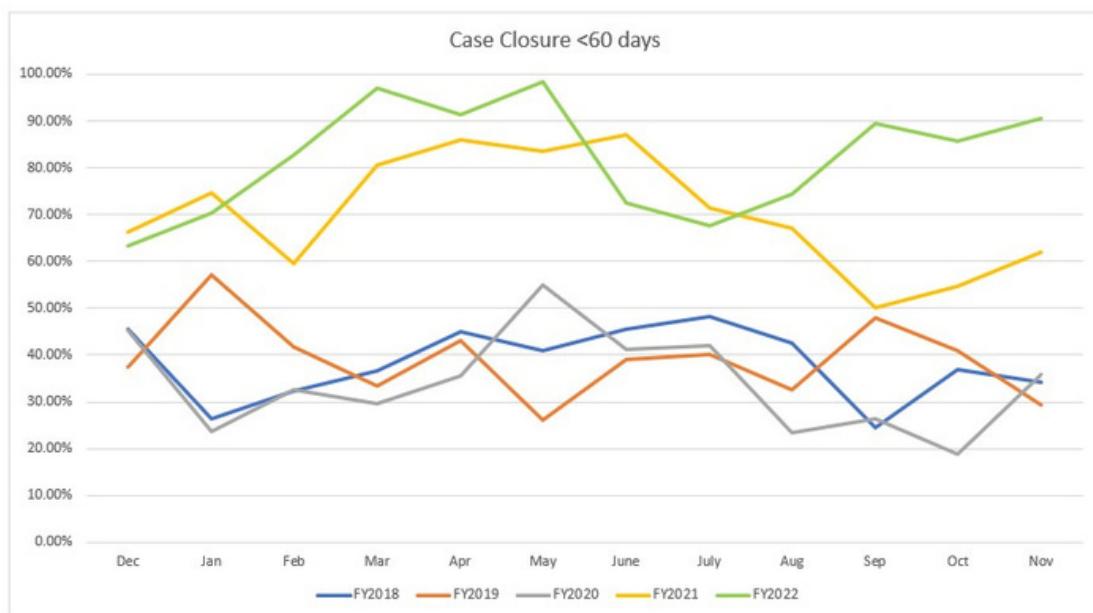
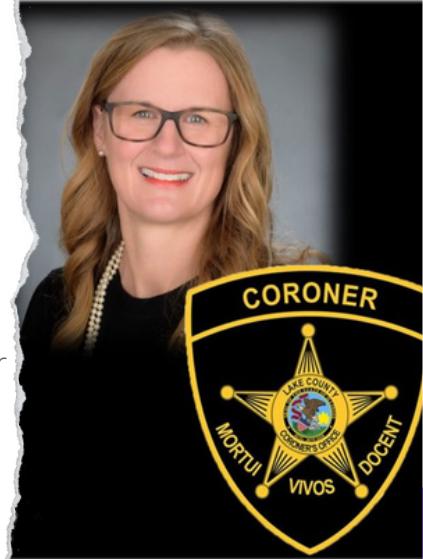
**I am proud of the hard work of the Lake County Coroner's Office team!**

- The Lake County Coroner's Office has achieved the set goal of having greater than 80% of all cases that we assume jurisdiction over, investigated, and closed within 60 days. In 2022, **83.45%** of coroner's case were closed within 60 days. This means that families are able to have closure and a permanent death certificate, and that data that might help prevent future fatalities is available to the community. Unfortunately, certain cases remain open longer than the 60 day goal dependent on expanded testing or inquest hearings.
- The Lake County Coroner's Office is taking every opportunity to avail itself to expend its resources. In addition to the aforementioned agencies like the LCOI, the LCHD and the LCSPTF, we have been working with other non-profit agencies like Missing Pieces through Lurie Children's Hospital and Kids Above All to try to connect families with resources in their time of loss and need.
- With COVID-19 restrictions lifted, the Lake County Coroner's Office has been able to welcome more tours through its doors in addition to staff getting out into the community to visit more classrooms and schools. We have spoken to classrooms of students interested in the field of forensic science as well as partnering with other community leaders to speak about the opioid crisis. If you are interested in coordinating an opportunity for a school or group, please do not hesitate to reach out to us by email at LCCO@lakecountyil.gov to explore the opportunity.

Kind Regards,



Jennifer Banek, MS, CRNA  
Lake County Coroner





## LAKE COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE

The Lake County Coroner's Office serves a community of over 700,000 people, where there are approximately 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 that 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.

Additionally, we dedicate this report to the late Retired Coroner Barbara E. Richardson, who served as Coroner of Lake County for over 20 years. Her motto "Our commitment; care of the deceased, concern for the living" remains at the forefront of the Coroner's Office values.

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

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*Chapter 55; 5/3-3007: Each Coroner shall be the conservator of the peace of his County, and in the performance of his/her duties shall have the same powers as the Sheriff. (as this relates to death investigation)*

### ***Who reports deaths to the Coroner?***

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*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?***

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*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**  
**State Attorney's Office**

# The Lake County Coroner's Office Staff



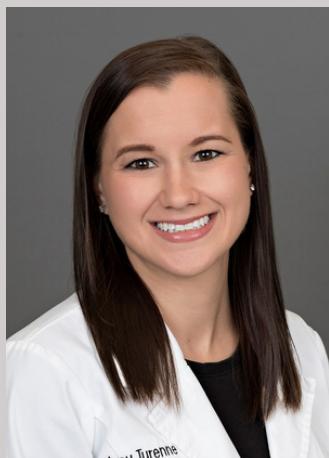
Jennifer Banek,  
MS, CRNA  
*Coroner*



Steve Newton  
*Chief Deputy Coroner*



Eimad Zakariya, MD  
*Forensic Pathologist*



Amy Turenne, MS  
*Forensic Toxicologist*



Alexa Murdoch  
*Administrative Assistant*



Karina Casillas  
*Administrative Assistant II*



Devyn Strickland  
*Autopsy Technician*

# The Lake County Coroner's Office Staff

## Investigators



Tammy Mayer, D-ABMDI  
*Senior Deputy Coroner*



Mike Reid, F-ABMDI  
*Deputy Coroner*



Steve Carroll, F-ABMDI  
*Deputy Coroner*



Robert James Jr, F-ABMDI  
*Deputy Coroner*



Sarah Pendley, D-ABMDI  
*Deputy Coroner*



Kiersten Reif, D-ABMDI  
*Deputy Coroner*  
*Through September 2022*



Emmanuel "Joe" Jabastin  
*Deputy Coroner*  
*Through December 2022*



Caroline Davis D-ABMDI  
*Deputy Coroner*  
*Beginning August 2022*

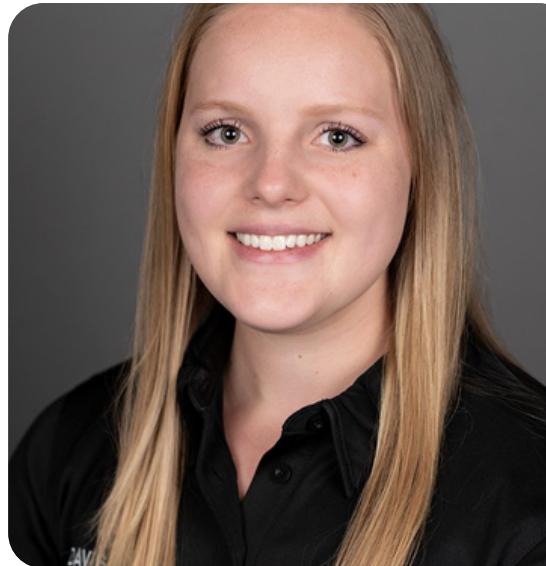


Alexandra Peña  
*Deputy Coroner*  
*Beginning September 2022*

# 2022 LCCO Transitions

## **Caroline Davis, Deputy Coroner**

Caroline is a proud resident of Lake County and lives to serve her community. She attended Lewis University in Romeoville, IL where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Biology and a minor in Criminal Justice. She began her career at the Lake County Coroner's Office in July of 2019 as the Autopsy Technician and continued her education in death investigations. In August of 2022, she was promoted to the position of Deputy Coroner. Additionally, she has served in the Navy Reserves for six and a half years as a Master-at-Arms.



## **Alexandra Reynoso-Peña, Deputy Coroner**

Alexandra is a long-time resident of Lake County who has been an employee with Lake County for 13 years. She began her career at the Lake County Coroner's Office as an Administrative Assistant in 2017. She then was promoted to Deputy Coroner in September of 2022. Alexandra attended Robert Morris College where she earned her Associates degree in Business Administration and attended Argosy University where she earned her Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. Alexandra is fluent in both English and Spanish and volunteers her time in many community events. She lives with her husband and two children in Lake County.



# 2022 LCCO New Hires

## **Devyn Strickland, Autopsy Technician**

Originally from Arizona, Devyn's interest in forensics developed when she was an intern for Coconino County's Office of the Medical Examiner in 2020. She received her

Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences from Northern Arizona University with minors in Chemistry and Psychological Sciences in 2021. Upon graduating, she was accepted into Rosalind Franklin University's Pathologist

Assistant program bringing her to Illinois. Whilst in graduate school, she changed career paths to pursue work in forensic pathology and was hired on as the Autopsy Technician for the Lake County Coroner's Office.



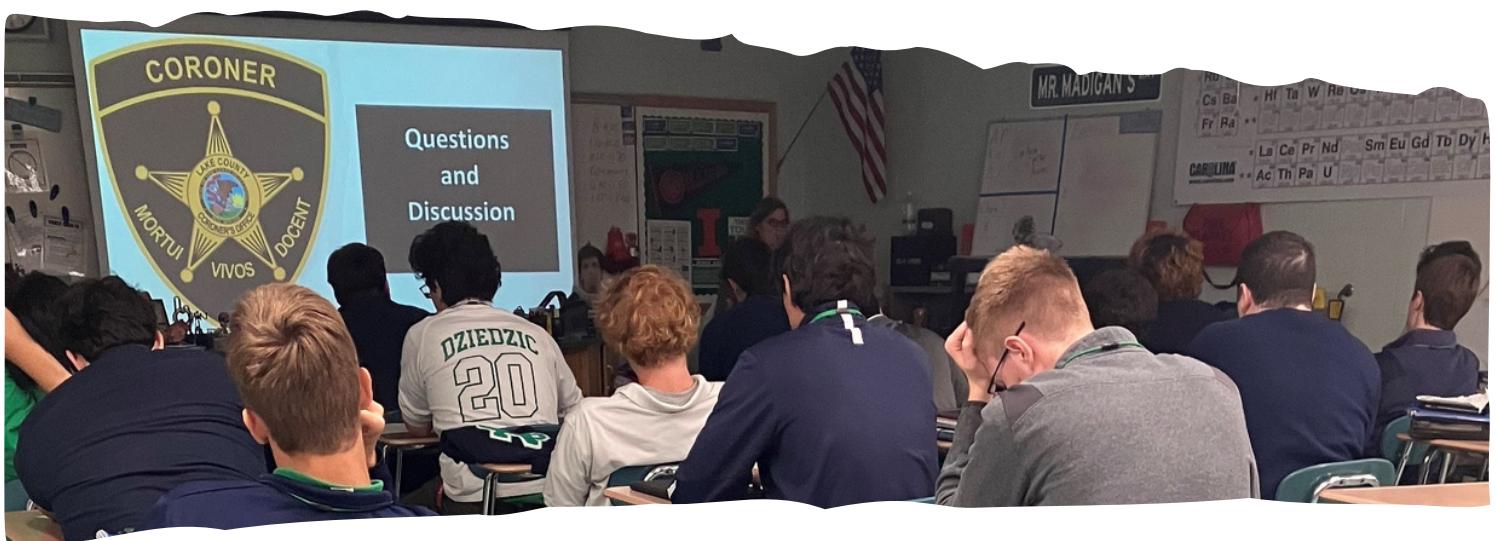
## **Karina Casillas, Administrative Clerk**

Karina began her career at the Lake County Coroner's Office in October of 2022. Karina attended the College of Lake County with a focus in science. Karina is a life-long resident of Waukegan, IL and enjoys spending her time taking care of her two tarantulas with her fiancé, Dallas.



# 2022 Community Outreach

Throughout 2022, Coroner Banek and members of her staff participated in a variety of community outreach initiatives, including hosting office tours, speaking at school functions throughout Lake County, suicide prevention, opioid awareness initiatives, and various community events, highlighting the work our office does and providing information on preventable deaths.



Gift of Hope is the organ and tissue donor network that operates in Illinois. 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 2022 by turning tragedies into opportunities to save and improve lives. In 2022, Gift of Hope had 1892 referrals of which 82 cases became tissue donors and 19 became organ donors.

Going forward into 2023, an automated system has been put in place to assure that potential referrals are communicated to Gift of Hope so that they may obtain permission from families in a timely manner.

# 2022 Community Outreach



## missing pieces

sharing support after child loss



The Lake County Coroner's Office is proud to partner with Missing Pieces in an effort to provide grieving family members support in their time of need. In 2022, the Lake County Coroner's Office referred 48 Lake County families to Missing Pieces.

*Missing Pieces partners with Chicagoland organizations to help those who have experienced the loss of a child find needed resources to navigate their grief journey.*

*The impact of perinatal, infant, child, and adolescent death reverberates through families, schools, neighborhoods, faith-based communities, and healthcare providers. Bereaved survivors of childhood death are at risk for complicated grief, depression, anxiety, poor physical health, and early death.*

Missing Pieces is a network of Chicagoland organizations dedicated to supporting families and their communities following the death of an infant, child, or young adult.

Please visit [missingpiecesgrief.org](http://missingpiecesgrief.org) to:

- find support or connect with others
- learn more about grief
- discover ways to memorialize your child

Whether your loss is recent, or it has been some time, we are here to help.

All that we  
deeply love becomes  
a part of us.

**Todo lo que amamos  
profundamente se  
convierte en parte  
de nosotros.**

Nos Faltan Piezas apoya a familias y sus comunidades después de la muerte de un bebé, niño/a, o adulto joven.

Visita [missingpiecesgrief.org](http://missingpiecesgrief.org) para:

- Encontrar apoyo o conectarte con otros
- Aprender más sobre el pesar
- Descubrir maneras para conmemorar a tu hijo/a

Si tu pérdida es reciente, o ha pasado algún tiempo, estamos aquí para ayudarte.



## 2022 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 2022 the Lake County Coroner's Office completed five coroner's inquests to determine the manner of death in each case.

2022 Inquests			
Date of Death	Date of Inquest	Case Type	Jury-Ruled Manner of Death
05/01/2022	08/18/2022	Officer Involved - Off Duty	Homicide
08/24/2022	12/15/2022	Officer Involved	Homicide
09/08/2022	12/15/2022	Officer Involved	Homicide
09/23/2022	12/15/2022	In Custody	Natural
10/08/2022	12/15/2022	In Custody	Suicide

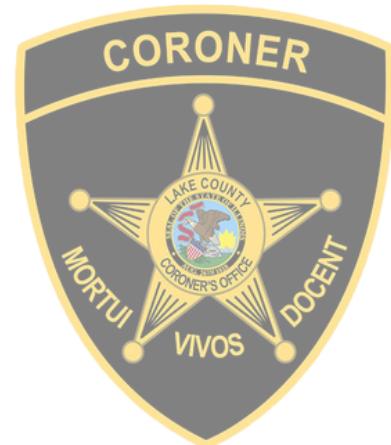
### What is a Coroner's Inquest?

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.

2022

# STATISTICAL DATA



01/01/2022 – 12/31/2022

## Lake County Coroner's Office Overall Statistics

### DEATH CALLS REPORTED TO LCCO

TOTAL DEATH REPORTS	RELEASED TO MEDICAL	ACCEPTED CORONER CASES
5752	5081	671

### CORONER CASE MANNERS OF DEATH

HOMICIDE	SUICIDE	ACCIDENT	NATURAL	UNDETERMINED
54	78	272	262	5

### CORONER CASE NATURAL DEATH TYPES

NEUROLOGIC	GASTRO-INTESTINAL	PULMONARY	CARDIAC	LIVER	KIDNEY	CANCER	DIABETIC
4	2	18	171	9	4	11	7
CHRONIC ALCOHOLISM	INFECTION COVID-19	INFECTION OTHER	SEIZURE DISPRDER	OTHER	NON-HUMAN ARTIFACT INVESTIGATION		
12	16	2	1	5	1		

### TOXICOLOGY REPORT STATS

#### CORONER CASES-TOXICOLOGY TESTING

URINE DROP TOXICOLOGY TESTING (Non-Coroner Cases - Samples from Outside Agencies)

504

1669

### AUTOPSY CASES

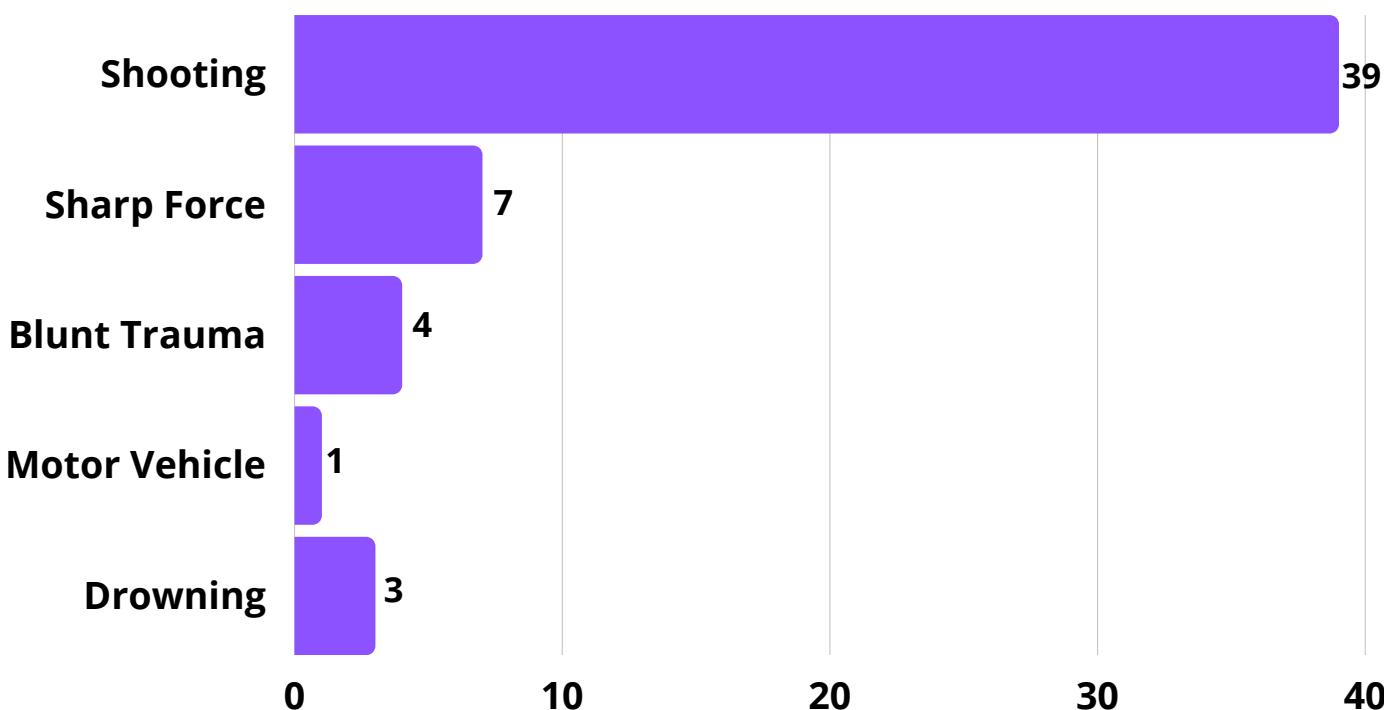
FULL (Full Autopsy with Report Signed by Pathologist)	LIMITED (Partial Autopsy with Report Signed by Pathologist)	MEDICAL RECORD REVIEW (No Autopsy with Report Signed by Pathologist)
200	297	104

### CORONER CASE DEMOGRAPHICS

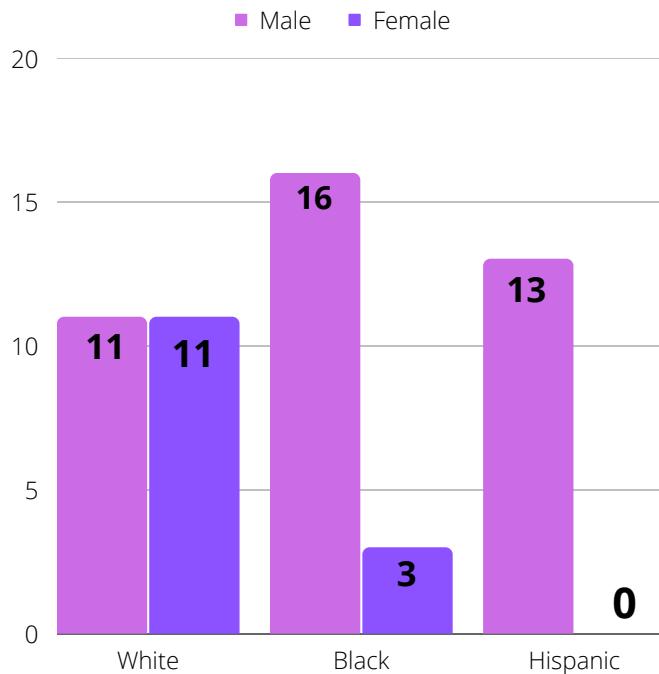
AGE	0-10	11-17	18-25	26-44	45-64	65+
	11	8	51	152	218	231
RACE	WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	HISPANIC	OTHER	
	466	112	14	76	3	
SEX	FEMALE	MALE				
	211	460				

# Manner of Death: Homicide

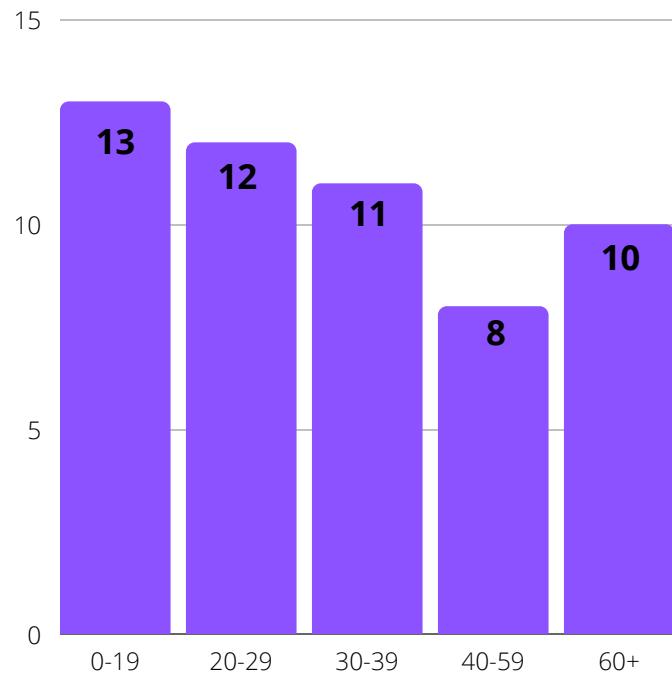
In 2022, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 54 homicide deaths. A homicide is a death resulting from a voluntary action performed by another person. It is not necessarily a murder which indicates intent and is determined through the legal process.



## Homicides by Race and Gender

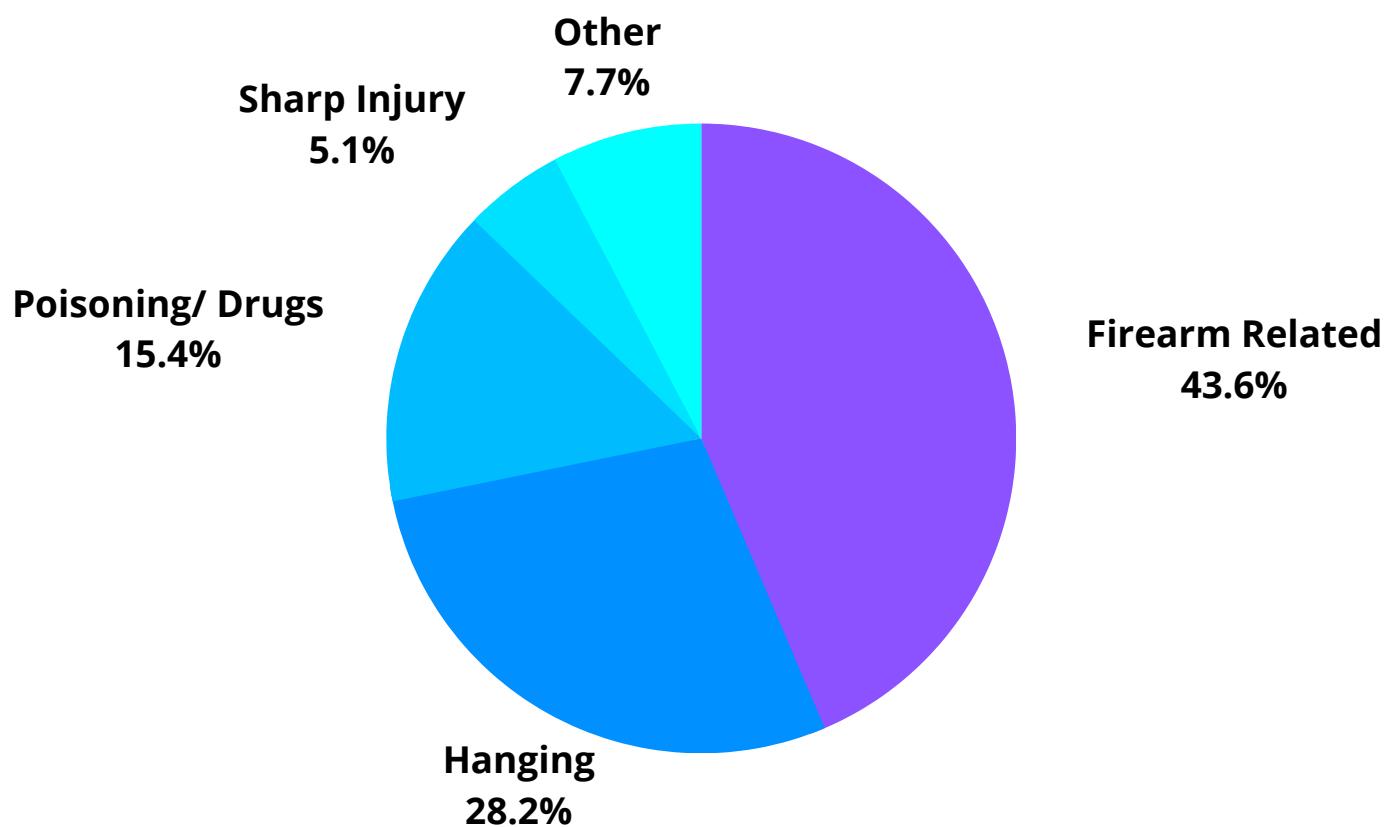


## Homicides by Age

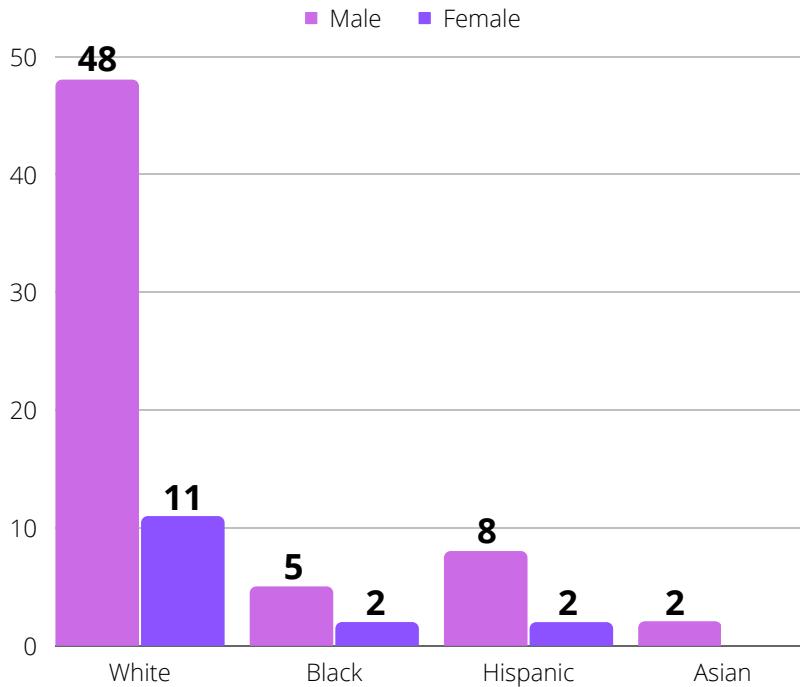


# Manner of Death: Suicide

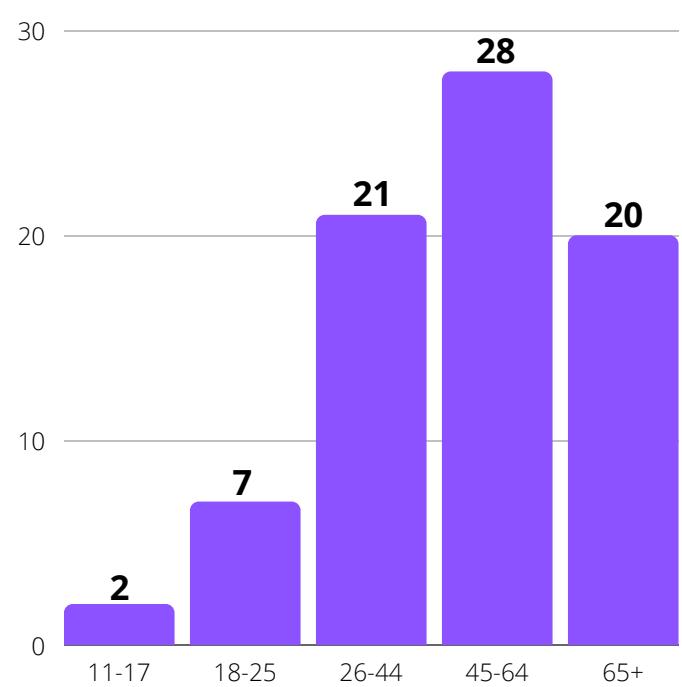
In 2022, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 78 suicide deaths. A suicide is a death resulting from a self-inflicted injury which ends one's life.



## Suicides by Gender

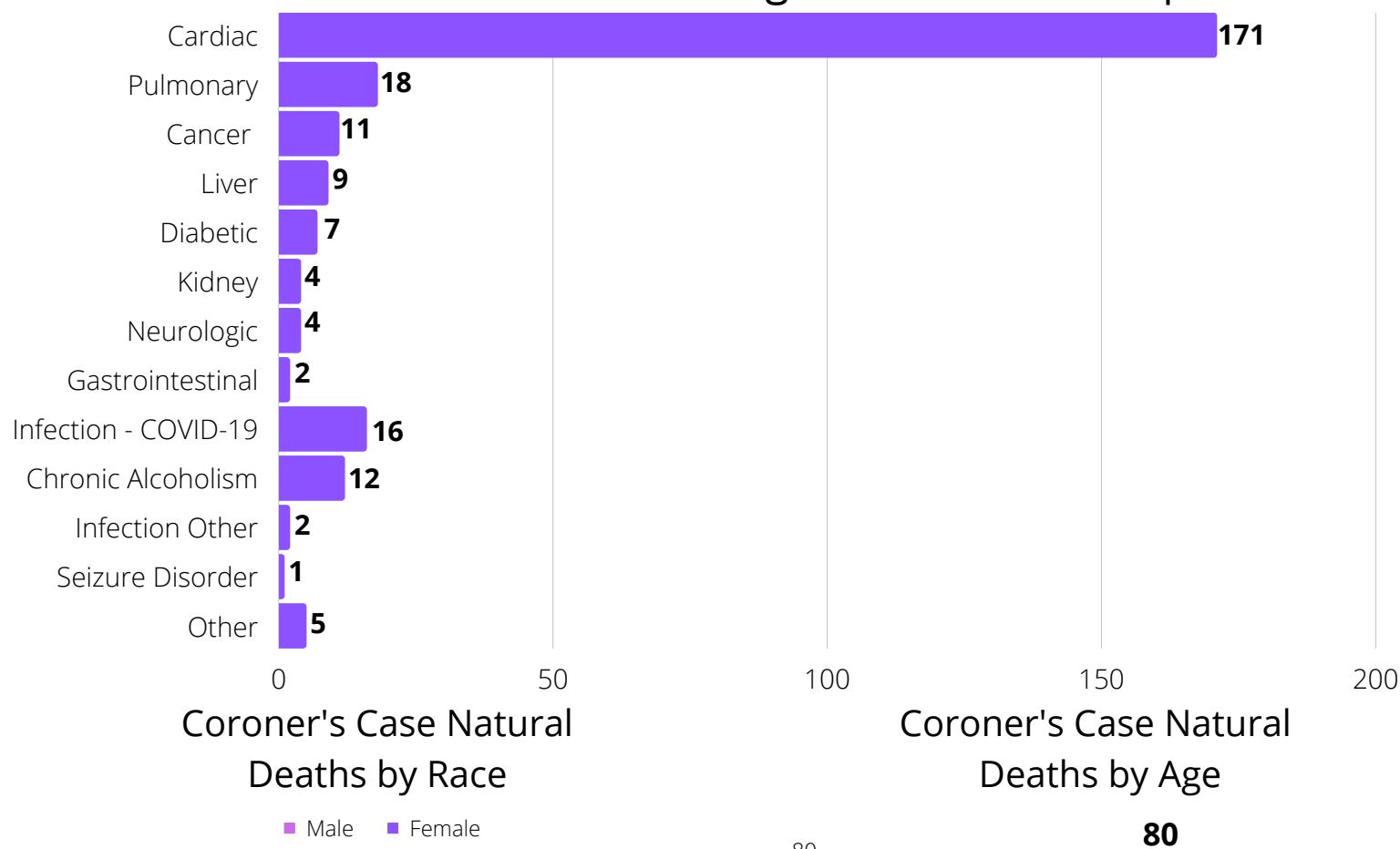


## Suicides by Age



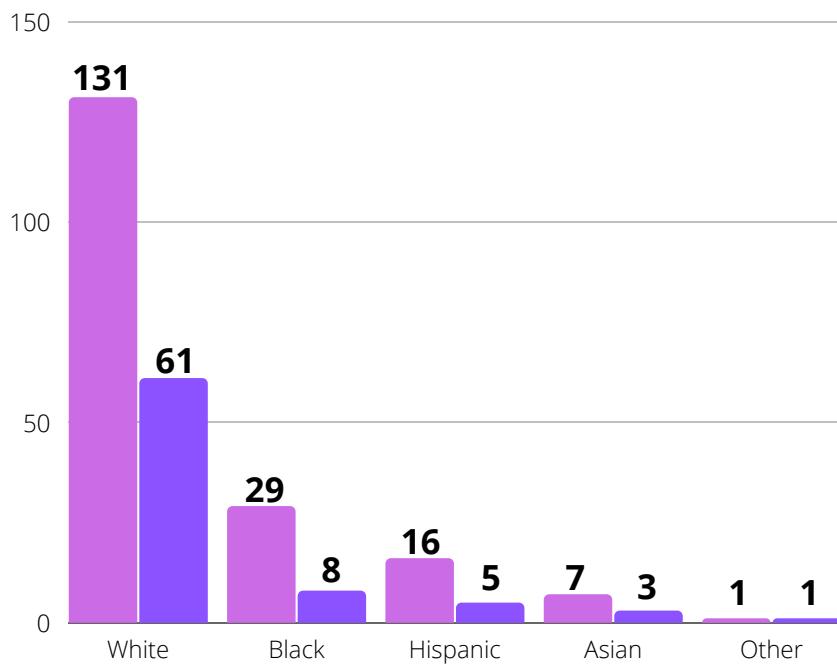
# Manner of Death: Natural

In 2022, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 262 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.

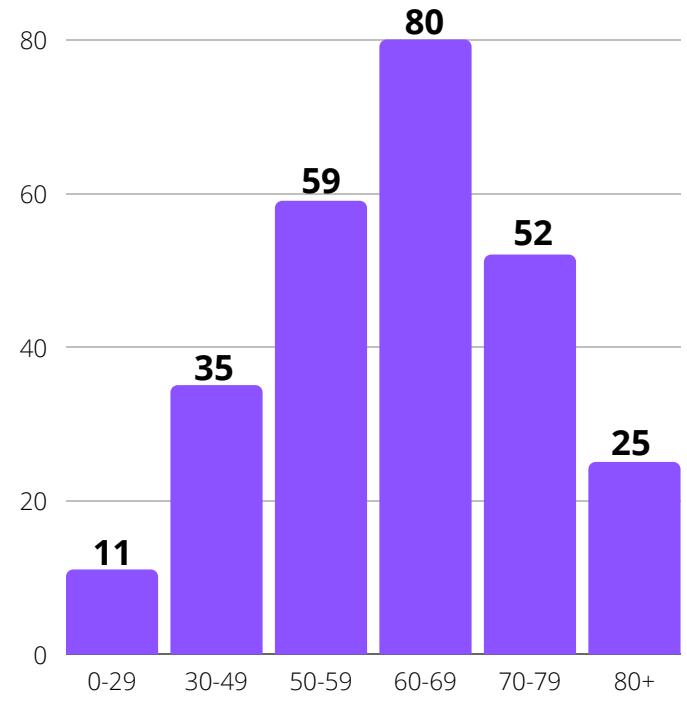


Coroner's Case Natural Deaths by Race

■ Male ■ Female

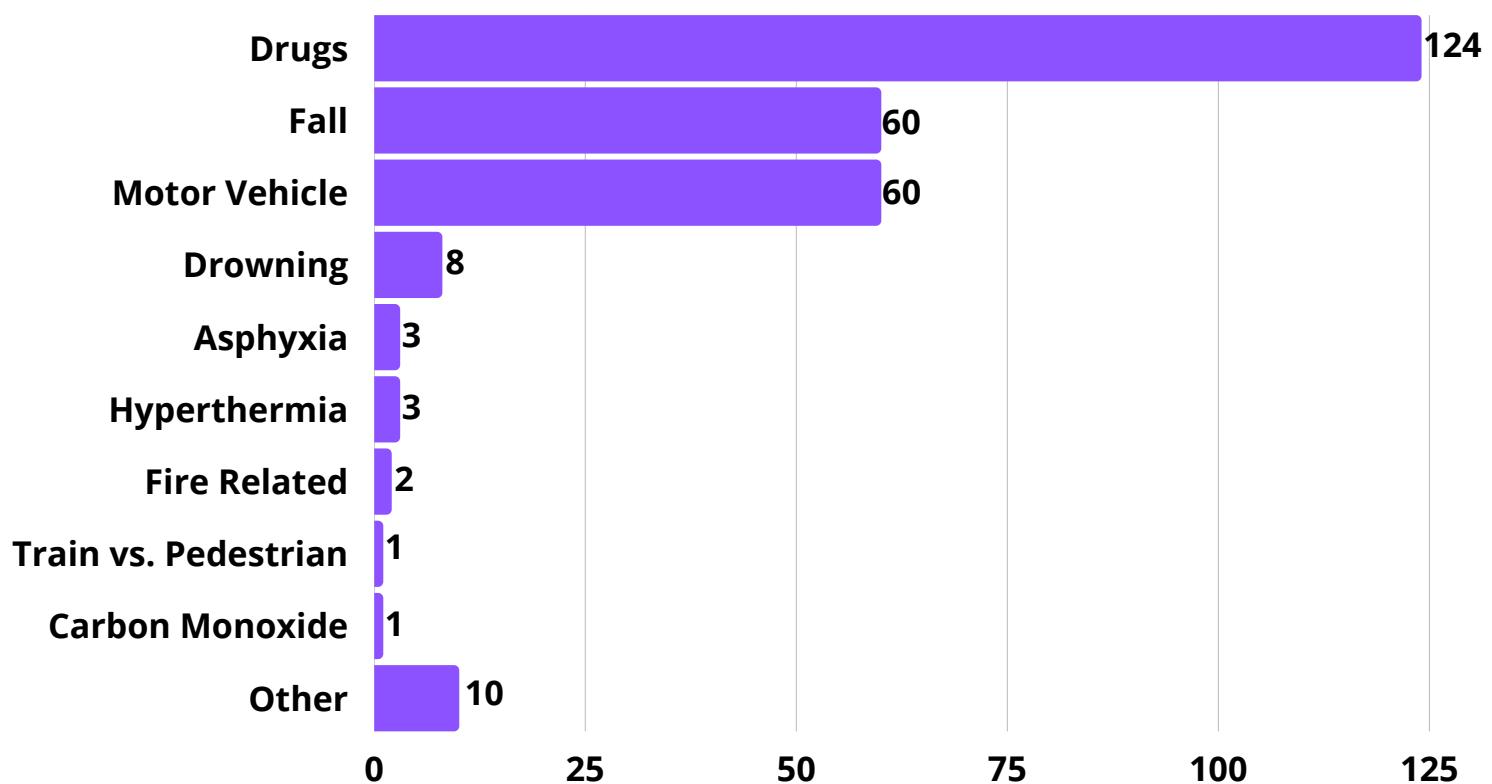


Coroner's Case Natural Deaths by Age

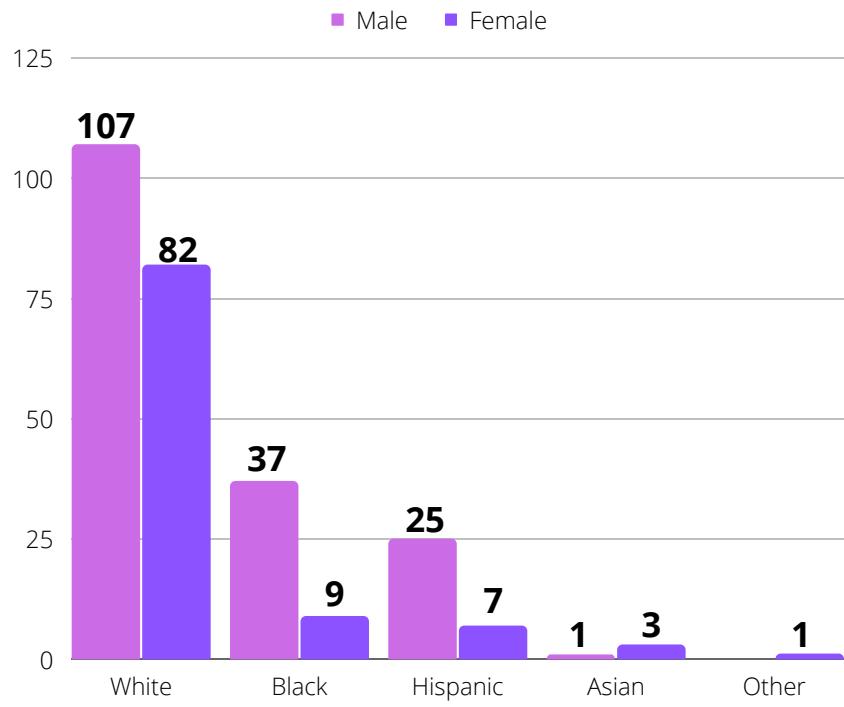


# Manner of Death: Accident

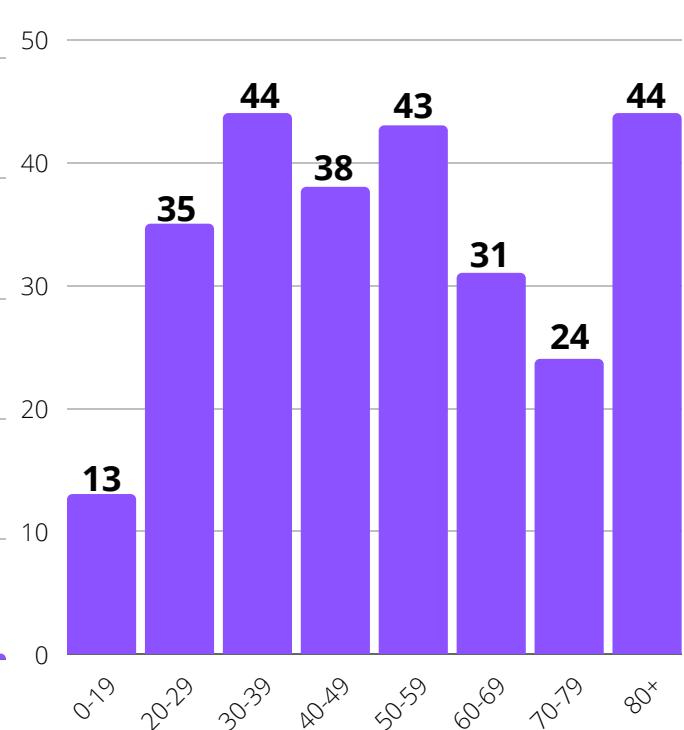
In 2022, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 272 accidental deaths. An accidental death occurs due to unnatural causes when there is no evidence of intent to cause harm and the fatal outcome was unintentional.



Accidental Deaths by Race and Sex



Accidental Deaths by Age



# Manner of Death: Undetermined

In 2022, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 5 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.

2022 Undetermined Manner			
Date of Death	Race	Sex	Age
4/7/2022	White	Male	0 - Stillbirth
7/28/2022	Black	Female	22-years-old
10/7/2022	White	Male	69-years-old
11/29/2022	Black	Male	58-years-old
12/16/2022	Black	Female	24-years-old

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# Infant through Preschool-age Deaths

In 2022, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 9 deaths of children between birth and 5-years-old.

2022 Infant Through Preschool Deaths				
Race	Sex	Age	Month of Death	Manner of Death
White	Male	3-years-old	February	Natural
Hispanic	Male	1-year-old	February	Natural
White	Male	Stillbirth	April	Undetermined
White	Female	3-years-old	June	Homicide
White	Male	5-years-old	June	Homicide
White	Male	2-years-old	June	Homicide
Hispanic	Male	8-months-old	October	Accident
White	Male	3-years-old	October	Accident
White	Female	4-years-old	November	Homicide

# Autopsies

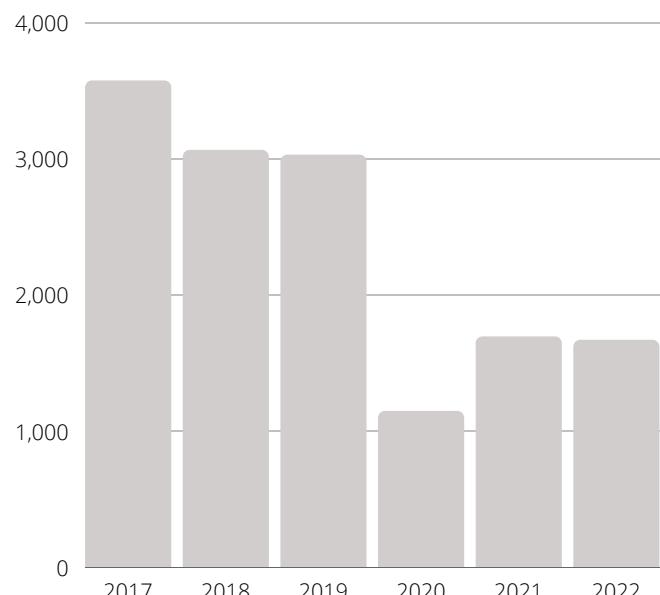
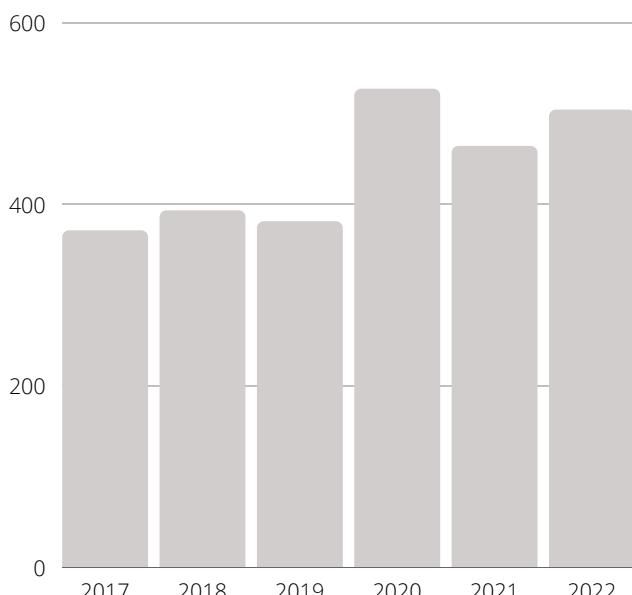
In 2022, the Lake County Coroner's Office performed 497 autopsies under the direction of our full-time pathologist, Dr. Zakariya. An examination is considered "full" when a complete examination is performed both internally and externally. A limited autopsy is performed when only certain internal organs 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

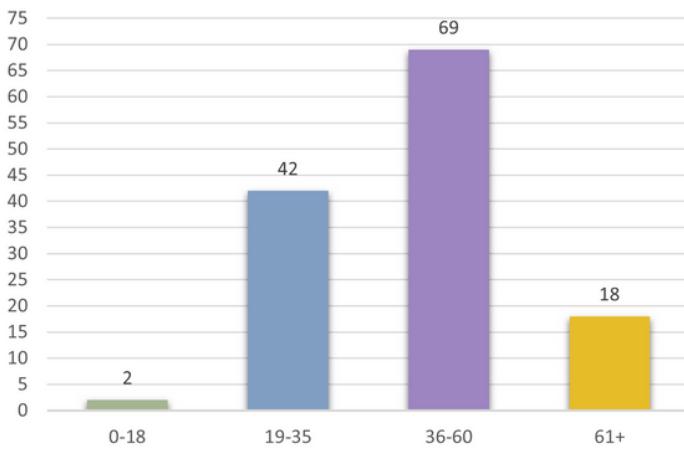
In 2022, the Lake County Coroner's Office toxicology lab processed 504 Coroner's cases and 1669 tests for outside agencies.



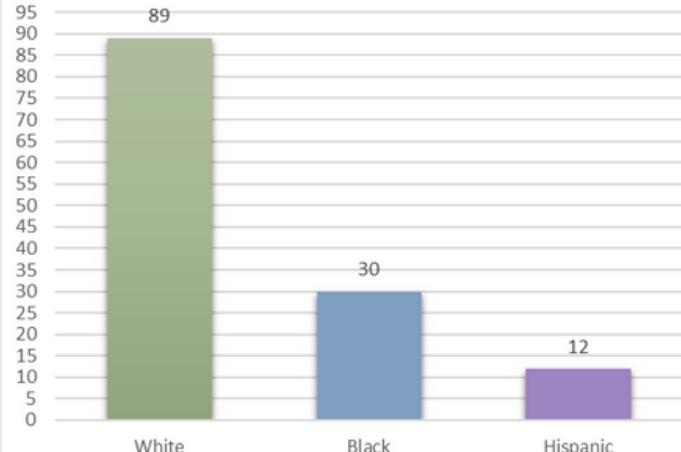
# Drug Stats

In 2022, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 131 drug overdose deaths which included a combination of suicides and accidental deaths.

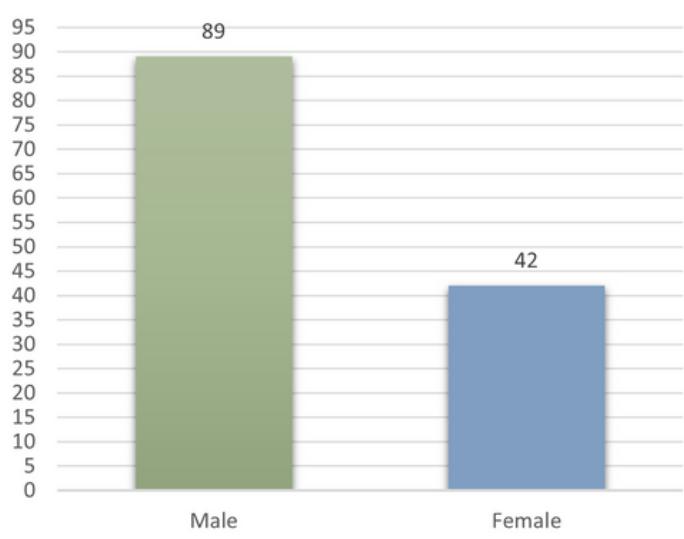
Age



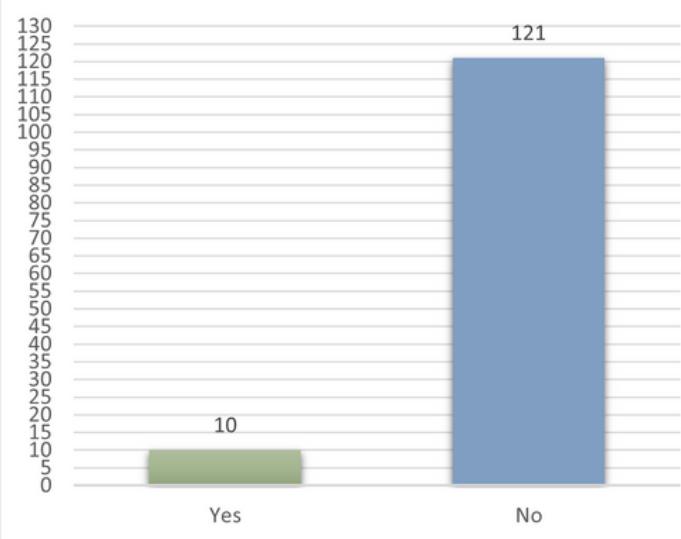
Race



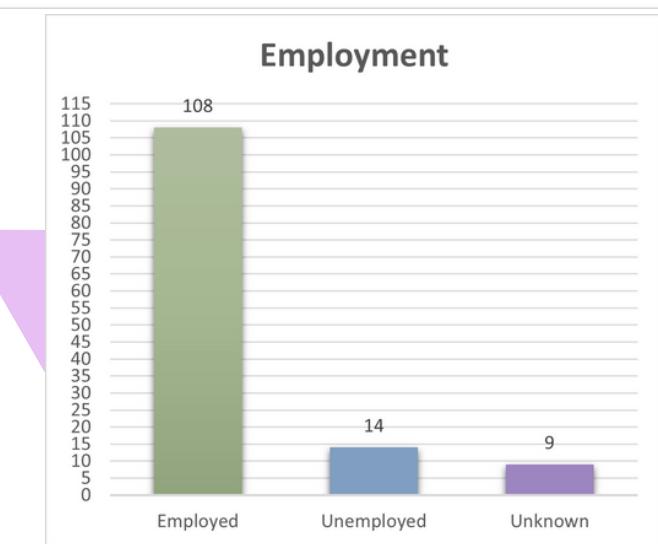
Gender



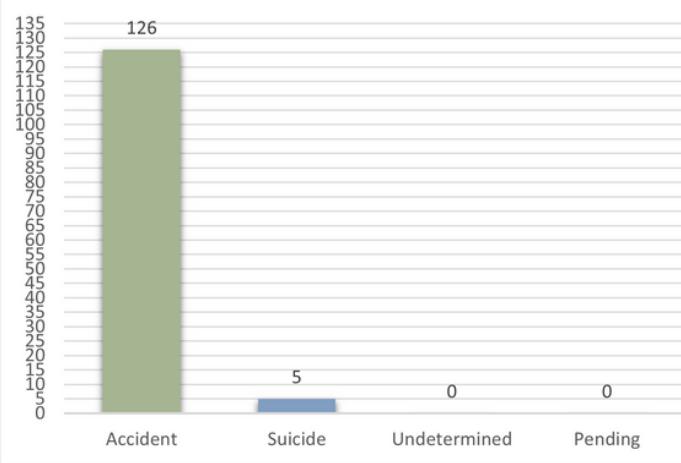
Veteran



Employment



Manner of Death



## Drug Stats

Of the 131 overdose deaths in 2022, 105 deaths were attributable to Opioids.

92 overdose deaths contained Fentanyl.

Xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, was present in 7 cases, all which contained Fentanyl.

<u>TOTAL</u>	
Count	Description
16	Fentanyl
48	Fentanyl + Non OPI
3	Fentanyl + Heroin
16	Fentanyl + Heroin + Non OPI
4	Fentanyl + Hydrocodone + Non OPI
0	Fentanyl + Methadone
2	Fentanyl + Methadone + Non OPI
2	Fentanyl + Methadone + Heroin + Non OPI
1	Fentanyl + Oxycodone + Non OPI
0	Heroin + Oxycodone
0	Heroin + Hydrocodone
5	Heroin + Non OPI
4	Hydrocodone + Non OPI
0	Methadone
0	Methadone + Non OPI
1	Opiate Non-Specific + Non OPI
0	Oxycodone
3	Oxycodone + Non OPI
26	Non OPI
131	<b>TOTAL OVERDOSE DEATHS</b>

## WHAT IS FENTANYL?



Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is approximately **50X MORE POTENT THAN MORPHINE<sup>1</sup>**

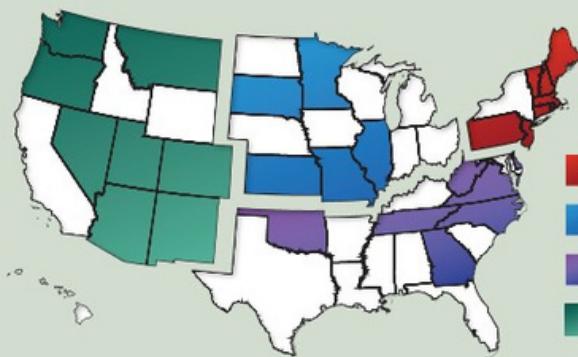
Many people are exposed to fentanyl without knowledge while others use it intentionally because of its potency.

## OVERDOSE DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES EXCEEDED 100,000 IN A 12-MONTH PERIOD FOR THE FIRST TIME!

64% of these deaths involved synthetic opioids, mainly illicitly manufactured fentanyl (IMFs) (May 2020-April 2021)<sup>2</sup>  
This is up from the more than 91,000 overdose deaths that occurred the previous year. (December 2019-December 2020)<sup>3</sup>



Although the northeast region continues to suffer the highest overdose deaths, several regions of the country showed sharp increases in IMF related deaths.<sup>2</sup>



- Northeast**  
3.5% increase; 5,194 deaths
- Midwest**  
33.1% increase; 2,010 deaths
- South**  
64.7% increase; 4,342 deaths
- West**  
93.9% increase; 1,852 deaths

\*In jurisdictions participating in State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (SUDORS).

## FENTANYL IS IMPACTING MINORITIES AT AN ALARMING RATE!

Non-Hispanic Blacks had the highest mortality rate due to synthetic opioids other than methadone in 2020. In addition, from 2013-2020, the highest changes in this rate were for: non-Hispanic Blacks, Hispanics, non-Hispanic Whites.<sup>4</sup>



**47.6X**

Overdose deaths involving IMF rose 47.6-fold among Non-Hispanic Blacks.<sup>4</sup>



**35.7X**

Overdose deaths involving IMF rose 35.7-fold among Hispanics.<sup>4</sup>



**15.9X**

Overdose deaths involving IMF rose 15.9-fold among Non-Hispanic Whites.<sup>4</sup>



## YOU CAN HELP SAVE LIVES - CARRY NALOXONE!



## HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF AN OVERDOSE.



UNRESPONSIVE



IRREGULAR BREATHING



GRAY, BLUE, OR PALE SKIN COLOR



VERY SMALL PUPILS

## HOW TO REVERSE AN OVERDOSE.

Immediate action saves lives! Good Samaritan Laws protect you when you are trying to help someone in need.

## CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY

Call 911, or direct someone nearby to call and say that you are supporting a suspected overdose.



## ADMINISTER NALOXONE

Even though the person is unresponsive, 1) Announce that you are going to give naloxone 2) Spray the naloxone in the person's nose.



## ADMINISTER CPR

Tilt the individual's head back to make sure their airways are open.  
Apply chest compressions.



## GIVE NALOXONE AGAIN

Administer additional Naloxone if the person does not regain color or breathing, otherwise continue chest compressions, until help arrives.



## REMAIN CALM &amp; COMFORTING

If the person is revived, remain calm and compassionate and encourage them to accept help or stay in a public place.



# What is Xylazine?



Xylazine is a **horse tranquilizer drug** and large animal sedative with pain killing & muscle relaxant properties that is **mixed with heroin, cocaine, meth, and other street drugs.**

Its use has lead to an increase in **overdose deaths** across the country.

'Zombie' drug? Other names for xylazine  
Brand names for xylazine include:

Rompun  
Sedazin  
AnaSed

In the illicit drug market, providers have heard xylazine or drugs laced with xylazine referred to as:

Tranq  
Tranq Dope  
Sleep Cut  
Zombie Heroin

Xylazine is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration for human use.

There is no amount of xylazine that is safe for humans.

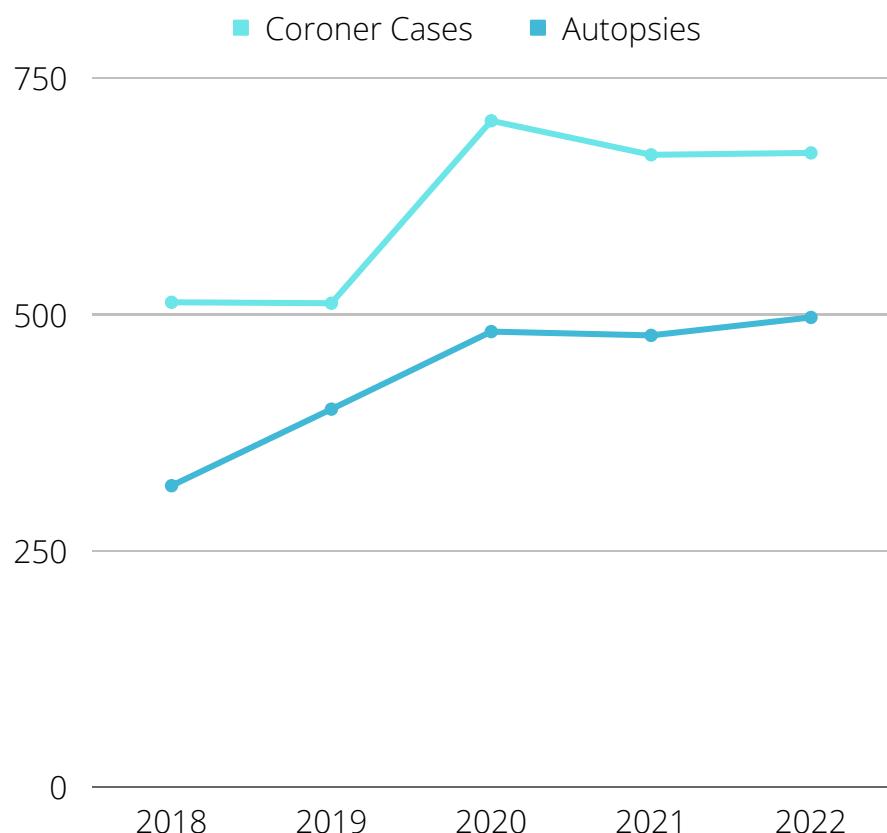
When used in people, xylazine can cause "serious and life-threatening effects," including severe skin wounds and dead tissue, the FDA says. It can also depress breathing, blood pressure and heart rate to "critical levels."

Source: CBS News, February 28, 2023

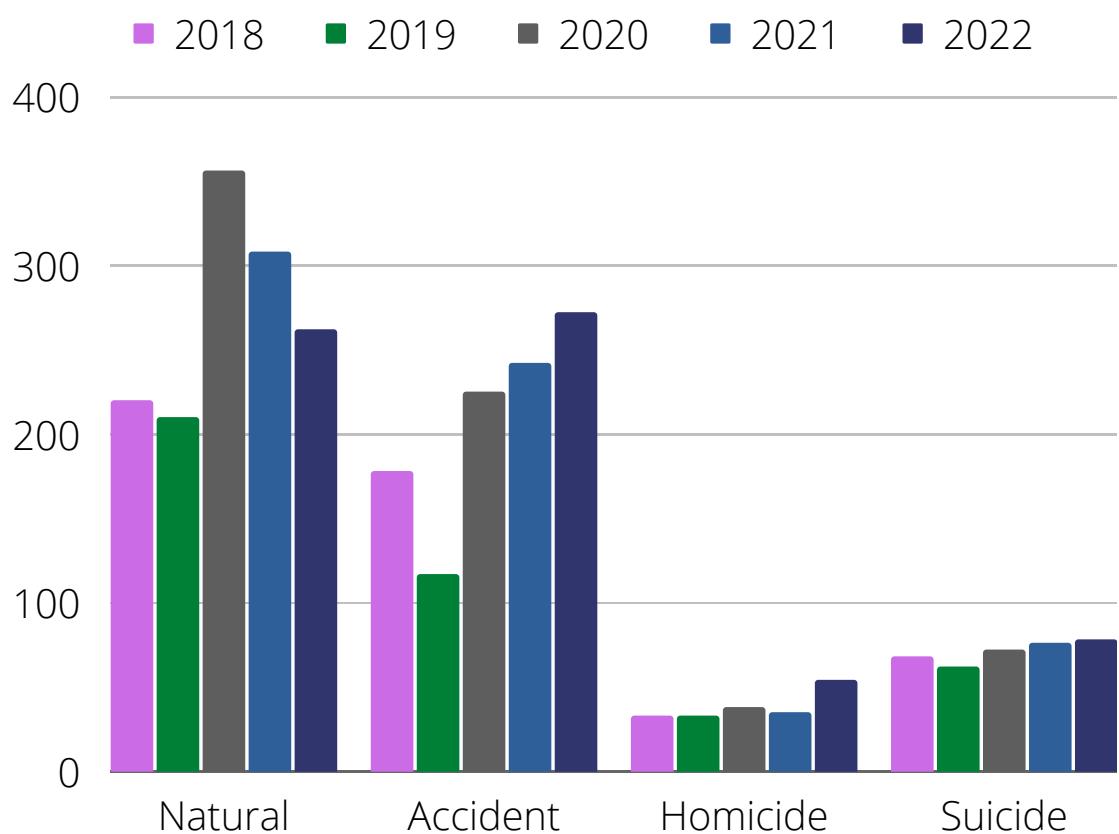
In the event of a suspected overdose, the National Institute of Drug Abuse still recommends giving naloxone because xylazine is frequently combined with opioids. As with all overdoses, the agency also urges calling emergency medical services.

Source: USA Today January 24, 2023

# 5 Years of Data and Trends



## Coroner Case Manners of Death

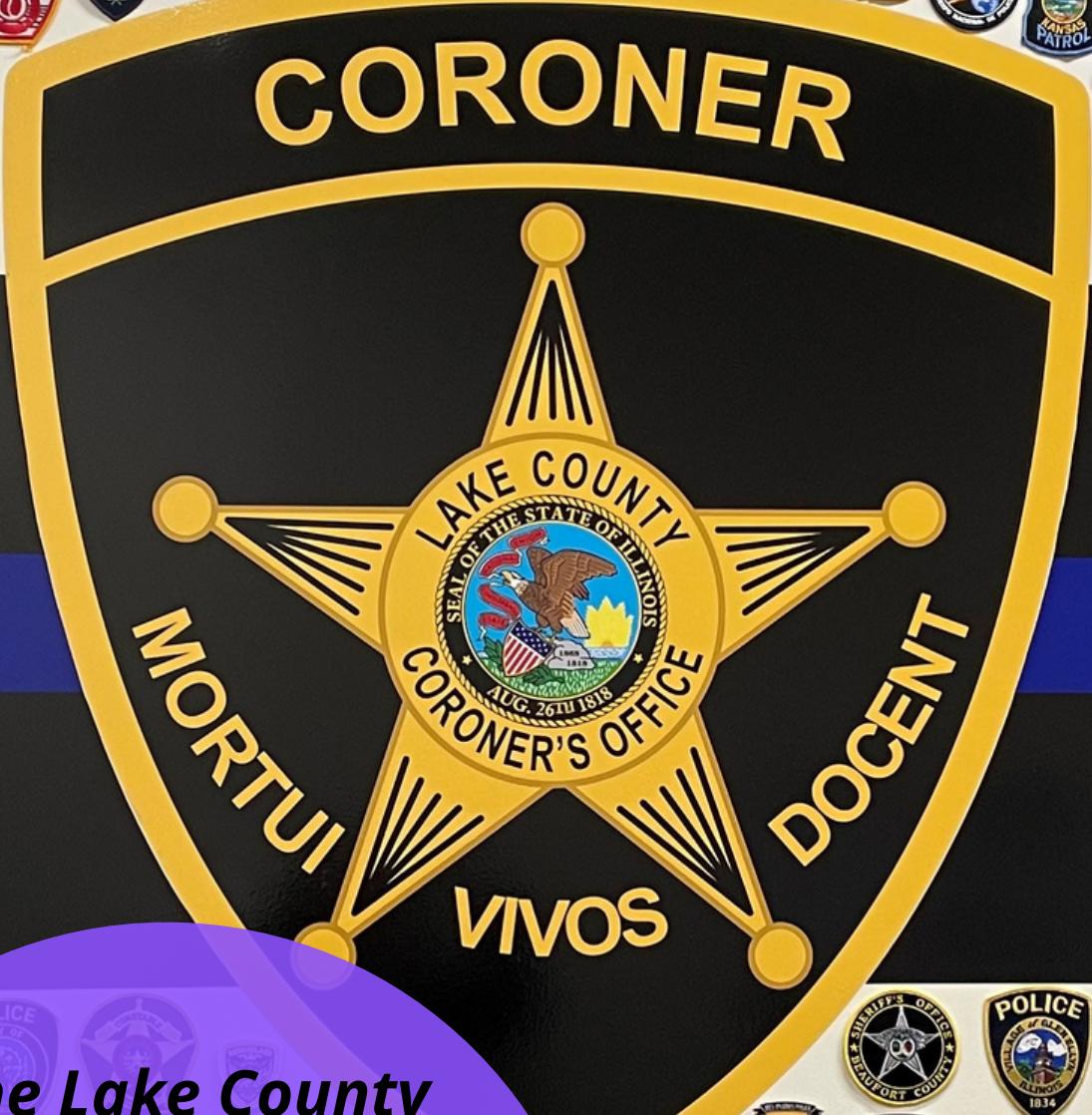


# 2022: The Faces of LCCO



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