

Thurston County Coroner



2018 Annual Report

Thurston County Coroner
2000 Lakeridge Dr SW
Olympia, 98502

Last Revised: September 25, 2025

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
The Thurston County Coroner's Office	3
The Thurston County Coroner's Office Staff	4
Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner	5
The Thurston County Coroner's Office Cases	6
Cases by Manner of Death	7
Natural Causes of Death by Category	8
Deaths by Unnatural Causes	9
Accidental Deaths by Type	10
Accidental Deaths - Motor Vehicle Crashes	11
Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death	12
Suicide by Means	13
Homicide Deaths	14
Deaths by Age Group	15
Disclaimer	15

The Thurston County Coroner's Office

The Thurston County Coroner's Office investigates sudden, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths that occur in Thurston County. Deputy Coroners are medicolegal death investigators and respond to death scenes at any hour and anywhere within the boundaries of Thurston County. The Coroner's Office determines cause and manner of death after a complete investigation and postmortem examination, if required. In addition, the Coroner's Office provides cause and manner of death for the death certificate. Complete findings of the death investigation are distributed to families and law enforcement agencies as appropriate.

The main duties of the Coroner's Office are to determine the cause and manner of death. 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 accident. On occasion, the manner of death is classified as undetermined.

Information collected during the investigation helps clarify the circumstances, such as the sequence of events prior to death. Evidence collected during an investigation and/or postmortem examination may help lead to the arrest or successful conviction of a suspect in a homicide case. Because deaths occur around the clock, Deputy Coroner Investigators are available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year.

With the skill and experience of the medicolegal death investigators and board-certified forensic pathologists, the quality of death investigations in Thurston County are among the best in the State. The death scene investigation reports by the Deputy Coroners are very thorough and supply comprehensive information to the pathologists.

Our Coroner and Deputy Coroners also extend their duties to the living by answering questions and addressing concerns regarding deaths within the county. Deputy Coroners are frequently in contact with family members of a deceased and assist them by providing appropriate answers regarding the circumstances of the death and directing next steps in making final arrangements for their loved one.

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

The Thurston County Coroner's Office Staff

Gary Warnock
Coroner

Molly Ivanovich
Administrative Assistant 2

Lisa Chase
Deputy Coroner

Karen Peek
Deputy Coroner

Donald Seese
Deputy Coroner

Charlotte Mitchell
Deputy Coroner

Kristina Vilsack
Deputy Coroner

Traci McCullah
Deputy Coroner

Joe West
Forensic Photographer

Eric Kiesel, MD, PhD
Forensic Pathologist

Ladd Tremaine, MD
Forensic Pathologist

Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner

The Revised Code of Washington (RCW), mandates that specific types of death be referred to the Coroner for investigation (see list below). These deaths include sudden and unexpected deaths, accidental deaths, and violent deaths. The Coroner has the authority under the law to order an autopsy at any time it is deemed necessary to determine or confirm the cause and manner of death.

Deaths Reportable to the Coroner:

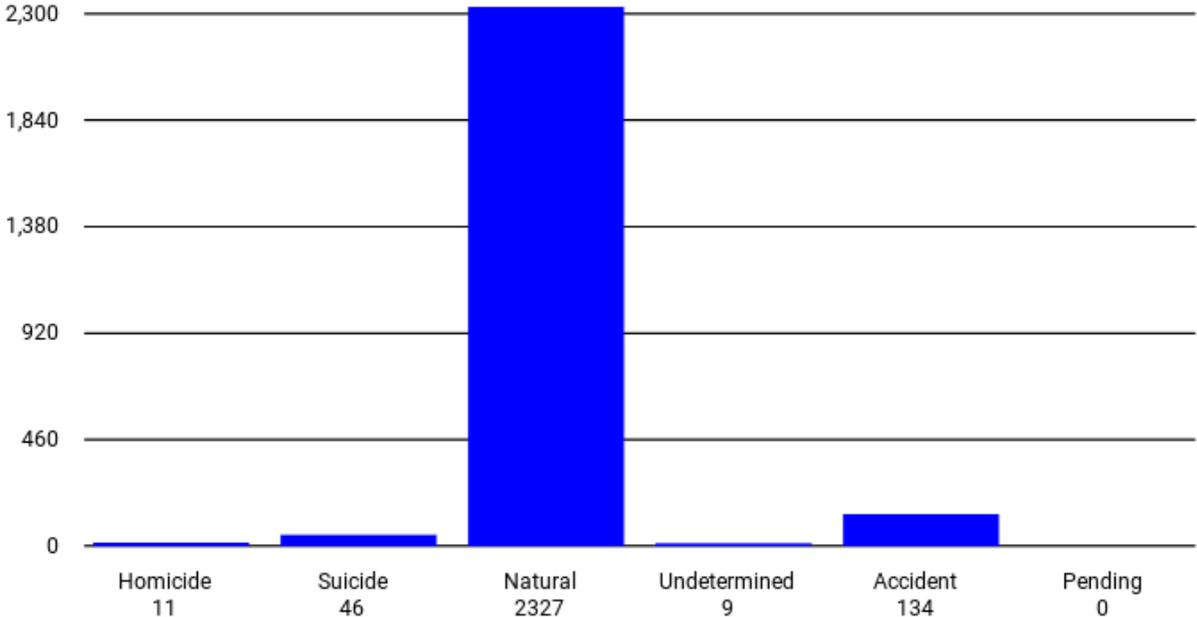
- Violent death (e.g., strangulation, gunshot, stabbing, poisoning, etc.)
- Accidental deaths (e.g., falls, drowning, motor vehicle collisions, burns, overdose, etc.)
- Death of a prisoner (e.g., deaths in any county or city jail while imprisoned or in custody)
- Suspicious Circumstances (e.g., Unidentified Bodies or events surrounding death)
- Deaths caused by unnatural or unlawful means
- Sudden and Unexpected deaths (e.g., all deaths during a surgical procedure, anesthesia-related, unexpected natural death, occupational-related deaths)
- Death due to a violent contagious disease or suspected violent contagious disease
- Death of a mother due to an abortion
- Unexpected infant deaths
- When a decedent is not claimed by relatives or friends

The Coroner would generally order an autopsy for most of the reportable deaths listed above.

The Thurston County Coroner's Office Cases

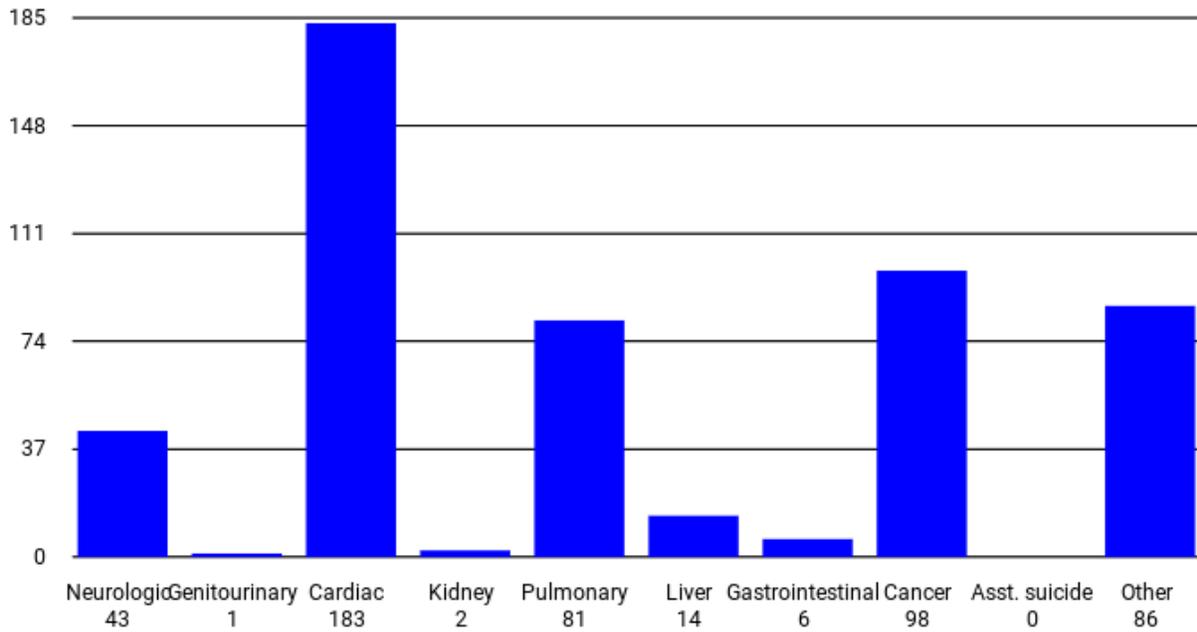
Population (approximate, 2018)	286,419
Deaths Reported to the Coroner's Office	2527
A. Number of jurisdictional deaths investigated by the Coroner's Office	320
1. Number of scene investigations by the Coroner's Office	242
2. Number of autopsies completed under the Coroner's Office	174
B. Number of non-jurisdictional deaths	2214

Cases by Manner of Death



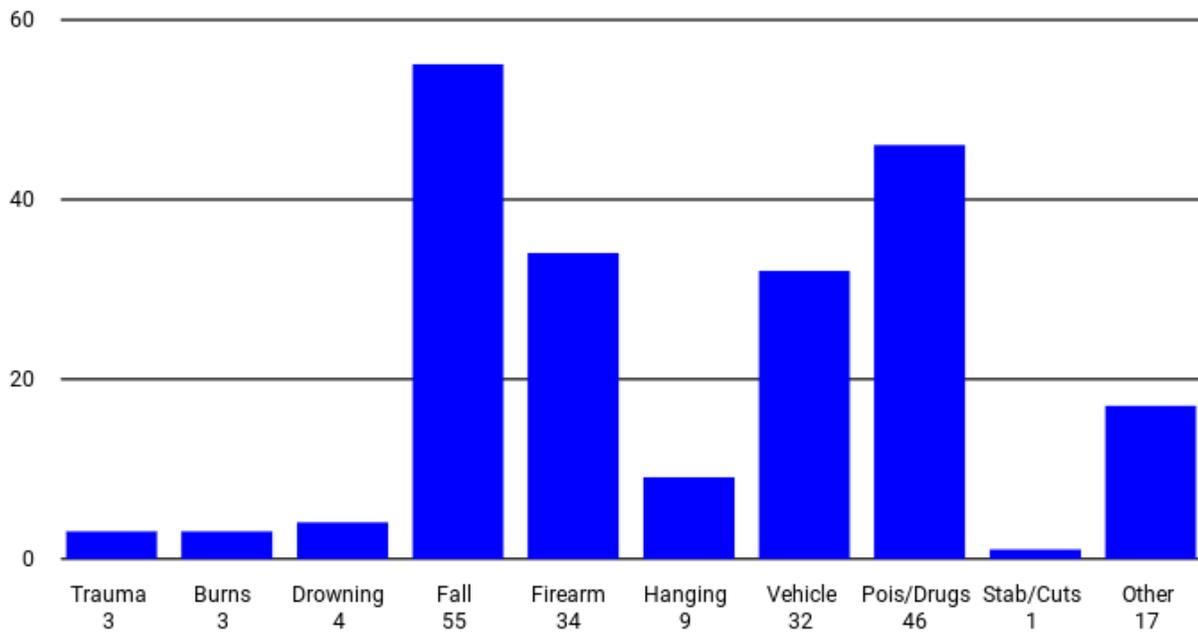
Number of Deaths by Manner	2527
Homicide	11
Suicide	46
Natural	2327
Undetermined	9
Accident	134

Natural Causes of Death by Category



Natural Deaths by Category		2327
Neurologic		43
Genitourinary		1
Cardiac		183
Kidney		2
Pulmonary		81
Liver		14
Gastrointestinal		6
Cancer		98
Other		86

Deaths by Unnatural Causes

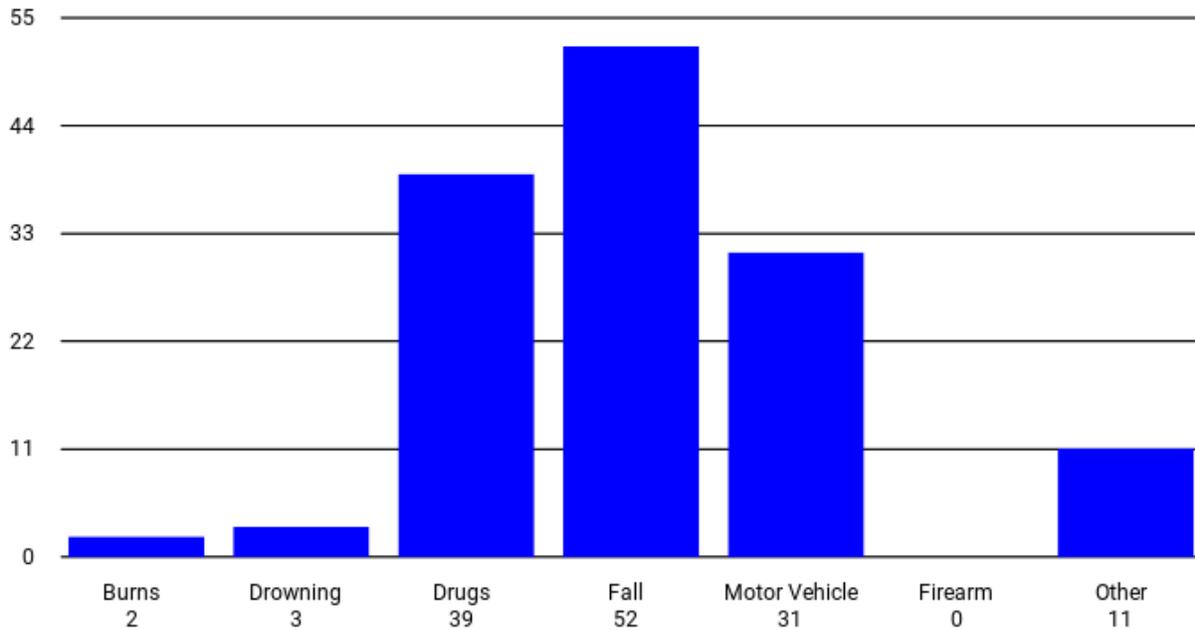


Unnatural Deaths Categorized (Some deaths may be in multiple categories) **200**

Trauma	4
Burns	3
Drowning	4
Fall	55
Firearm	34
Hanging	9
Vehicle	32
Drugs/Poison	46
Stab/Cuts	1
Other	17

"Other" unnatural deaths may include the following:
Hypothermia, Food Asphyxia (Choking), etc.

Accidental Deaths by Type

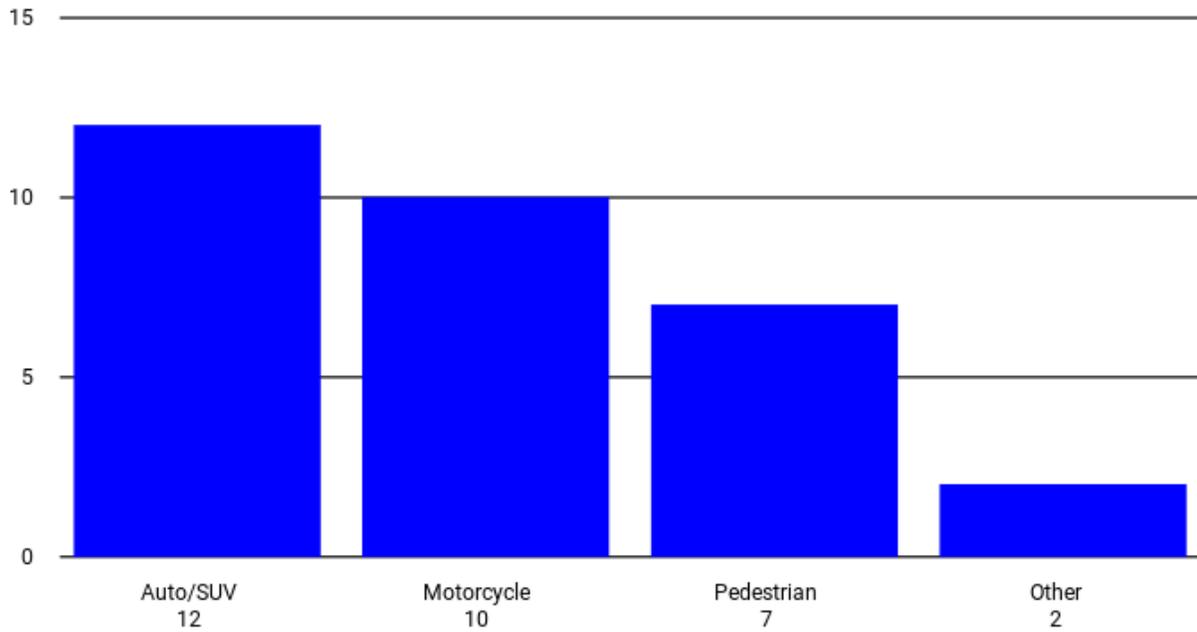


Accidental Deaths by Means (Some deaths may be in multiple categories) **134**

Burns	2
Drowning	3
Drugs	39
Fall	52
Motor Vehicle	31
Firearm	0
Other	11

"Other" category may include:
Hypothermia, Aircraft, Food Asphyxia (Choking), etc.

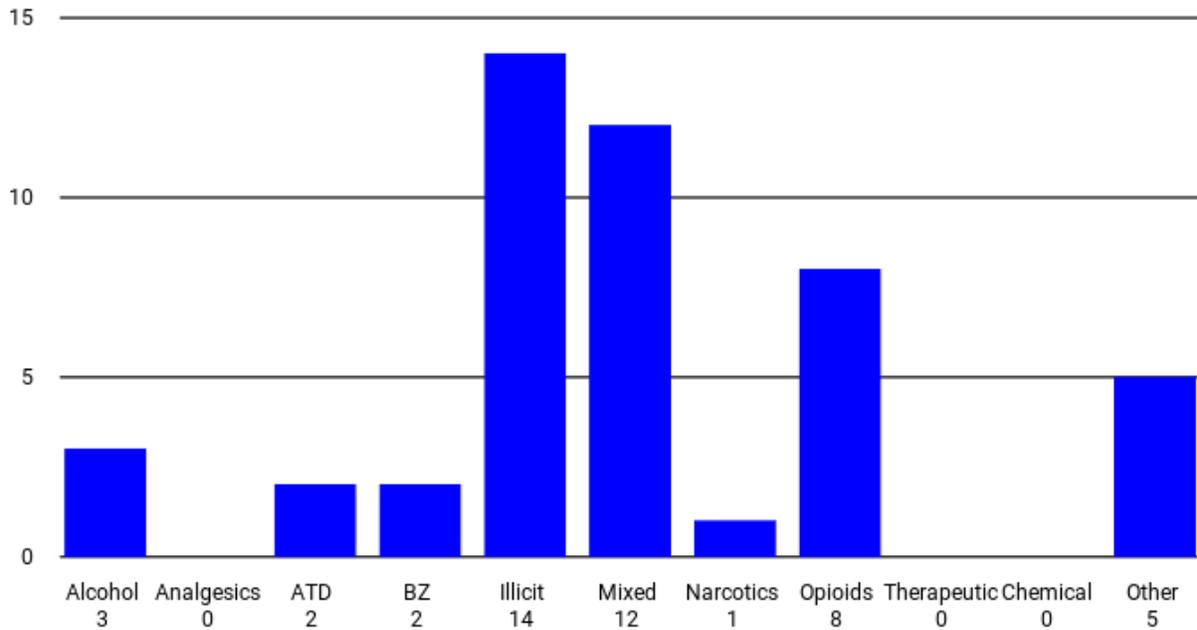
Accidental Deaths - Motor Vehicle Crashes



Accidental Motor Vehicle Deaths	31
Auto/SUV	12
Motorcycle	10
Pedestrian	7
Other	2

"Other" may include:
Bicyclist, passenger, etc.

Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death



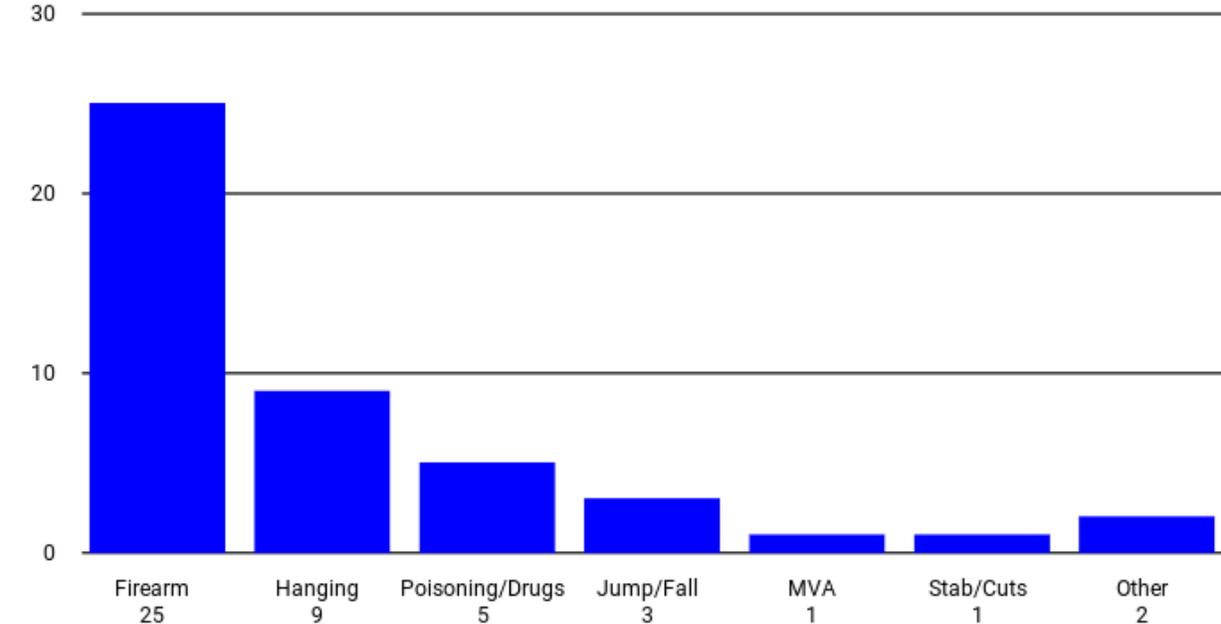
Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death

Alcohol	3
Antidepressants	2
Benzodiazepines	2
Illicit (Single drug)	14
Mixed	12
Narcotics	1
Opioids	8
Other	5

"Other" may include:

Methadone, Diphenhydramine, etc.

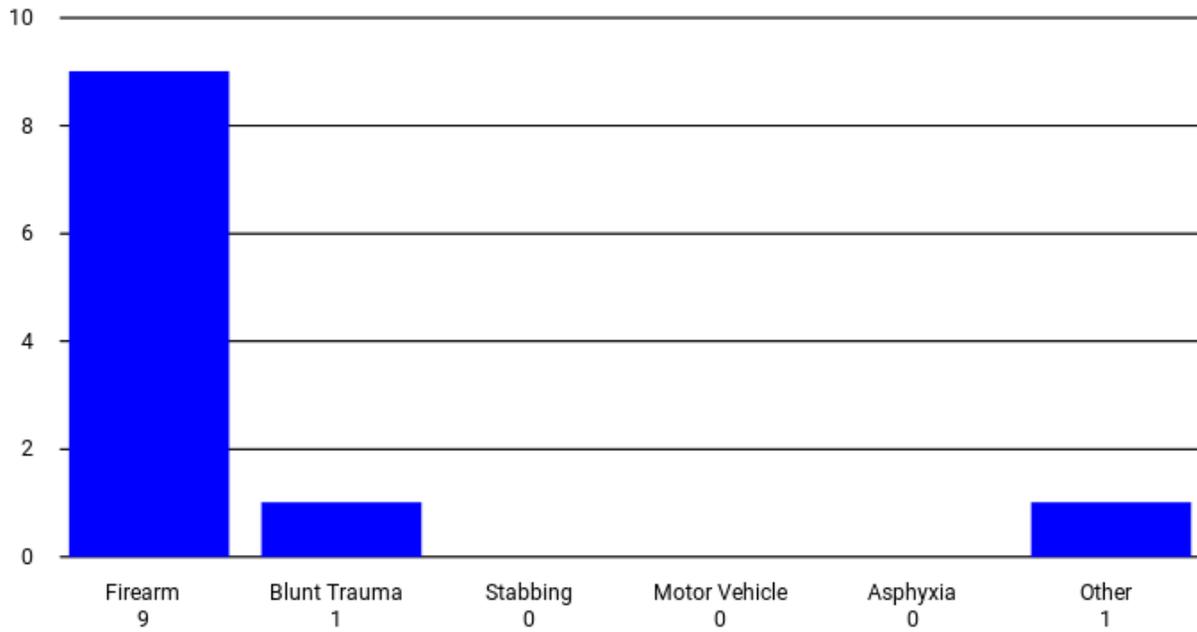
Suicide by Means



Suicide by Means	46
Firearm	25
Hanging	9
Poisoning/Drugs	5
Jump/Fall	3
Motor vehicle	1
Stab/Cuts	1
Other	3

"Other" may include:
Asphyxia, drowning, etc.

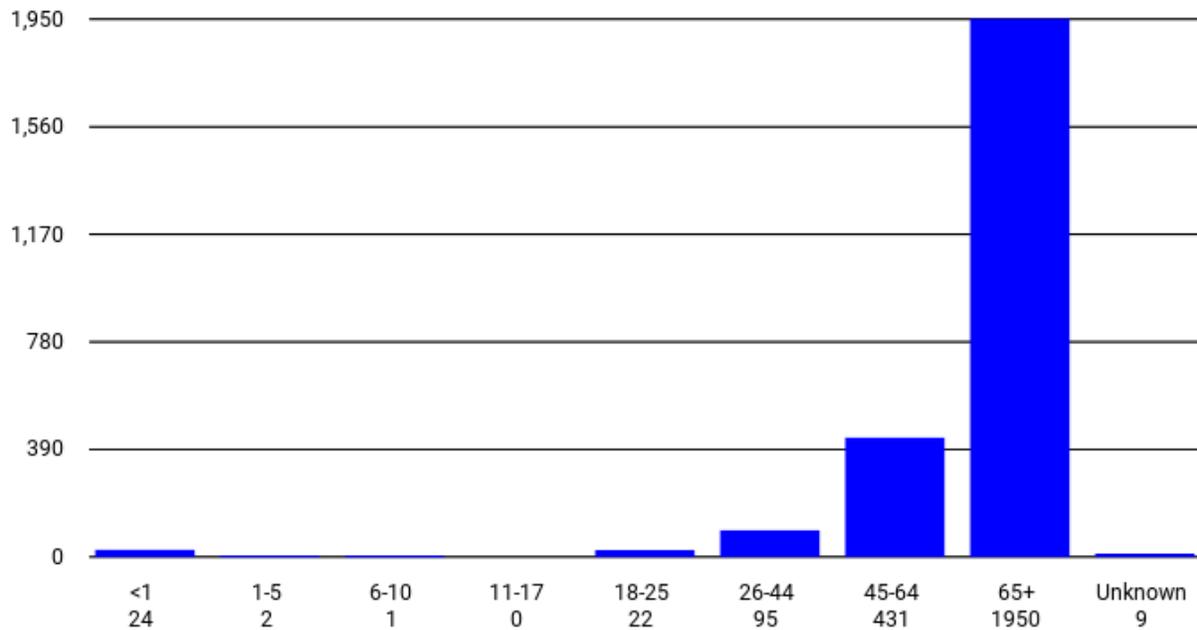
Homicide Deaths



Homicide by Means 11

Firearm 9
Blunt Trauma 1
Other 1

Deaths by Age Group



Deaths by Age Groups

Under 1 year	24
1-5 years	2
6-10 years	1
18-25 years	22
26-44 years	95
45-64 years	431
65 and over	1950

Disclaimer

The Coroner's Office endeavors to provide accurate and up-to-date information in the Annual Report; however, this report is not complete and may be updated at any time. When the report is updated, the previous report will be removed and a new report will be posted.

Updated: September 2025