



**REGIONAL MEDICAL
EXAMINER'S OFFICE**

2023 Annual Report

Washoe County
Regional Medical
Examiner's Office



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Chief's Report

History and Current Status

The history of the Medical Examiner's Office can be described in two eras: pre-2007 and post-2007. Prior to 2007, the office was the Washoe County Coroner Office (WCCO) and was managed by a layperson coroner. Pathologists were retained on a contract basis to perform autopsies, and frequently also actively practiced hospital pathology at the same time. Effective July 1, 2007, the Board of County Commissioners approved county code changes that established a Medical Examiner system in Washoe County, and the office became known as the Washoe County Medical Examiner-Coroner Office. A forensic pathologist was appointed as the Chief Medical Examiner and Coroner and employed a second forensic pathologist as a full-time Assistant Medical Examiner; numerous part-time locum tenens pathologists from across the country were added over time to handle the increasing regional caseload. A Deputy Chief Medical Examiner was recruited in 2015 due to both caseload and the need for succession planning. Dr. Ellen Clark was the first Chief Medical Examiner of the office and retired at the end of 2016 after many years of dedicated service.

The office relocated in January 2017 from 10 Kirman Avenue to the current site: 990 East 9th Street, a modern, state-of-the-art facility, newly constructed in 2016. The agency rebranded at this time as the Washoe County Regional Medical Examiner's Office (WCRMEO).

Dr. Laura Knight, previously Deputy Chief Medical Examiner from 2015-2016, became Chief Medical Examiner and Coroner in January 2017 and remains in that position. Three Assistant Medical Examiners completed the physician staff of the office up until April 2023, when a Deputy Chief Medical Examiner was recruited. All five forensic pathologists employed by the WCRMEO are board-certified by the American Board of Pathology in Forensic Pathology.

Total deaths reported to WCRMEO in 2023 were 5,907, down slightly from 6,206 in 2022 and from the all-time high of 6,321 in 2021. This includes Washoe County deaths and all outside referral counties. However, more of the deaths reported in 2023 were jurisdictional cases requiring examination than in previous years. In 2023, WCRMEO pathologists performed 1,019 autopsies (a record high); 323 medical external examinations; and 783 consultations (medical records review and death certificate completion) (also a record high). Annual number of autopsies has steadily increased over the years, up 72% since 2015. Total deaths reported increased 55% over the same time period, indicating that a greater percentage of deaths reported are non-natural deaths that fall under Medical Examiner jurisdiction. Much of the increase has been fueled by drug-related deaths, as will be apparent in the data later in this report; drug-related deaths reached an unfortunate all-time high in our region in 2023.

The WCRMEO played a significant role in public health surveillance during the COVID-19 pandemic, collecting the first swab from a deceased individual to screen for COVID-19 on March 6, 2020. WCRMEO collected nasopharyngeal and other swabs for COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) testing in 273 deceased individuals in 2021, with 98 positive results; 156 deceased individuals in 2022; and 54 deceased individuals in 2023 with only 10 positive results. All deaths reported to the office during the pandemic time period were historically screened for COVID-19 symptoms. All

cases certified as being due to COVID-19 had a confirmed positive laboratory test for SARS-CoV2.

The WCRMEO continued to receive grant funding in 2023 from the CDC (through the state) for data entry into the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) and for toxicology testing and related expenses from the SUDORS grant. Data entry through these programs is utilized for state and national level death prevention efforts.

Finally in 2023, the office successfully leveraged new technological advances in forensic genetic genealogy (FGG) to identify individuals whose remains were in such poor condition due to decomposition that they could not be identified when found. Some such cases date back to the late 1970s to early 1980s. Prioritizing homicide (or suspected homicide) cold cases first, the office sent a total of nine cases for FGG analysis and achieved one of hopefully many such identifications in 2023. The identity of the deceased may allow additional investigative leads in the investigation of who may have been involved in her death. More importantly, we were able to restore the dignity of being laid to rest with her name and provide some closure to her surviving family members.

Continuing Excellence and Future Goals

Future goals and priorities of the office include national accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners (anticipated for 2025); continuing partnerships with organ and tissue donation organizations; mass fatality preparedness; and academic partnership with the University. We will continue to be the regional referral center for high quality autopsies, providing services on a contract basis to 18 additional counties in Nevada and Northern California, and the regional center for excellence in medicolegal death investigation. We will continue to conduct high quality mass fatality training exercises, and training conferences on medicolegal death investigation for surrounding county coroners and law enforcement. We will enhance the education of medical students, through cooperation with the University of Nevada-Reno School of Medicine, hopefully recruiting future forensic pathologists to the field to combat what has become a dire workforce shortage. Finally, and most importantly, we will strive to continue to serve the citizens of Washoe County with diligence, respect, and compassion, at a time when many of them are having the worst day of their lives, having lost a loved one.

Final Words

This report represents the 8th annual statistical and informational report of the Washoe County Regional Medical Examiner's Office. It is my sincere hope that other regional agencies, community leaders, law enforcement, county coroners, and citizens may find it interesting and useful, and that it may inform regional policy. Additionally, I hope this data may be of use in prevention efforts, as many of the deaths that come to the attention of the Medical Examiner/Coroner are ultimately preventable.

Yours in service,

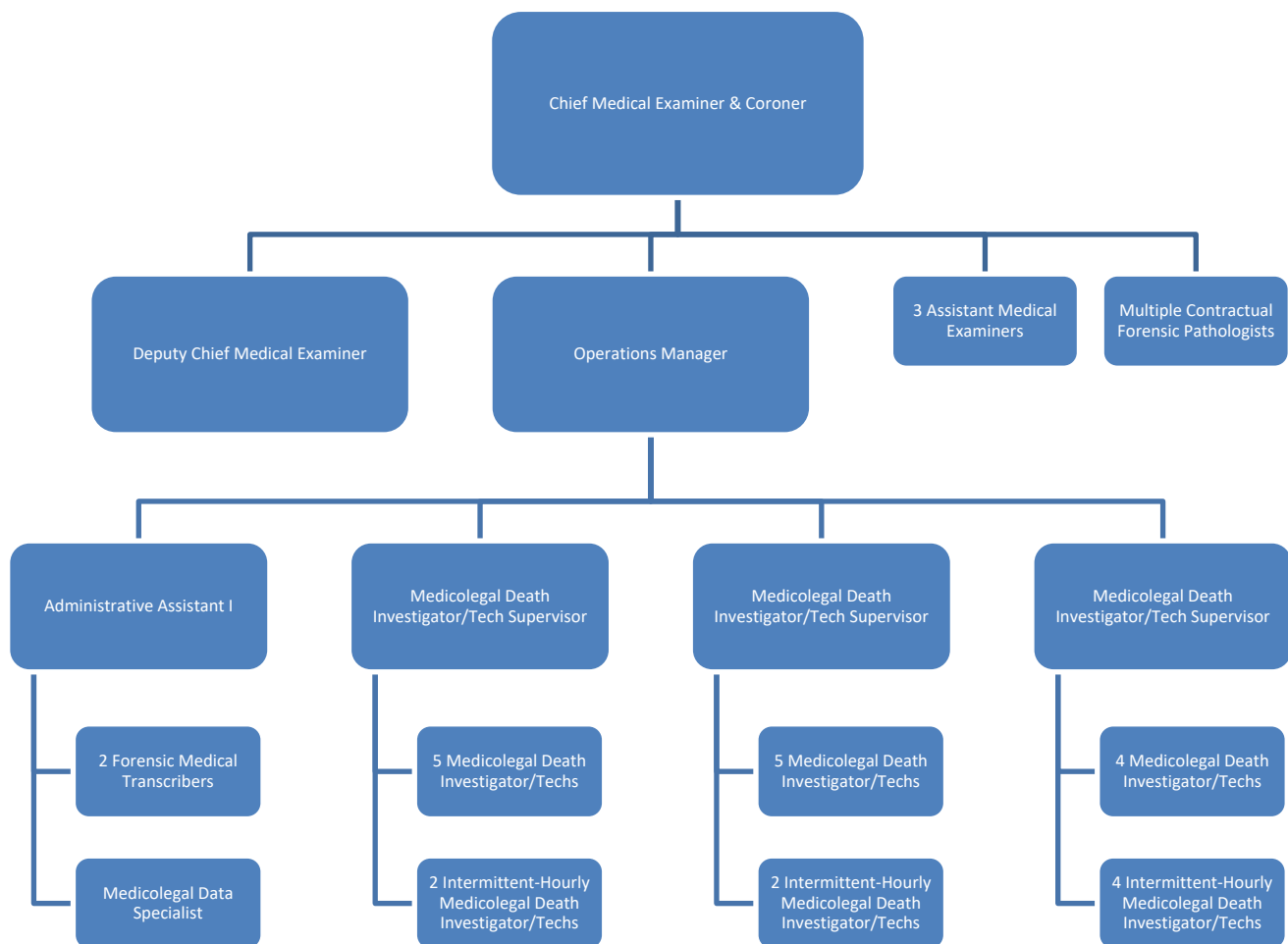
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura D. Knight', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Laura D. Knight, MD
Chief Medical Examiner & Coroner,
Washoe County Regional Medical
Examiner's Office

Associate Professor, Departments of
Pathology and Pediatrics,
University of Nevada – Reno School
of Medicine

Introduction

Organizational Chart



Mission Statement

The mission of the Washoe County Regional Medical Examiner's Office (WCRMEO) is to investigate unexpected and unexplained deaths in order to identify and report on the cause and manner of death. We apply scientific investigative techniques and medical procedures, with integrity and compassion, to serve families and public agencies impacted by sudden unexpected death.

Statutory Authority

The WCRMEO is primarily governed by Chapter 259, 440, and 451 of the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) and Chapter 35 of the Washoe County Code (WCC). NRS 259 requires that each county have a coroner and WCC 35 creates the Medical Examiner system to fulfill coroner duties.

Description

The Medical Examiner investigates sudden or unexpected deaths, traumatic deaths, and suspicious deaths. Certain categories of sudden death, by law, must be reported to and investigated by this office. All suspicious and many apparent natural death scenes in Washoe County are attended and evaluated by trained Medicolegal Death Investigators employed by the Medical Examiner's Office. Many reported deaths are ultimately determined to be due to natural causes, but a significant number of reported cases are found to be due to accidents, homicidal trauma, and suicides. Of the deaths reported to and falling within the office's jurisdiction in 2022 (not including deaths referred from outside counties on a contractual basis), 61% required autopsy or other medical examination and an additional 39% required detailed review of medical history and circumstances of death. Board-certified forensic pathologists (medical doctors specializing in forensic pathology) conduct these autopsy and medical examinations.

Responsibilities of the office include:

- Determining the cause and manner of death for jurisdictional cases
- Electronic certification of death certificates in all cases of unnatural death and in many cases of natural death
- Conducting investigations of death scenes
- Identifying, collecting and processing evidence in order to ensure scientific integrity and usefulness
- Recognizing unsuspected homicidal violence
- Recognizing and reporting communicable and dangerous diseases, poisonings, and consumer product safety concerns
- Positively identifying the dead
- Notifying the decedent's next of kin and providing proper assistance to grieving families
- Ensuring integrity of the personal property of decedents
- Providing expert legal testimony in criminal and civil matters
- Preparing for and responding to mass disasters
- Assisting in providing for burial of indigent citizens in accordance with law

Community and Academic Involvement

The WCRMEO is very active in the community. In 2023, WCRMEO staff made many presentations in the community including the Nevada Law Enforcement Academy, Nevada Department of Public Safety, the Peer Support Group, high school students, and lectures to medical students at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). The office also hosts a two-day educational conference on death scene investigation for law enforcement/coroner agencies in the region. Dr. Knight also was an invited speaker for a national webinar in February 2023 for Project ECHO: OD-FIT, titled: “Tips & Tricks for Building a Resilient Medicolegal Death Investigators’ Workforce”.

Pathologists in the office have a letter of appointment to teach at the University of Nevada, Reno with a rank of Assistant or Associate Professor. WCRMEO hosted educational rotations in-office for dozens of UNR medical students, as well as law enforcement officers, and other students in related fields.

In 2023, a total of ten scientific abstracts were presented at national scientific conferences involving collaboration with WCRMEO, with principal authors or co-authors from the office; these conferences were the Annual Scientific Meeting of the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS), and the International Association of Medical Examiners and Coroners (IACME). These presentations represent collaborations with UNR Anthropology faculty, students and faculty of UNR School of Medicine, UNR undergraduate students, and Medical Examiners and researchers from other academic institutions outside of Nevada. Topics included complex suicides in NV, vaping-related mortality, peer support and wellness programs in Medical Examiner offices, and Medical Examiner collaboration with organ and tissue donation. Additionally, the *American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology* published an original research article from WCRMEO in September 2023, co-authored by two UNR medical students with Dr. Knight as the senior author, titled: “Neck Hemorrhage: Fact or Artifact? A Retrospective Analysis of Patterns of Postmortem Anterior Neck Muscle Hemorrhages from Hypostasis vs. Strangulation”.

WCRMEO Staff regularly participate in fatality review committees and other prevention efforts in our state, including the NV State Committee to Review Suicide Fatalities (of which Dr. Knight is the Chairperson), NV State Maternal Mortality Review Committee, Washoe County Child Fatality Review Team, regional

Substance Abuse Task Force, CDC NV Advanced Review Team for the Sudden Death in the Young project, and hospital-based peer review committees. Dr. Knight also served as Chair of the State Disaster Identification Coordination Committee. The WCRMEO continued to receive grant funding in 2023 from the CDC (through the state) for data entry into the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) and for toxicology testing and related expenses from the Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) grant. Data entry through these programs is utilized for state and national level death prevention efforts.

Awards and Honors

In 2023, the Washoe County Regional Medical Examiner's Office received the following awards:

- Hope Strength Life Award from Nevada Donor Network (NDN)
- The Platinum Level Partner Award from Nevada Donor Network and the US Health Resources and Services Administration
- Dr. Laura Knight was honored to receive the *Randy Lee Hanzlick, M.D. Persistence Award*, awarded by the National Association of Medical Examiners, "For Outstanding Mid-Career Leadership by a NAME Member".
- Dr. Laura Knight was honored to receive the 2023 Governor's Award, presented by Nevada Donor Network and Governor Joe Lombardo in Carson City, NV, "for outstanding efforts in supporting the gift of life through organ and tissue donation".
- Dr. Knight wishes to acknowledge her gratitude for the critical role of the staff of the WCRMEO in earning these recognitions.

Jurisdiction and Service Area

The WCRMEO's primary jurisdiction is Washoe County. However, the office provides services to 13 additional Nevada counties (including the state capital) and 6 California counties through interlocal agreements.

California Counties	
Alpine	
Lassen	
Modoc	
Plumas	
Sierra	
Tehama	



Nevada Counties	
Carson City (state capital)	
Churchill	
Douglas	
Elko	
Esmeralda	
Eureka	
Humboldt	
Lander	
Lyon	
Mineral	
Nye	
Pershing	
Storey	
Washoe	

WCRMEO service area highlighted in blue

Examination Types and Descriptions

Autopsy	A full postmortem examination encompassing detailed examination of the exterior and interior of the body, including dissection of internal organs and structures, to determine cause of death. Specimens for additional studies, such as toxicology testing, are obtained during the autopsy.
Limited Autopsy-Head Only	An autopsy examination limited to the external examination of the entire body and internal examination of only the head. Used in select trauma or suspected trauma cases only. Toxicology specimens can be obtained during a limited autopsy.
External Examination	An examination of the exterior of the body that documents identifying features, stigmata of disease, and findings of injury, without accompanying internal dissection. Toxicology specimens such as blood can be obtained during an external examination.
Consultation	Death investigated by the WCRMEO in which no physical examination is performed because the decedent has well-documented medical condition(s) and no primary care physician, or trauma with prolonged hospitalization, determined to be the cause of death. A Medical Examiner reviews medical records and circumstances of death and completes the death certificate.
Jurisdiction Terminated	Natural death from known natural disease that is reported to the WCRMEO but does not fall within its jurisdiction

Manner of Death Types and Descriptions

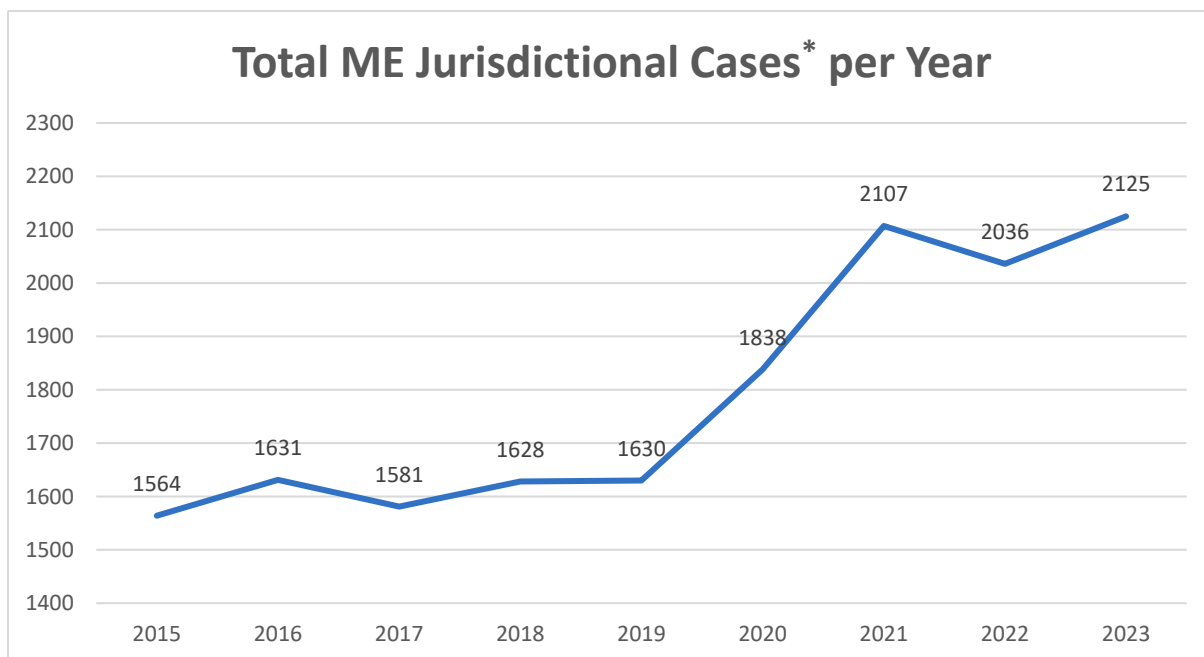
Natural	Death caused by a natural disease or medical condition
Suicide	Death caused by a purposeful self-action with the intent of ending one's own life
Homicide	Death at the hands of another
Accident	Death caused by an unintentional action or external factor
Undetermined	Death in which the cause of death may or may not be known, but the circumstances in which the death came about are unknown or cannot be determined

General Statistics

In 2023, 98% of all deaths occurring in Washoe County were reported to the ME Office

Total Cases Reported by Type

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	'22-'23 Percent Change
Autopsies	565	657	740	784	805	816	933	901	939	4%
Consultations	655	641	534	527	463	578	704	695	783	13%
External Exams	316	279	265	269	314	396	403	367	323	-12%
Head-Only Autopsy	27	54	42	48	48	48	67	73	80	10%
Jurisdiction Terminated	2255	2622	3103	3368	3450	4071	4214	4170	3782	-9%
Total Cases Reported	3819	4253	4684	4996	5080	5909	6321	6206	5907	-5%



*Total Medical Examiner Jurisdictional Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, External examinations, and consultations completed by the WCRMEO. Washoe County cases only.

State of Residence for All Reported Cases

Alabama	1	Louisiana	0	Ohio	1
Alaska	1	Maine	1	Oklahoma	0
Arizona	10	Maryland	0	Oregon	7
Arkansas	0	Massachusetts	0	Pennsylvania	0
California	413	Michigan	1	Rhode Island	0
Colorado	1	Minnesota	0	South Carolina	0
Connecticut	1	Mississippi	0	South Dakota	1
Delaware	0	Missouri	0	Tennessee	0
Florida	6	Montana	1	Texas	5
Georgia	1	Nebraska	0	Utah	6
Hawaii	0	Nevada	5255	Vermont	0
Idaho	7	New Hampshire	0	Virginia	0
Illinois	4	New Jersey	0	Washington	13
Indiana	0	New Mexico	0	West Virginia	0
Iowa	0	New York	1	Wisconsin	0
Kansas	1	North Carolina	1	Wyoming	0
Kentucky	1	North Dakota	0	Unknown/Other	169

Total Examination Cases* by Manner of Death

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	'22-'23 Percent Change
Natural	288	326	431	483	511	540	615	458	409	-11%
Accident	237	263	358	352	369	421	483	559	584	4%
Suicide	137	170	165	165	191	180	210	204	227	11%
Homicide	34	38	46	42	42	60	49	55	57	4%
Undetermined	41	27	43	58	52	58	46	65	65	0%

*Total Examination Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, and external examinations completed by the WCRMEO. Includes Washoe County and contractual cases.

Total Examination Cases* by Sex

	2023	Percentage
Male	972	72%
Female	370	28%
Unknown	0	0%

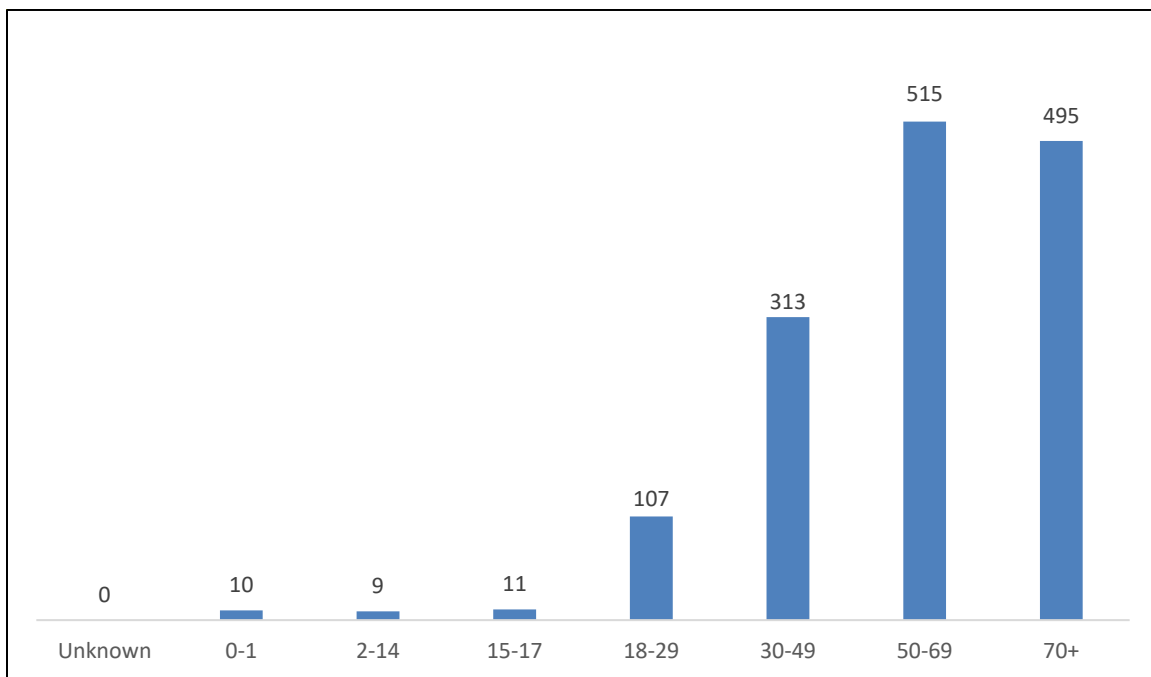
*Total Examination Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, and external examinations completed by the WCRMEO. Includes Washoe County and contractual cases.

Total Examination Cases* by Race

	2023
White	1068
Hispanic/Latinx/South American	121
Black/African American	63
Asian/Pacific Islander	28
American Indian/Native American	47
Other/Unknown	24

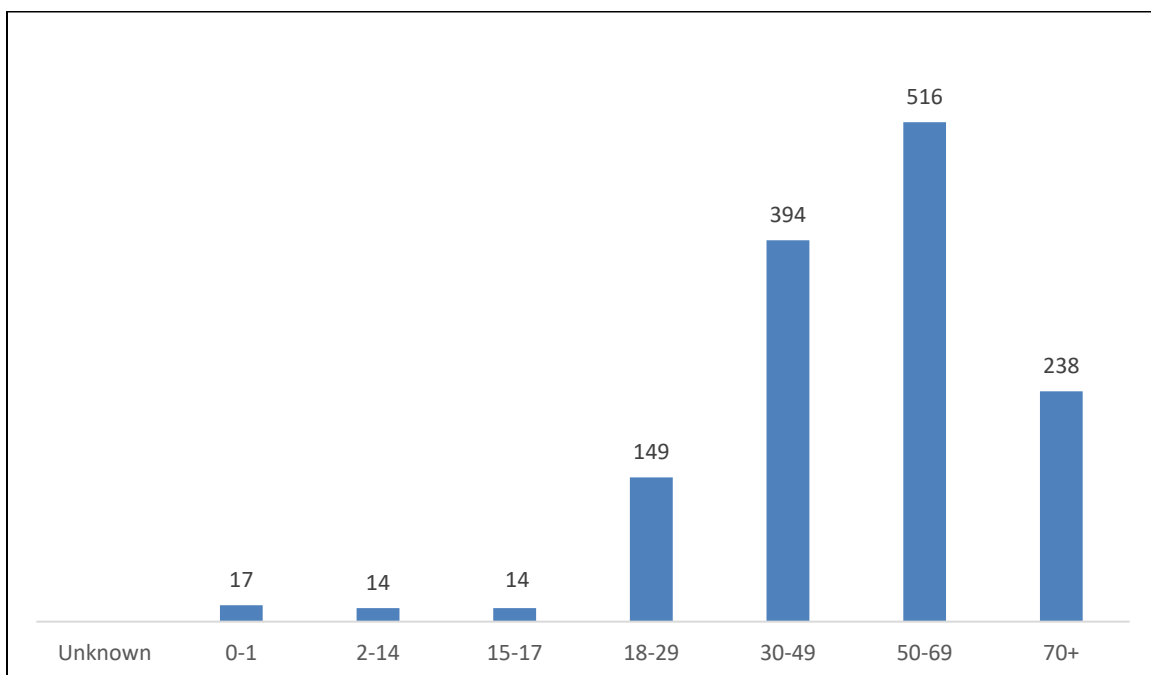
*Total Examination Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, and external examinations completed by the WCRMEO. Race information is reported by next of kin. Multiple races may be reported for a single decedent. Includes Washoe County and contractual cases.

Total ME Jurisdictional Cases* by Age



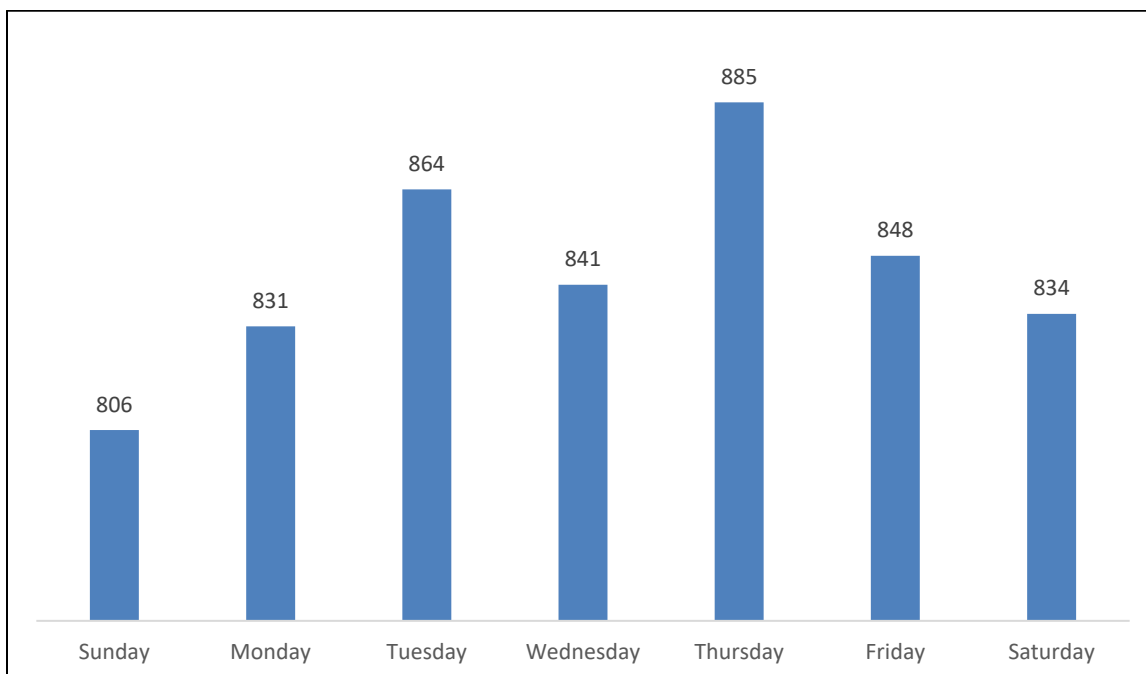
*Total Medical Examiner Jurisdictional Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, External examinations, and consultations completed by the WCRMEO. Washoe County cases only.

Total Examination Cases* by Age

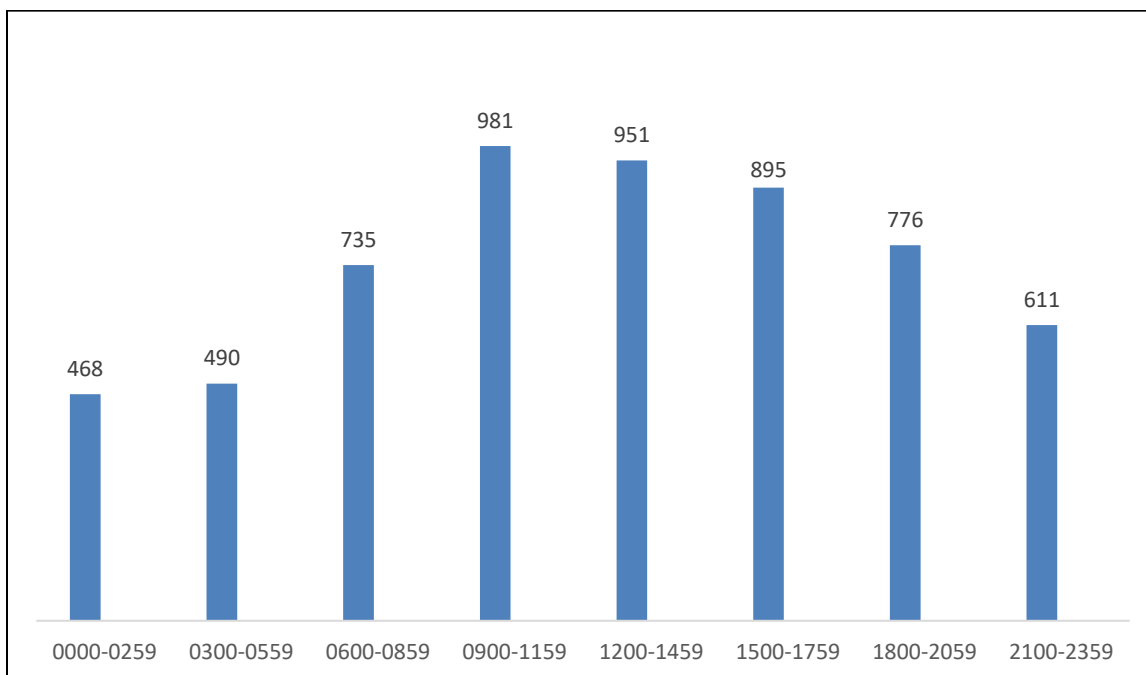


*Total Examination Cases comprises all autopsies, limited (head-only) autopsies, and external examinations completed by the WCRMEO. Includes Washoe County and contractual cases.

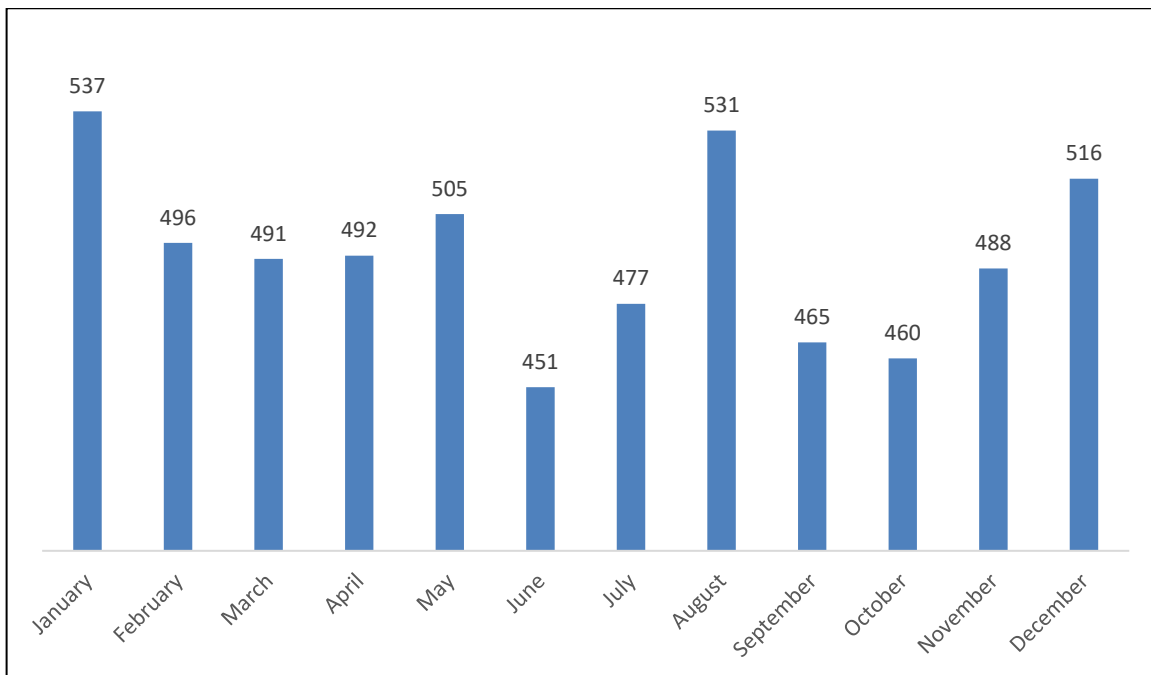
Total Reported Deaths by Day of the Week



Total Reported Deaths by Time of Death



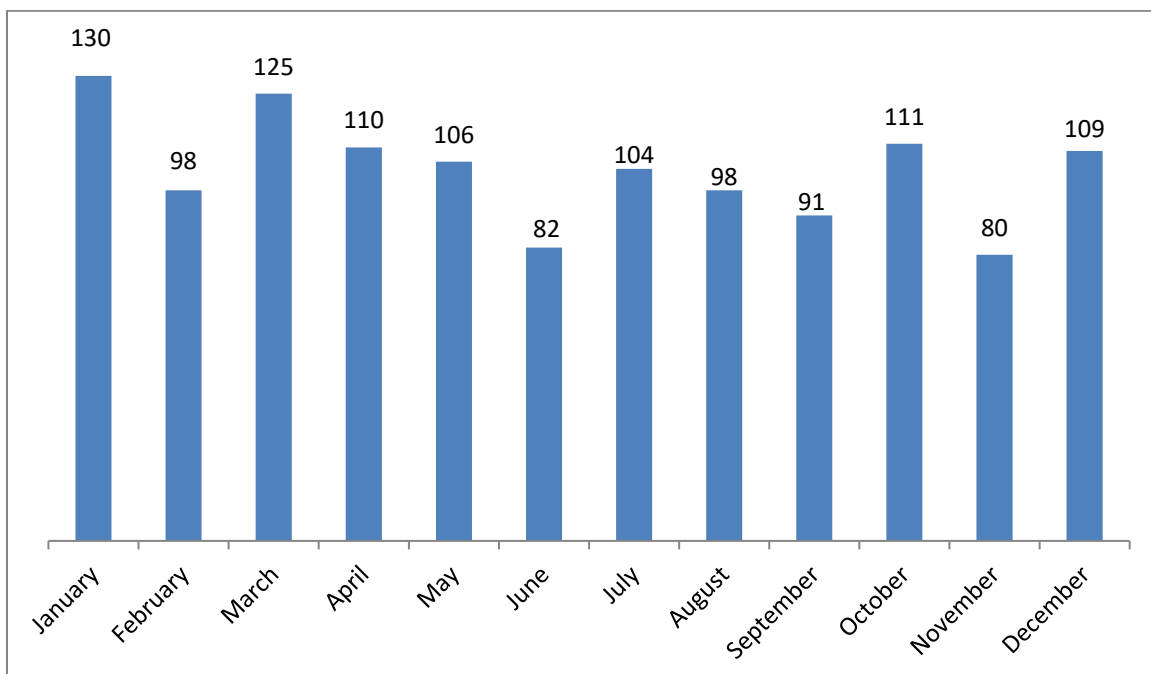
Total Reported Deaths by Month



Scene Responses by Month

1,246 total scene responses in 2023

Overall increasing trend: 1,260 responses in 2022, 1,214 in 2021, 1,094 in 2020, and 948 in 2019



Specific Causes & Types of Death

Major Causes of Death, for Each Manner of Death

For All* Autopsy/External Examination and Consultation Cases Performed at WCRMEO

NATURAL

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Cardiac (Atherosclerotic and/or Hypertensive Cardiovascular Disease, Congestive Heart Failure, Coronary Artery Disease, Cardiomyopathy, Myocardial Infarction)	550	63%
Complications of Chronic Alcoholism	104	12%
Pulmonary Related Complications	69	8%
Cerebral/Dementia	46	5%
Other	31	4%
Cancer	28	3%
Complications of Diabetes and/or Ketoacidosis	29	3%
Gastrointestinal Related	14	2%
Total	871	100%

*It is important to note that the vast majority of COVID-19 deaths occurred in hospitals under the attendance of community physicians. Those deaths did not fall under Medical Examiner jurisdiction and are not included in this data.

ACCIDENT

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Drug/Alcohol intoxication	456	51%
Complications of blunt force injuries, fractures, & falls	329	36%
Others	48	5%
Cardiac (Atherosclerotic and/or Hypertensive Cardiovascular Disease, Congestive Heart Failure, Bacterial Endocarditis, Cardiomyopathy, Myocardial Infarction)	22	2%
Drowning	12	1%
Asphyxia, various types	25	3%
Hypothermia	10	1%
Total	902	100%

SUICIDE

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Gunshot wound	146	62%
Hanging / Asphyxia	50	21%
Drug Intoxication	26	11%
Blunt Force Injuries (Intentional)	6	3%
Sharp Force Injuries	4	2%
Carbon Monoxide / Smoke Inhalation	2	1%
Drowning	1	<1%
Total	235	100%

HOMICIDE

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Gunshot Wound(s)	36	63%
Sharp Force Injuries	11	19%
Blunt Force Injuries	7	12%
Strangulation	3	5%
Total	57	100%

UNDETERMINED

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Traumatic Injuries (Unexplained)	26	39%
Undetermined Cause	24	36%
Drug Intoxication	14	21%
Other	3	4%
Total	67	100%

*Includes Washoe County and outside counties covered by interlocal agreement

WASHOE COUNTY HOMICIDES BY INCIDENT LOCATION*

Injury Location	Number
Reno	26
Sparks	8
Sun Valley	3
Nixon	2
Incline Village	1

* Cases included are only those where injury and death occurred in Washoe County.
If an injury occurred outside of Washoe County but they were transported to a hospital within the county and died, they would not be counted in this section

HOMICIDES BY COUNTY

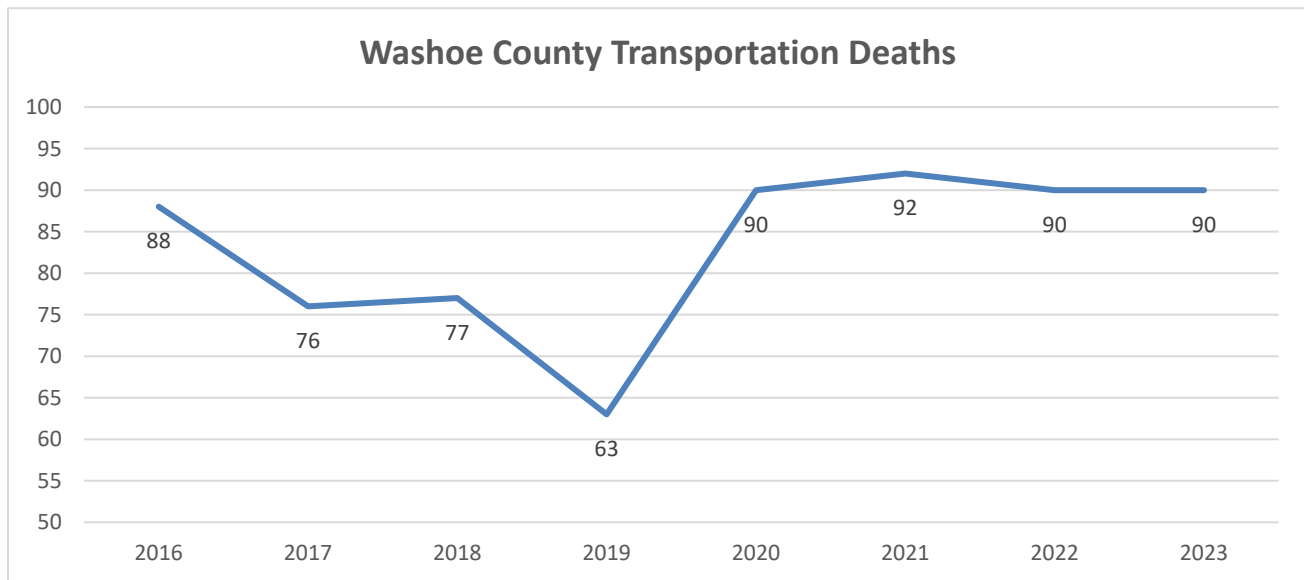
Cases for counties other than Washoe are only included if the case was referred to WCRMEO by that county's coroner

County of Death	Total
Washoe*	42
Elko	4
Plumas	3
Douglas	2
Lassen	2
Lyon	2
Carson City	1
Churchill	1
Eureka	0
Humboldt	0
Lander	0
Modoc	0
Pershing	0
Storey	0

*Includes those who were injured in another county but died in a Washoe County hospital

Washoe County Transportation Deaths

In 2023, Washoe County had 90 transportation-related deaths, a number relatively stable since 2020.



Gender	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percent Change '22 to '23
Male	66	54	58	41	71	63	68	64	-6%
Female	22	22	19	22	19	29	22	26	18%

Transportation Deaths, By Age

Age	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage of Change '22 to '23
0-17	3	7	2	2	5	4	6	1	-83%
18-29	20	12	17	13	24	17	21	15	-29%
30-49	23	14	13	10	20	27	26	28	8%
50-69	32	22	21	22	26	26	18	29	61%
70+	10	21	24	16	15	18	19	17	-11%

Transportation Deaths, By Role

Role	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage of Change '22 to '23
Driver/Operator	49	47	44	35	59	47	57	43	-25%
Pedestrian	23	15	18	16	21	24	23	33	43%
Passenger	12	10	14	10	9	17	9	11	22%
Cyclist	1	4	1	2	1	2	1	3	200%

Washoe County Drug Intoxication Deaths

2023 saw the mega-trend of increases in drug intoxication deaths continue, reaching a record high of 358 deaths, up 76% over the 5-year period since 2019, and nearly tripled since 2012. Over half of the 2023 illicit drug-related deaths involved methamphetamine, and over half involved fentanyl, which was usually present in combination with other drugs.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Drug Deaths (Washoe County)	125	145	109	133	110	173	169	203	239	276	315	358
Major Categories*												
Illicit Drugs Only	36	54	41	53	38	78	73	86	114	125	189	215
Illicit Drugs and Ethanol Combined						1	5	14	13	14	18	33
Illicit Drugs & Over-the-Counter Drugs Combined, with or without ethanol						2	1	8	9	10	9	7
Prescription Drugs Only						34	31	27	23	33	23	18
Prescription Drugs and Ethanol Combined						11	10	8	7	9	10	7
Prescription & Over-the-Counter Drugs Combined						8	4	8	10	4	7	6
Over-the-Counter Drugs Only, or Over-the-Counter Drugs and Ethanol Combined						6	3	5	5	3	3	3
Illicit and Prescription Drugs Combined	8	17	2	11	19	22	22	18	20	31	29	29
Prescription Drugs, Illicit Drugs, & Ethanol Combined						2	4	4	9	6	13	17
Prescription Drugs, Over-the-Counter Drugs, & Ethanol Combined						1	0	3	0	4	1	2
Huffing volatiles/intoxicants, with or without other drugs						1	1	11	1	1	0	1
Illicit Drugs, Prescription Drugs, Over-the-Counter Drugs, & Ethanol Combined								0	2	1	0	2
Illicit Drugs, Prescription Drugs, and Over the-Counter Drugs Combined								3	7	5	6	10
Unable to Determine Specific Drugs Involved						2	0	2	0	0	0	0
Ethanol only (acute ethanol intoxication), or ethanol & toxic alcohol									3	1	1	0
Long Term Effects of Chronic Drug Abuse Without Acute Intoxication						5	16	15	18	18	3	7
Sodium nitrate/nitrite toxicity										2	3	1
Illicit-involved Deaths, By Drug*												
Methamphetamine (Without Heroin)	25	50	26	43	46	69	82	90	105	123	158	221
Heroin (Without Methamphetamine)	11	9	12	13	16	13	10	17	7	8	2	3
Methamphetamine and Heroin	3	4	3	8	9	16	13	15	23	27	15	8
Fentanyl (Alone)					0	2	2	3	9	18	21	19
Fentanyl (Alone or With Others)					7	19	14	25	56	79	144	183
Fentanyl and Methamphetamine					3	9	1	8	13	29	70	105
Fentanyl and Heroin					0	5	0	1	2	9	10	5
Cocaine (Alone or With Others)	5	11	4	3	4	5	8	10	15	20	27	40
Nitazenes								0	0	0	1	0
Mitragynine (Alone or With Others)								12	14	11	6	9

*Not inclusive of **all** intoxication deaths.

Note: In this reporting, illicit, prescription, and over-the-counter drug death data was stratified in more detail beginning in 2017.

Drug Intoxication Deaths, By Age

Age	Number	Percentage
0-17	1	<1%
18-29	51	14%
30-49	133	37%
50-69	151	42%
70+	22	6%

Drug Intoxication Deaths, By Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	254	71%
Female	104	29%

Methamphetamine-related Deaths, By Age

Age	Number	Percentage
0-17	0	0%
18-29	29	13%
30-49	76	33%
50-69	114	50%
70+	10	4%

Methamphetamine-related Deaths, By Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	163	71%
Female	66	29%

Heroin Intoxication Deaths, By Age

Age	Number	Percentage
0-17	0	0%
18-29	0	0%
30-49	4	36%
50-69	6	55%
70+	1	9%

Heroin Intoxication Deaths, By Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	6	55%
Female	5	45%

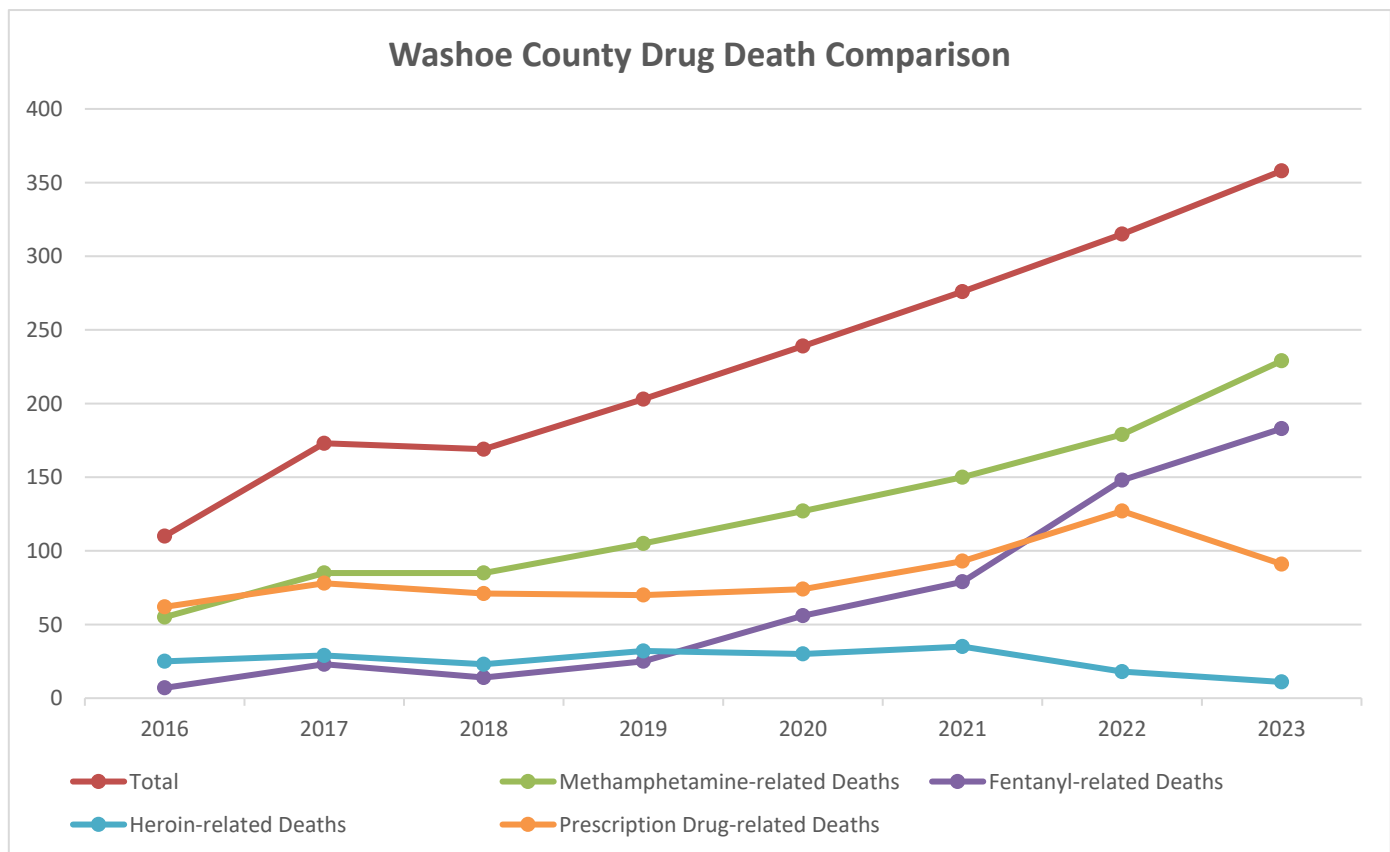
Fentanyl Intoxication Deaths, By Age

Age	Number	Percentage
0-17	0	0%
18-29	41	22%
30-49	83	45%
50-69	55	30%
70+	4	2%

Fentanyl Intoxication Deaths, By Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	136	74%
Female	47	26%

Washoe County Drug Death Comparison

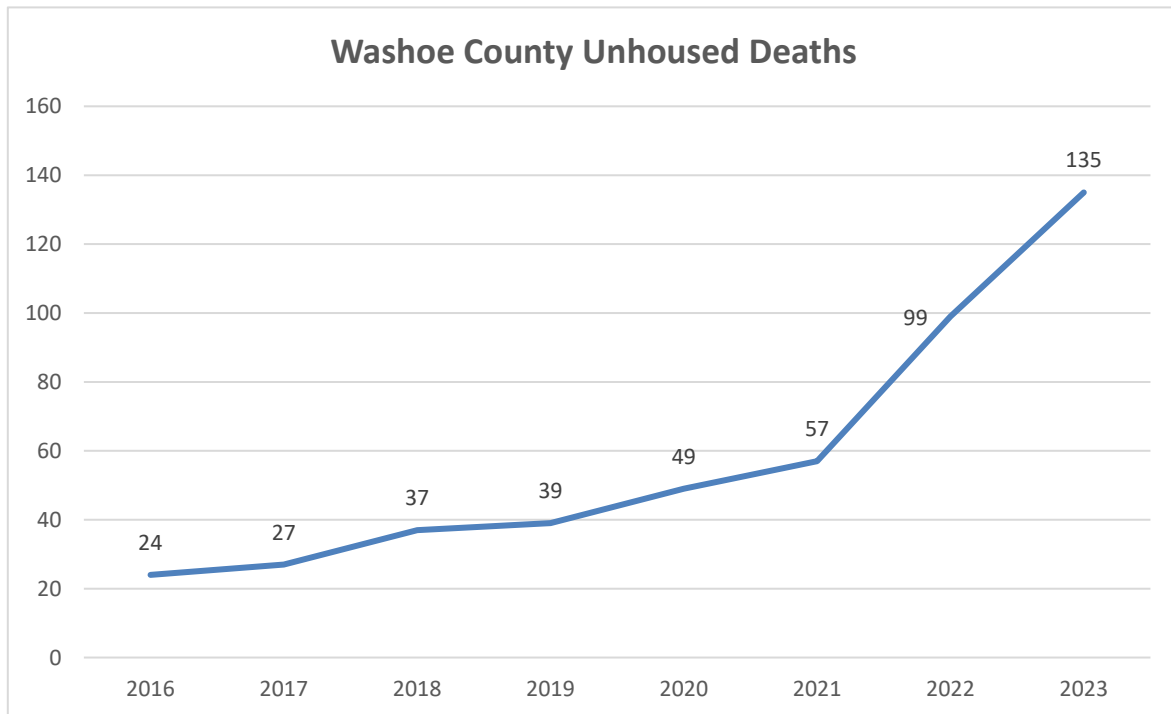


Type	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage of Change '22 to '23
Total Deaths	110	173	169	203	239	276	315	358	14%
Methamphetamine-related Deaths	55	85	85	105	127	150	179	229	28%
Fentanyl-related Deaths	7	23	14	25	56	79	148	183	24%
Heroin-related Deaths	25	29	23	32	30	35	18	11	-39%
Prescription Drug-related Deaths	62	78	71	70	74	93	127	91	-28%

Vulnerable Populations & Other Special Categories

Washoe County Unhoused Person Deaths

Deaths of unhoused individuals (persons with no fixed address or living quarters) reported to the WCRMEO are specifically tracked in the WCRMEO case database. There were 135 deaths in 2023, which is an increase from 99 in 2022, 57 in 2021, and 49 in 2020. The vast majority of these deaths were accidental in nature (most often from drug toxicity, as also seen in the general population), distantly followed by natural disease.



Washoe County Unhoused Deaths, By Sex

Gender	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Male	23	23	32	27	38	40	83	102
Female	1	4	5	12	11	17	16	33

Washoe County Unhoused Deaths, By Age

Age	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
0-17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18-29	1	2	1	3	3	3	11	19
30-49	6	7	11	14	12	26	36	54
50-69	14	14	23	17	26	24	44	52
70+	3	4	2	5	8	3	8	10

Washoe County Unhoused Deaths, By Manner of Death

Manner	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Accident	11	12	22	19	27	36	67	93
Natural	9	9	7	10	15	11	24	21
Homicide	0	2	3	2	0	2	2	9
Undetermined	2	2	2	4	5	4	3	8
Suicide	2	2	3	4	2	4	3	4

Washoe County Unhoused Person Deaths, by Manner of Death, Cause of Death

ACCIDENT

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Drug-related deaths	76	82%
Pedestrian vs Automobile	11	12%
Environmental Exposure	3	3%
Drowning	1	1%
Ground Level Fall	1	1%
Seizure Disorder	1	1%

NATURAL

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Cardiovascular Disease	11	52%
Complications of Chronic Alcoholism	4	19%
Sepsis	2	10%
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	1	5%
Complications of Cerebral Infarction	1	5%
Complications of Colonic Obstruction	1	5%
Pneumonia	1	5%

HOMICIDE

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Multiple Gunshot Wounds	4	44%
Sharp Force Injuries	3	33%
Pedestrian vs Automobile	1	11%
Strangulation	1	11%

SUICIDE

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Hanging/Neck Compression	2	50%
Gunshot Wound of the Head	1	25%
Sharp Force Injuries	1	25%

UNDETERMINED

Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Blunt Force Injuries	3	38%
Drowning	2	25%
Undetermined	2	25%
Drug Intoxication	1	4%

Law Enforcement-Involved Deaths in Washoe County

Type of Death	Number
In-Custody/Detained Deaths (jail or hospital) *	4
Officer-Involved Shootings**	3

*It is important to note that while all these deaths occurred within Washoe County, some may be inmates transferred to hospitals in Washoe County from jails/prisons outside the county.

**This includes lethal shootings by any federal, state, or local law enforcement organization that occurred in Washoe County.

Washoe County In-Custody/Detained Deaths, by Manner of Death

Manner	Number
Suicide	2
Natural	1
Homicide	1
Accident	0
Undetermined	0

Washoe County Pediatric Deaths

A total of 30 individuals aged 17 and under died under circumstances within WCRMEO jurisdiction in Washoe County in 2023.

Washoe County Pediatric Deaths, by Age

Age	Number	Percent
0	9	30%
1	1	3%
2	1	3%
3	1	3%
4	0	0%
5	0	0%
6	0	0%
7	1	3%
8	0	0%
9	1	3%
10	0	0%
11	0	0%
12	1	3%
13	2	7%
14	2	7%
15	3	10%
16	4	13%
17	4	13%

Washoe County Pediatric Deaths, by Sex

Sex	Number	Percent
Male	15	50%
Female	15	50%

Washoe County Pediatric Deaths, by Manner of Death

Manner	Number	Percent
Undetermined	8	27%
Accident	7	23%
Suicide	6	20%
Homicide	5	17%
Natural	4	13%

Washoe County Pediatric Causes of Death

Manner	Cause of Death	Number
Accident	Acute Carbon Monoxide Intoxication	2
	Choking	2
	Blunt Force Injuries	1
	Sepsis	1
	Suffocation	1
Suicide	Hanging	3
	Drowning	1
	Drug Intoxication	1
	Gunshot Wound	1
Homicide	Multiple Gunshot Wounds	3
	Sharp Force Injuries	1
	Strangulation	1
Natural	Pulmonary related	2
	Cardiac related	1
	Complications of Prematurity	1
Undetermined	Undetermined	8

Washoe County Senior Deaths

In 2023, there were 654 deaths at 65 years of age and older that met the criteria for Medical Examiner jurisdiction. Deaths in seniors present special challenges, such as the need to rule out neglect or abuse, and the propensity for ultimately lethal injury from simple falls.

Senior Deaths, By Sex

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	419	64%
Female	235	36%

Senior Deaths, By Manner of Death

Manner	Number	Percent
Natural	316	48%
Accident	291	44%
Suicide	39	6%
Undetermined	5	<1%
Homicide	3	<1%

Causes of Death

Manner	Cause	Number
Natural	Cardiovascular related	245
	Pulmonary related	21
	Cancer	10
	Other	40
Accident	Fall related	158
	Drug related	37
	Motor vehicle related	28
	Other	68
Suicide	Gunshot Wound	28
	Drug Related	4
	Hanging	5
	Blunt Force Injuries	1
	Sharp Force Injuries	1
Homicide	Blunt Force Injuries	2
	Gunshot Wound	1
Undetermined	Drug related	2
	Undetermined	2
	Chronic Kidney Disease	1

Other Statistics of Interest⁺

- In 2023, 94% of autopsy/examination reports were finalized within 60 days; 99% were finalized within 90 days.
- 42 organ, 193 tissue, and 311 ocular donations were performed on Medical Examiner cases in 2023, with the full cooperation of the WCRMEO.
- There were 195 unclaimed and abandoned decedents reported to the WCRMEO in 2023.
- There was 1 death in Washoe County in which a decedent remained unidentified after thorough investigation in 2023. There was 1 case in 2022, 1 in 2021, none in 2020, 1 in 2019, 1 in 2018, and none in both 2017 and 2016.
- 1,606 bodies were transported to and stored at the Medical Examiner's Office in 2023. 1,782 bodies in 2022, 1,881 in 2021, 1,672 in 2020, 1,512 in 2019, 1,495 in 2018, 1,463 in 2017 and 1,320 in 2016.
- A total of 2,126 bodies were transported on the order of the WCRMEO in 2023.
- Toxicology testing was performed on 1,396 cases in 2023. 1,390 cases in 2022, 1,235 in 2021, 1,206 in 2020, 1,076 in 2019, 1,022 in 2018, 956 in 2017, and 809 in 2016.
- The WCRMEO participated in 0 exhumations in 2023.

⁺Many are required by the National Association of Medical Examiners to be reported for accreditation purposes.