

Lancaster County Forensic Center

Office of the Coroner

2025 Annual Report



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Introduction

- The Lancaster County Coroner's Office is committed to the accurate determination of the cause of death, manner of death, proper scientific identification, and respectful disposition of every case under the jurisdiction of the agency. This is accomplished through the professional and compassionate application of the disciplines of science, medicine, and law. The Coroner's Office serves the 553,650 residents of Lancaster County, covering an area of approximately 960 square miles.
- All persons involved in death investigations, including law enforcement officials, emergency medical personnel, hospital personnel, nursing/personal care home personnel, and funeral directors should follow the attached guidelines. The list provided is by no means exhaustive. The Lancaster County Coroner's Office staff is available to assist with any questions you may have. In any death case, WHEN IN DOUBT, CALL THE CORONER.

GUIDELINES TO BE FOLLOWED IN DEATH CASES:

- A. The Coroner, Chief Deputy Coroner, or Deputy Coroner having view of the body, shall investigate the facts and circumstances concerning deaths WHICH APPEAR TO HAVE OCCURRED WITHIN THE COUNTY, REGARDLESS OF WHERE THE CAUSE THEREOF MAY HAVE OCCURRED, for the purpose of determining whether an autopsy should be conducted, or an inquest thereof should be had in the following cases:
1. Sudden death not caused by readily recognizable disease or wherein a physician, on the basis of prior medical attendance, cannot properly certify the cause of death.
 - a. Sudden Death Defined: The Coroner shall regard any death as sudden if it occurs without prior medical attendance by a person who may lawfully execute a certificate of death in this Commonwealth, or if, within twenty-four hours of death and the medical attendant refuses or is unable to certify the cause of death. Medical attendance includes hospitalization. (The provisions stated above regarding sudden death shall not be construed to affect the Coroner's discretion as to whether any death was suspicious, nor shall they be construed to authorize a Coroner to investigate a sudden death any further than necessary to determine cause and manner of death).
 2. Death occurring under suspicious circumstances including those where alcohol, drugs, or other toxic substances may have a direct bearing on the death.
 3. Death occurring as a result of violence or trauma, whether apparently homicidal, suicidal, or accidental (including but not limited to, those due to mechanical, thermal, chemical, electrical or radiation injury, drowning, cave-ins, and subsidence).
 4. Any death in which trauma (falls or fractures), chemical injury, asphyxia, exposure, fire related, drug overdose, or reaction to drugs or medical treatment was a PRIMARY or SECONDARY, DIRECT or INDIRECT, CONTRIBUTORY, AGGRAVATING, or PRECIPITATING cause of death.
 5. Operative and peri-operative deaths in which the death is not readily explainable on the basis of prior disease.
 6. Any death wherein the body is unidentified or unclaimed.
 7. Deaths known or suspected as due to contagious disease and constituting a public health hazard.
 8. Deaths occurring in a prison or penal institution or while in the custody of the police.
 9. Deaths of persons whose bodies are to be cremated, buried at sea, or otherwise disposed of so as to be thereafter unavailable for examination.
 10. Any sudden infant death.
 11. Stillbirth.
- B. The purpose of the investigation shall be to determine the cause and manner of any such death and to determine whether there is sufficient reason for the coroner to believe that any such death may have resulted from criminal acts or criminal neglect of persons other than the deceased.
- C. As part of the investigation, the coroner shall determine the identity of the deceased and notify the next of kin of the deceased.



TO REPORT A DEATH TO THE OFFICE OF THE CORONER
CALL LANCASTER COUNTY-WIDE COMMUNICATIONS
AT 717-664-1180.

GENERAL INQUIRIES REGARDING DEATH
INVESTIGATIONS MAY BE DIRECTED TO THE
CORONER'S OFFICE 7 DAY A WEEK AT 717-735-2123.

Full-Time

Dr. Stephen G. Diamantoni, MD
Coroner

Eric S. Bieber, F-ABMDI, CSCSA Chief Deputy Coroner/Administrator

Casey Buckley, MS, D-ABMDI, CCSA
First Deputy Coroner

Courtney Martin, MS, D-ABMDI
Coroner Supervisor

Madyson Love, D-ABMDI Deputy Coroner
Tom McLaughlin, D-ABMDI Deputy Coroner
Scott Spangler, D-ABMDI Deputy Coroner
Joshua Swayze, MA Deputy Coroner
Shannon Strickler, MS Deputy Coroner
Denise Padoll, D-ABMDI Deputy Coroner
Justin Degnan, Deputy Coroner
Kim Stark, Administrative Assistant
Jeremy Frion, Transport Coordinator

Part-Time

Dr. Richard Graff, D-ABMDI Deputy Coroner
Alex Asleson, MS Deputy Coroner
Shanna Boley, MBA Administrative Assistant

Staff



Facilities



Forensic Services

Forensic autopsies are performed by Dr. Wayne K. Ross, M.D., P.C. at the Lancaster County Forensic Center.

Forensic odontology services are provided by Lancaster County Deputy Coroner Dr. Richard Graff, D.D.S.

Forensic toxicology testing is performed by National Medical Services Labs of Horsham, Pennsylvania.

Websites and Social Media

The Lancaster County Coroner's Office homepage can be found at:

<https://www.co.lancaster.pa.us/133/Coroner>

On our homepage, you will find forms, statistics, answers to frequently asked questions, and helpful information to assist grieving families and friends.

The Lancaster County Coroner's Office can also be found on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/lancastercountycoroner>



Pennsylvania Coroners' Education Board

The Pennsylvania Coroners' Education Board, housed in the Office of Attorney General, provides the Basic Education Course which all newly elected coroners are required to attend prior to assuming office. The chief deputy and full-time deputies are required to attend the Basic Education Course within six months of appointment. The board also authorizes courses that are acceptable for fulfillment of the eight credit hours of continuing education required annually of all coroners and full-time deputies. All full-time and part-time staff of the Lancaster County Coroner's Office have completed the Basic Education Course.

Pennsylvania State Coroners' Association (PSCA)

The objective of the PSCA is to hold meetings for the purpose of discussing the various questions which arise in the discharge of the duties of the office of the coroner, legislative efforts and for such other purposes as will provide for greater efficiency of the operation of the office of the coroner. Additionally, the PSCA holds an annual conference and education seminar addressing various topics, questions, and current events for the coroner's offices located throughout Pennsylvania. The coroner, chief deputy coroner, and full-time deputies of the Lancaster County Coroner's Office are all members of the PSCA.

International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IACME)

The IACME has over 70 years of experience in the presentation of educational seminars for the purpose of assisting coroners and medical examiners in the performance of their duties. This commitment is enshrined in the association's mission statement, "The International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners is committed to advancing the accurate determination of the cause and manner of death through the utilization of science, medicine, and law." The coroner, chief deputy coroner, and full-time deputies of the Lancaster County Coroner's Office are active members of the IACME. The Lancaster County Forensic Center is accredited by the IACME.



American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI)

Coroner Dr. Stephen G. Diamantoni, MD and all deputies of the Lancaster County Coroner's Office are registered medicolegal death investigators with the ABMDI and hold the title, D-ABMDI (Diplomate).

- Chief Deputy Coroner Eric Bieber has attained ABMDI Board Certification gaining fellowship status and holds the title, F-ABMDI. He is (1) of (12) holding this status in Pennsylvania and (1) of (282) certificate holders in the United States.
- Chief Bieber is a member of the International Association for Identification. The primary certification body for crime scene related specialties in the United States and Europe. In 2021, Chief Bieber was recognized by IAI with certification as a Certified Senior Crime Scene Analyst. He is the first and only full-time death investigator holding this designation in the Mid-Atlantic states.

ABMDI is a voluntary national, not-for-profit, independent professional certification board that has been established to promote the highest standards of practice for medicolegal death investigators.

ABMDI certifies individuals who have the proven knowledge and skills necessary to perform medicolegal death investigations as set forth in the National Institute of Justice 1999 publication *Death Investigation: A Guide for the Scene Investigator* (2011 updated).

ABMDI was created, designed, and developed by veteran and practicing medicolegal death investigators and forensic pathologists who were involved in the development of *Death Investigation: A Guide for the Scene Investigator*. It will also assist the courts and public in evaluating competence of the certified individual.

In 2005, the ABMDI was first accredited by **the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board (FSAB)** and reaccredited in 2010, and 2015.

The goal of the FSAB is to establish a mechanism whereby the forensic community can access, recognize, and monitor organizations or professional boards that certify individual forensic scientists or other forensic specialists.



Purpose of the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI)

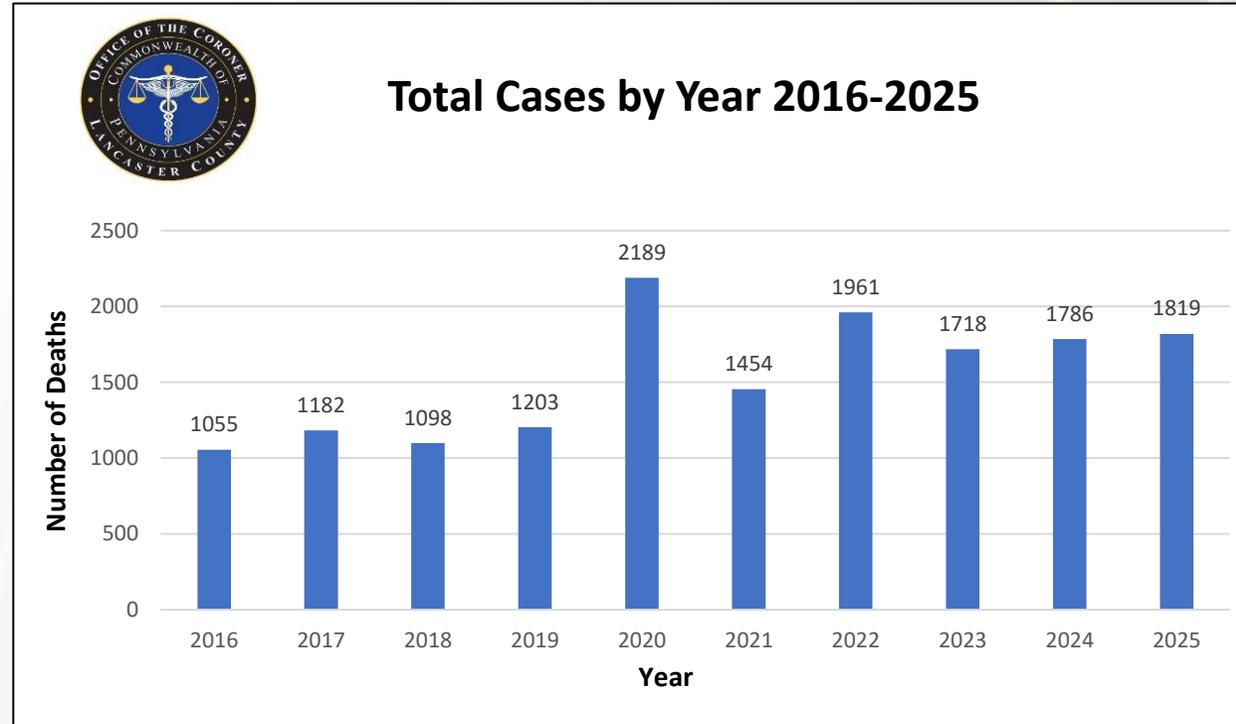
- To encourage adherence to high standards of professional practice and ethical conduct when performing medicolegal death investigations.
- To recognize qualified individuals who have voluntarily applied for basic and advanced levels of professional certification.
- To grant and issue certificates to individuals who have demonstrated their mastery of investigation techniques and who have successfully completed rigorous examination of their knowledge and skills in the field of medicolegal death investigation.
- To maintain a listing of individuals granted ABMDI certification.
- To recertify individuals every five years according to established professional recertification criteria, including continuing education requirements and work verification.

Benefits of Certification

Official guidelines for medicolegal death investigators had not been established until publication of the National Guidelines for Death Investigation by the National Institute of Justice in December 1997. Twenty-nine tasks were identified that may need to be performed to properly conduct a medicolegal death investigation. The guidelines were renamed and published in 1999 as *Death Investigation: A Guide for the Scene Investigator*. These national guidelines were validated by the Technical Working Group for Death Investigation (TWGDI), the National Medicolegal Review Panel (NMRP), and 146 members of the TWGDI national reviewers' network.

Certification provides official recognition by an independent professional certification body that an individual has acquired specialized knowledge and demonstrated proficiency in the standards and practice necessary to properly conduct medicolegal death investigations. The individual agrees to adhere to the highest standards of professional practice and ethical conduct when serving the public and when representing the profession.

Total Cases

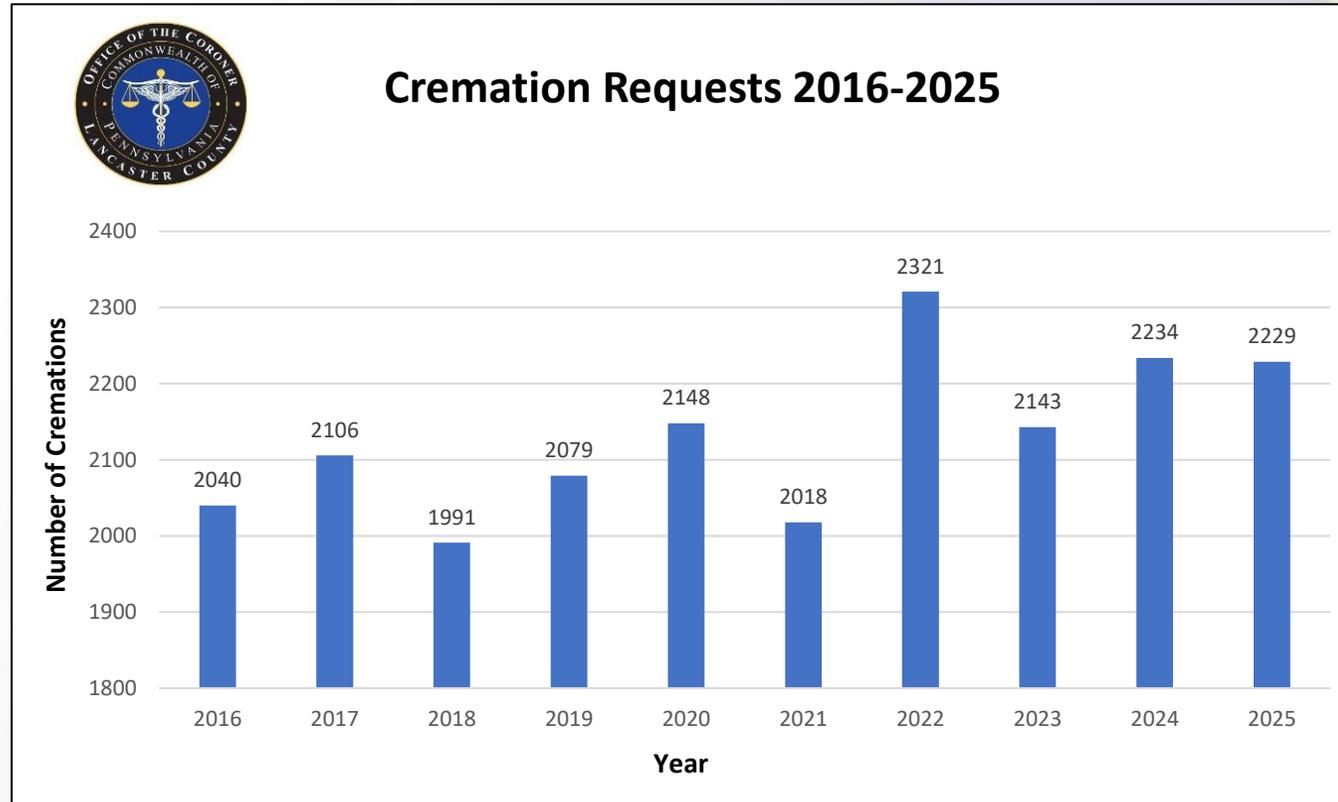


Total number of cases investigated from January 2016-December 2025 for all of Lancaster County.

In 2025, the Lancaster County Coroner's Office received reports of 1,819 deaths and accepted jurisdiction of 1,047 scenes.

Cremations

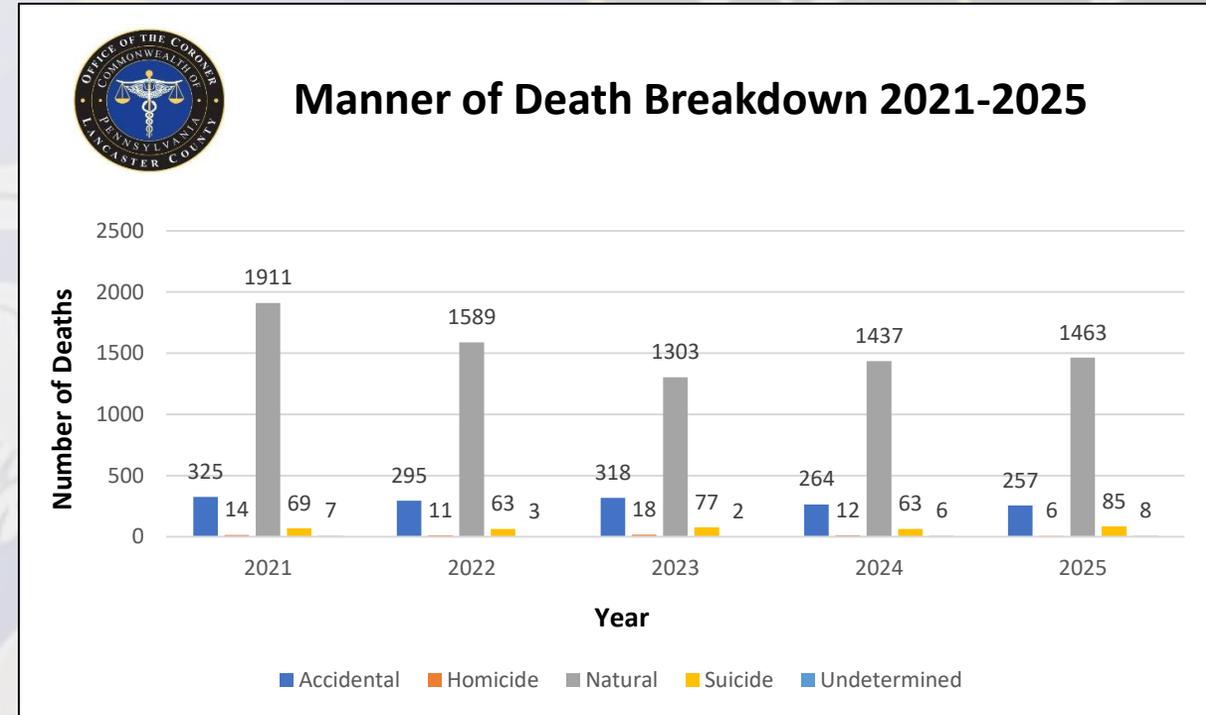
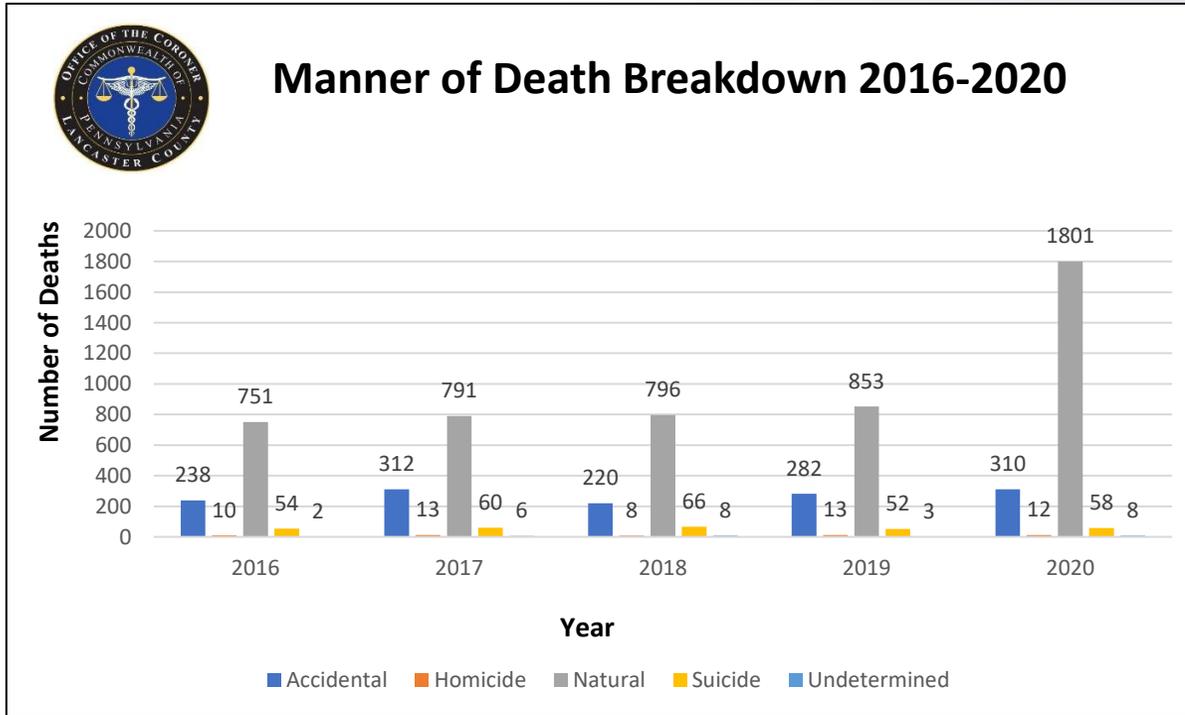
Pennsylvania state law requires any deaths of persons whose bodies are to be cremated, buried at sea, or otherwise disposed of, so to be thereafter unavailable for examination, must be reported to the coroner's office in the county of death. An investigation takes place into the cause of death, and an authorization is then granted when appropriate.



Total number of cremations authorized from January 2016-December 2025 for all of Lancaster County.

Note: Numbers include cases investigated by the Lancaster County Coroner's Office that were cremations as well as cases that were not originally reported to the office.

Manner of Death



Total number of cases investigated from January 2016–December 2025 broken down by manner of death.

Manner of Death

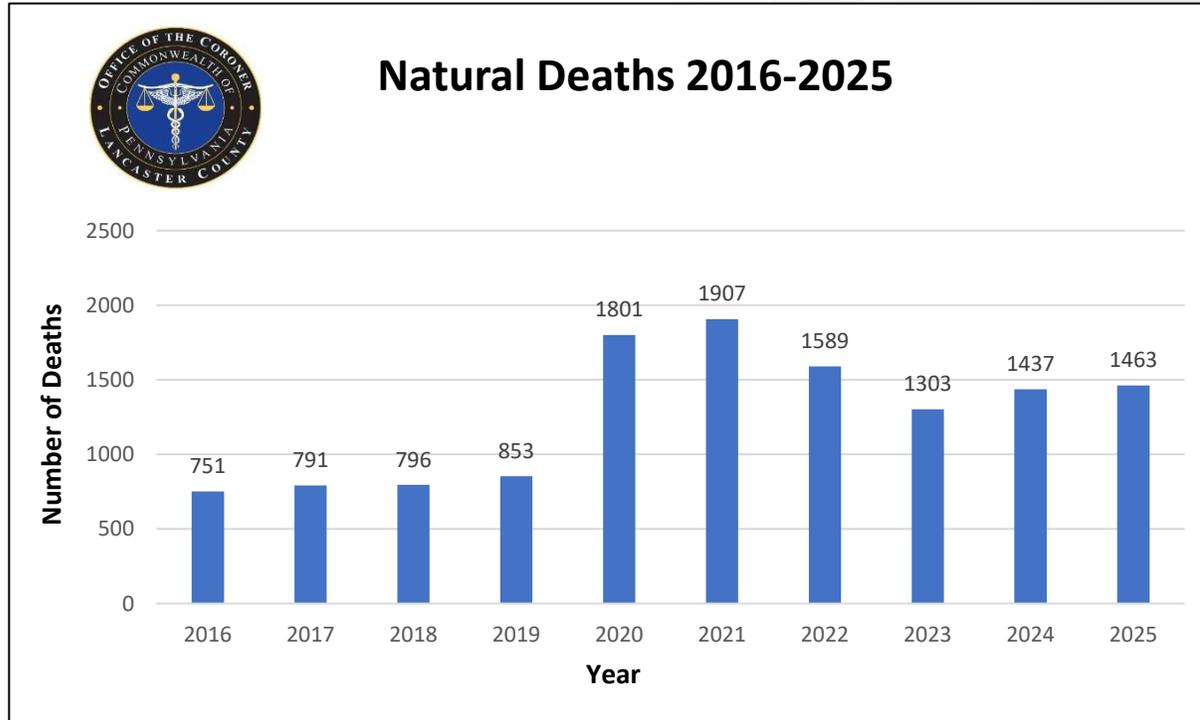


Total number of Accidental deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025.

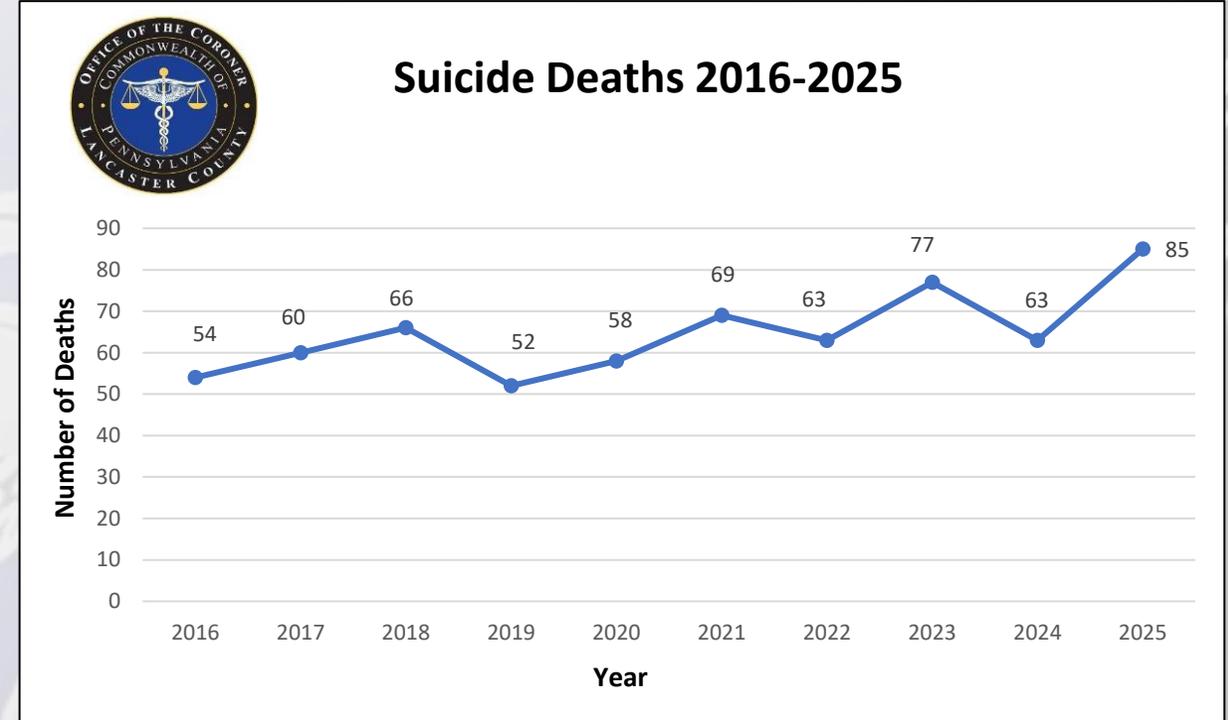


Total number of Homicide deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025.

Manner of Death

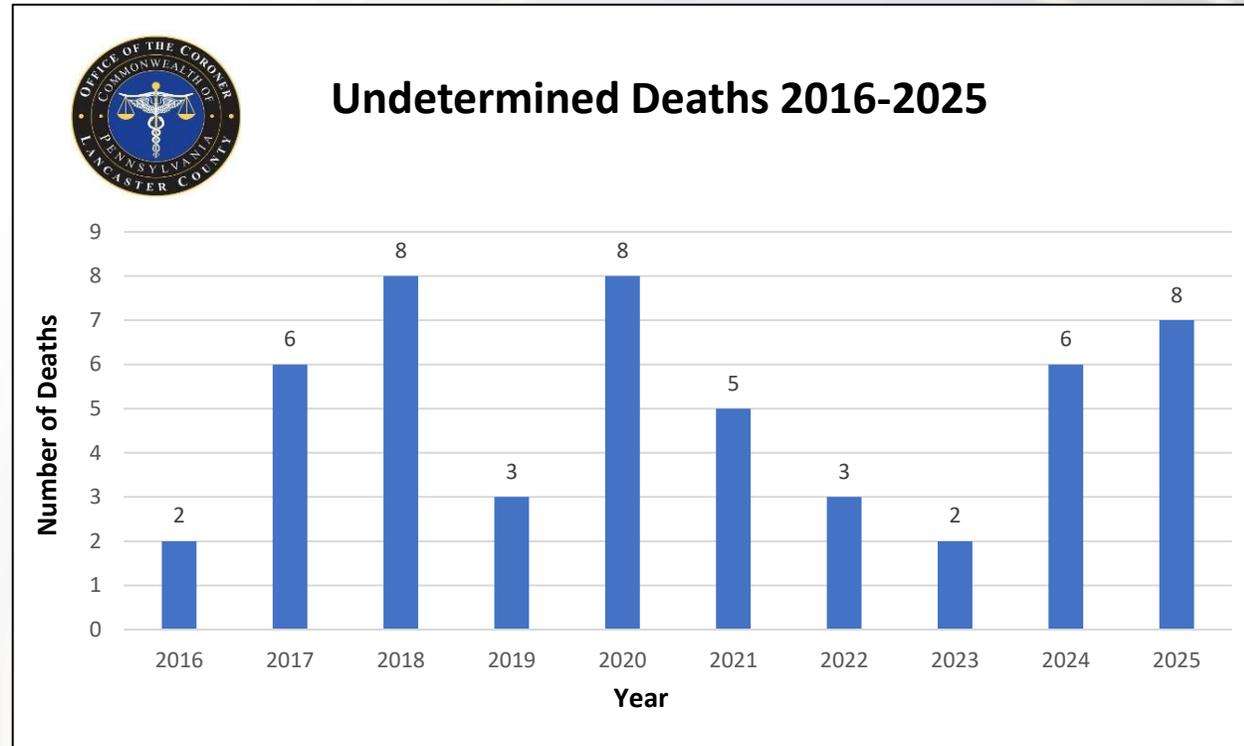


Total number of Natural deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025.



Total number of Suicide deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025.

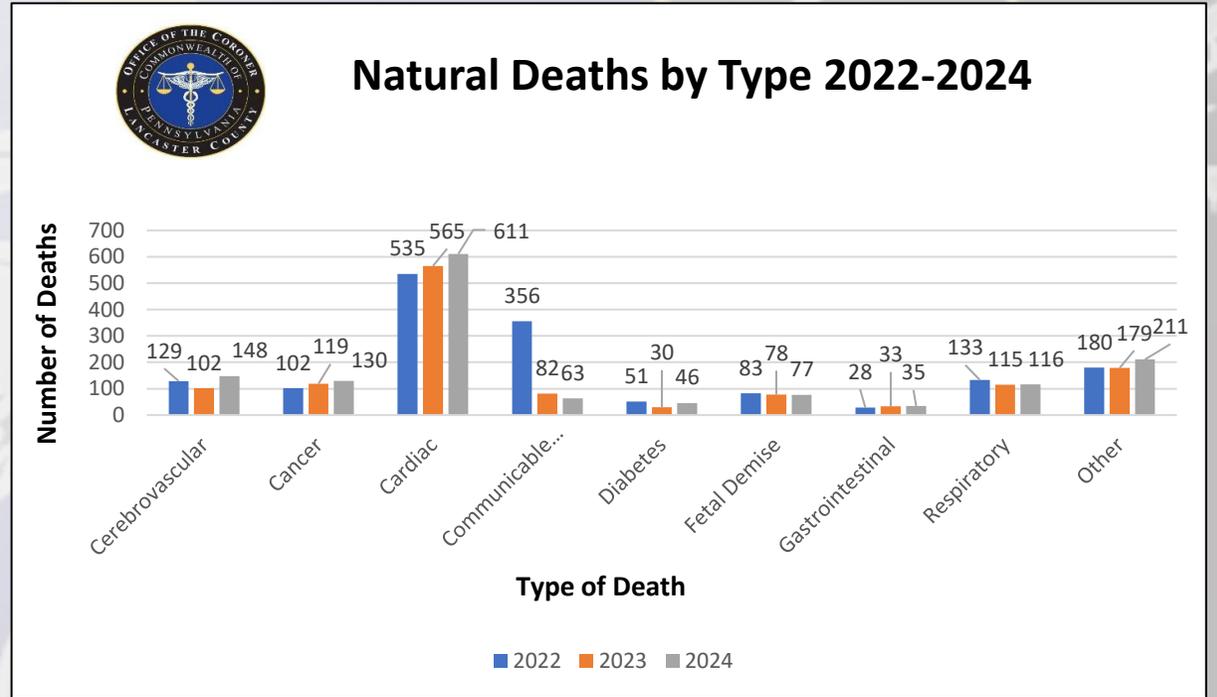
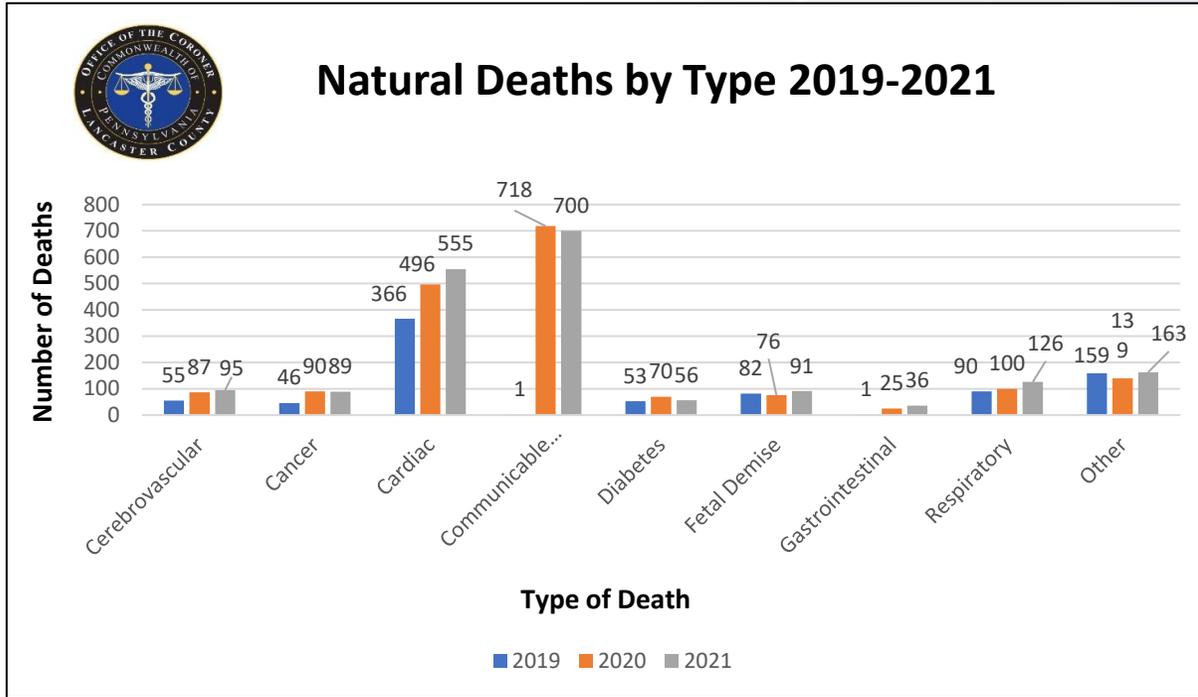
Manner of Death



Total number of Undetermined deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025.

Natural Deaths by Type

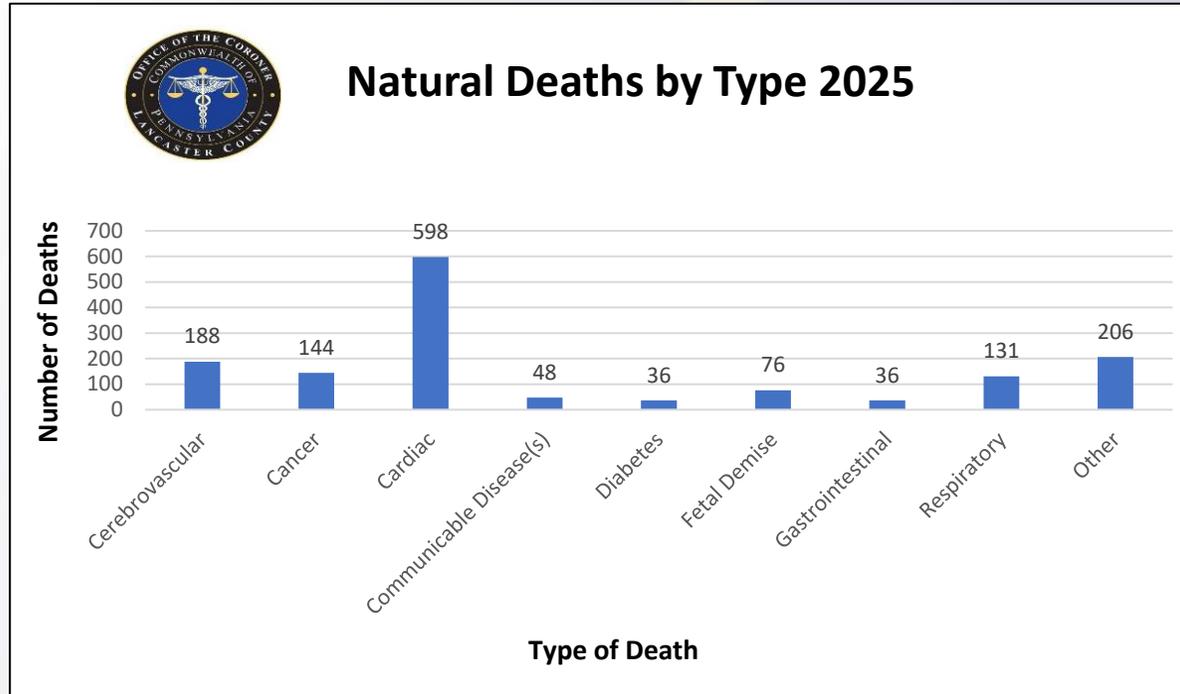
A large majority of cases investigated by any coroner's office are natural deaths. In some cases, after the investigation determines the death is natural, jurisdiction will be released back to the decedent's physician, who will then issue the certificate of death. The certificate of death must be issued by the Lancaster County Coroner's Office on all accidental, suicide, homicide, and undetermined cases. Depending on the circumstances, the Lancaster County Coroner's Office may issue the certificate of death on natural cases.



Types of Natural deaths investigated from January 2019–December 2024 broken down by type of death.

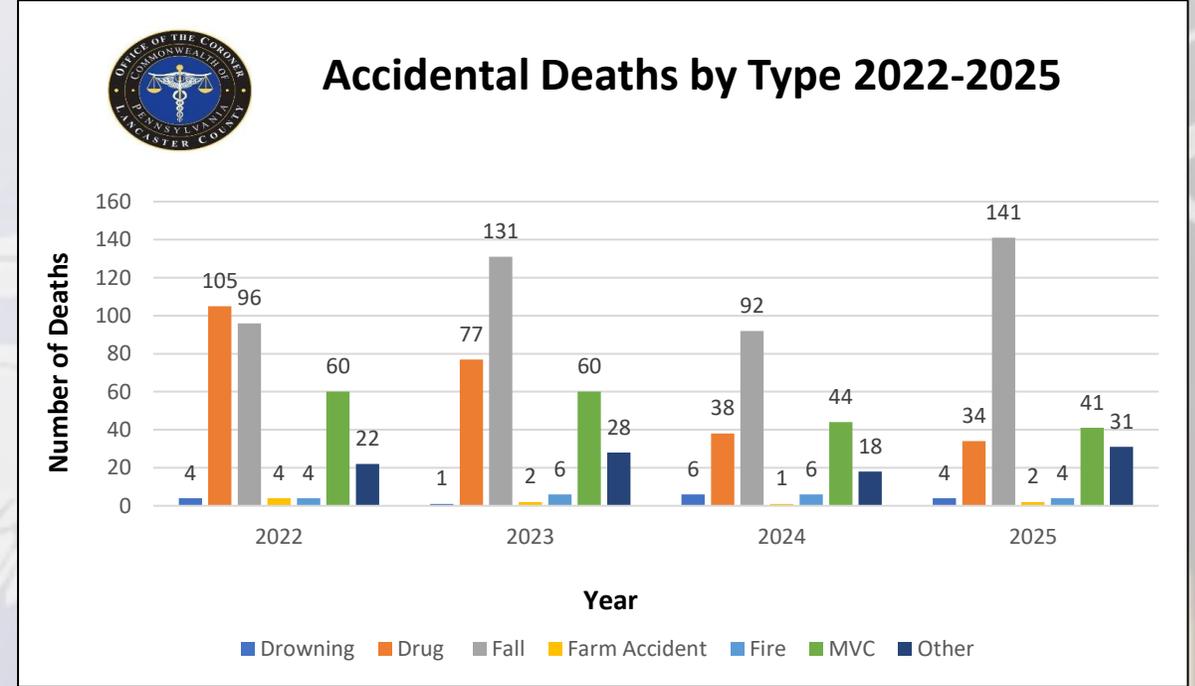
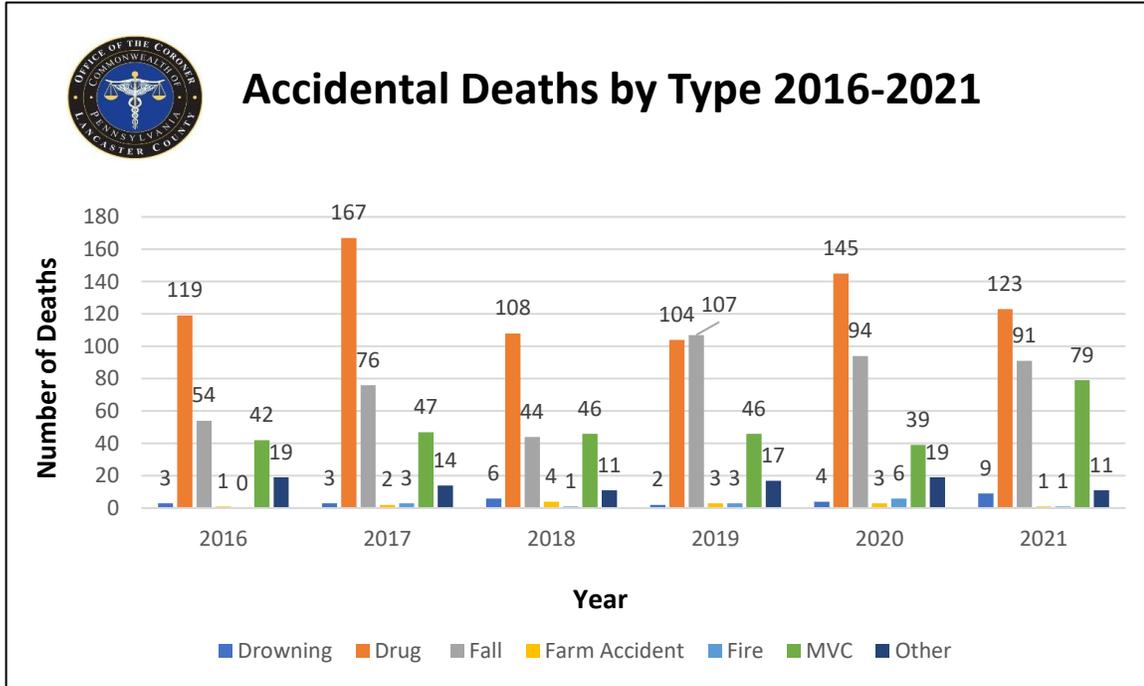
Natural Deaths by Type

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Types of Natural deaths investigated from January-December 2025 broken down by type of death.

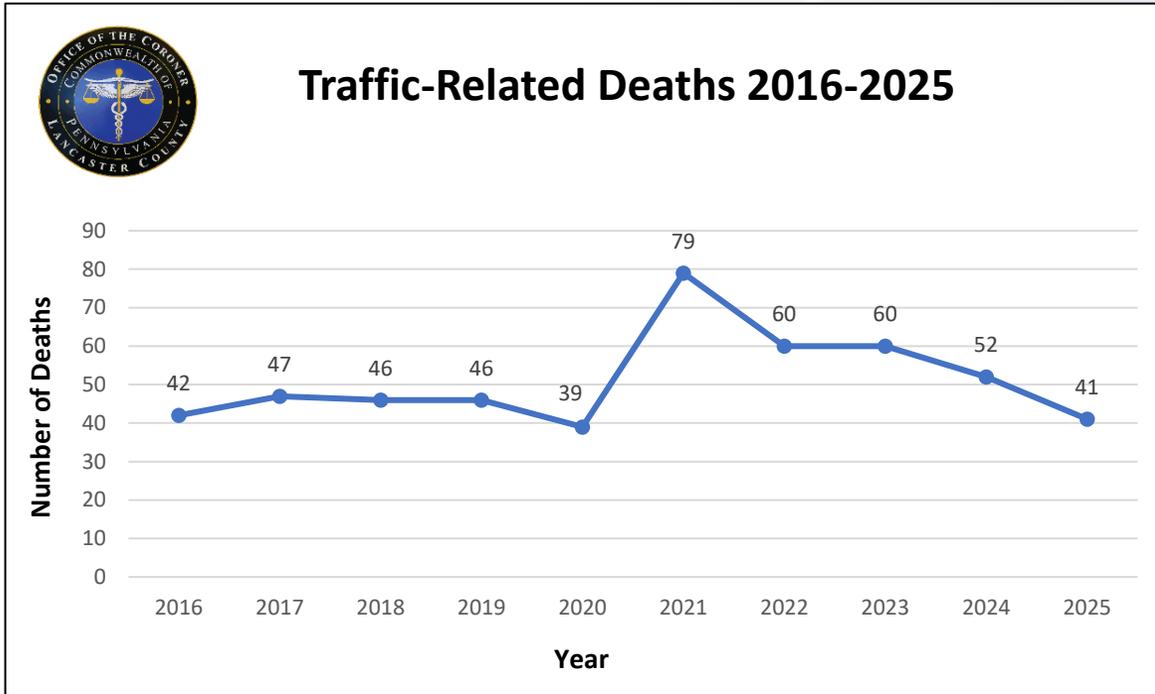
Accidental Deaths by Type



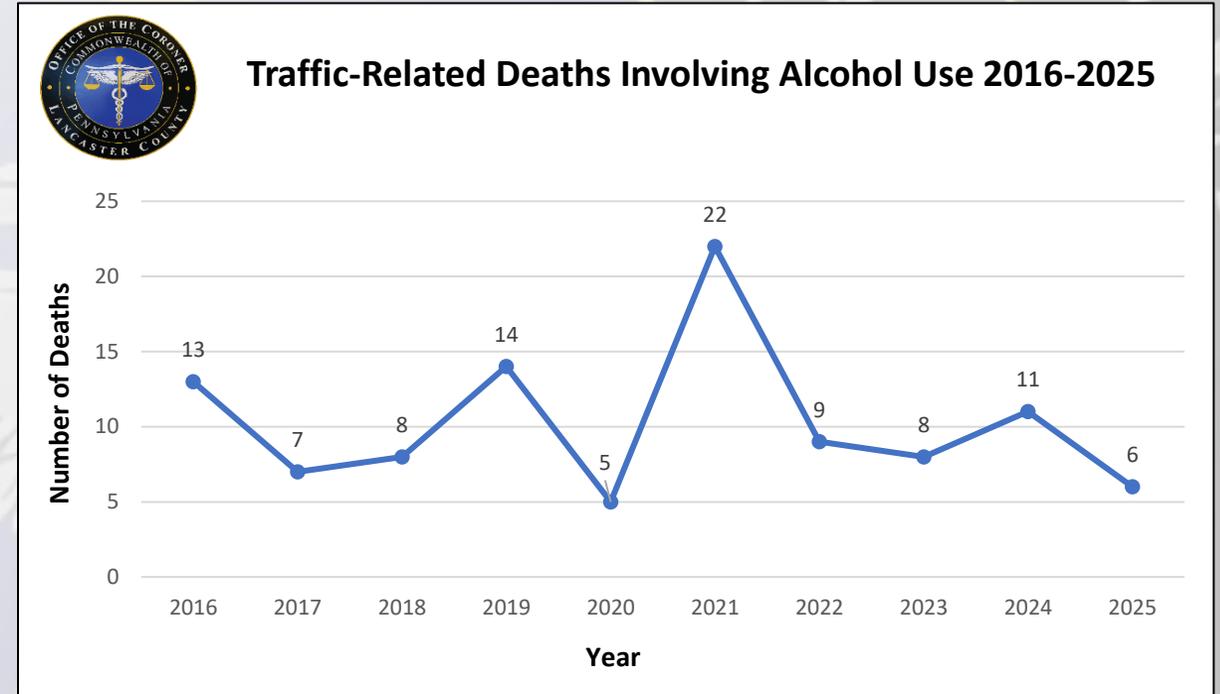
Types of Accidental deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025. Motor vehicle crashes are denoted by MVC.

Traffic-Related Deaths

Traffic-related deaths include only those individuals whose death occurs within Lancaster County, regardless of where the traffic incident takes place. This data does not include those individuals transported by ambulance or medical helicopter to out of county hospitals.



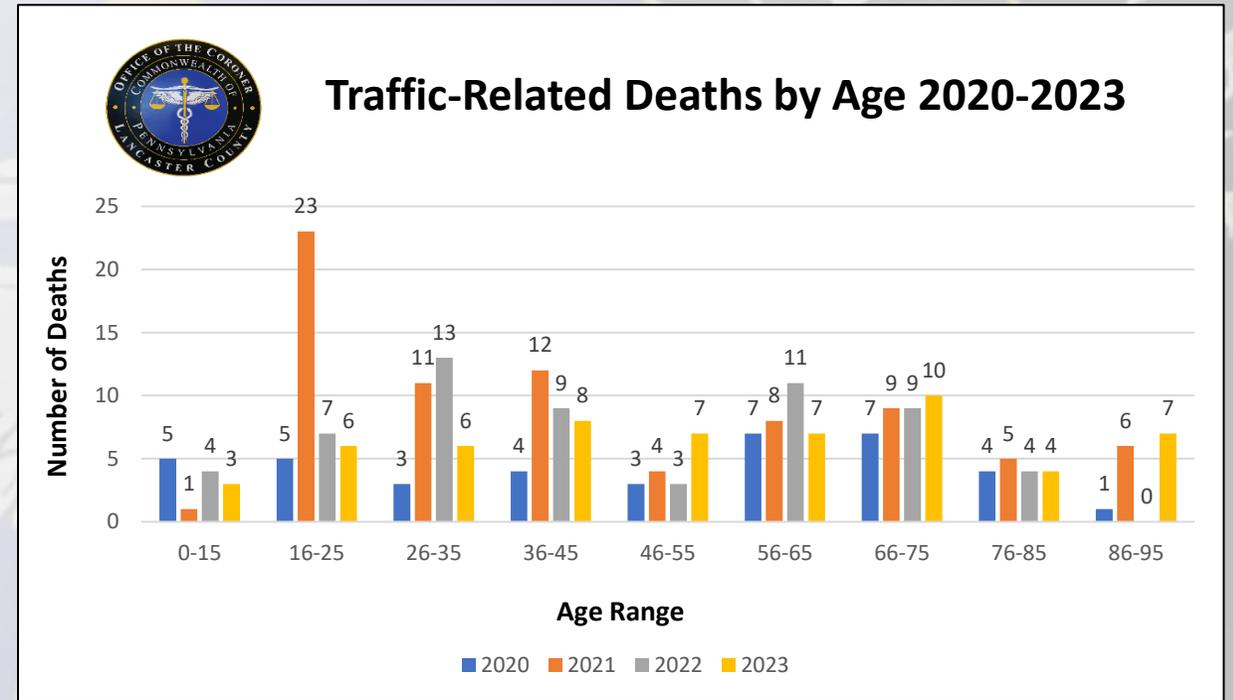
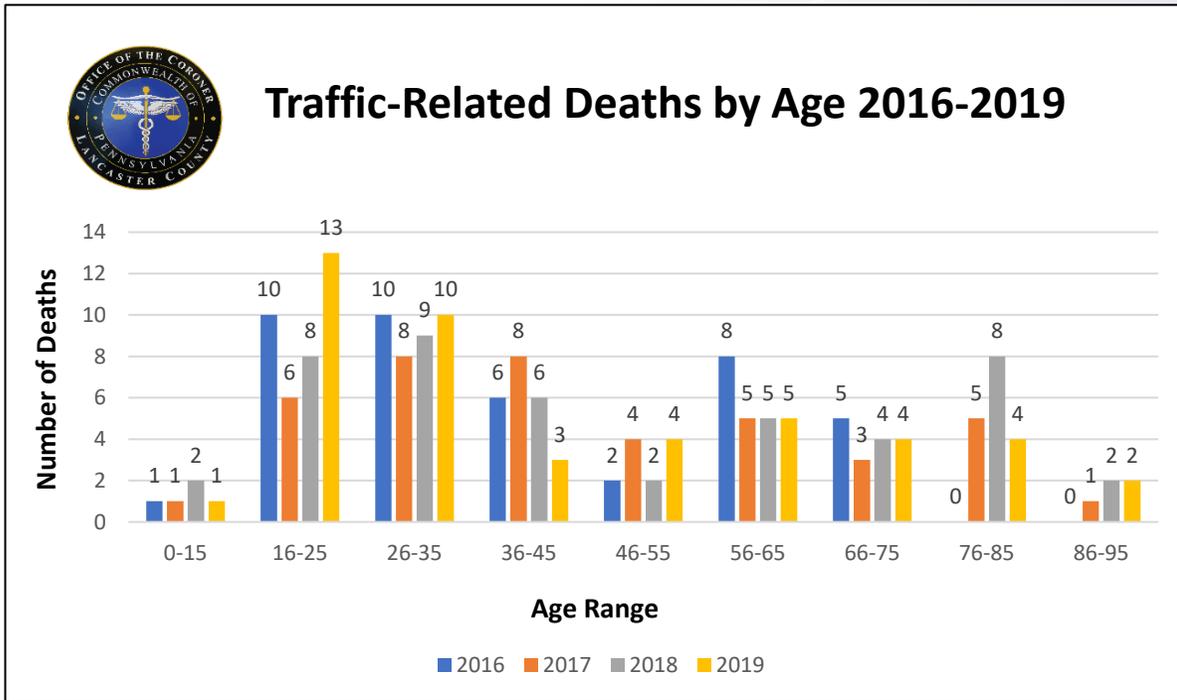
Total number of traffic-related deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025.



Total number of traffic-related deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025 that involved the use of alcohol.

Traffic-Related Deaths

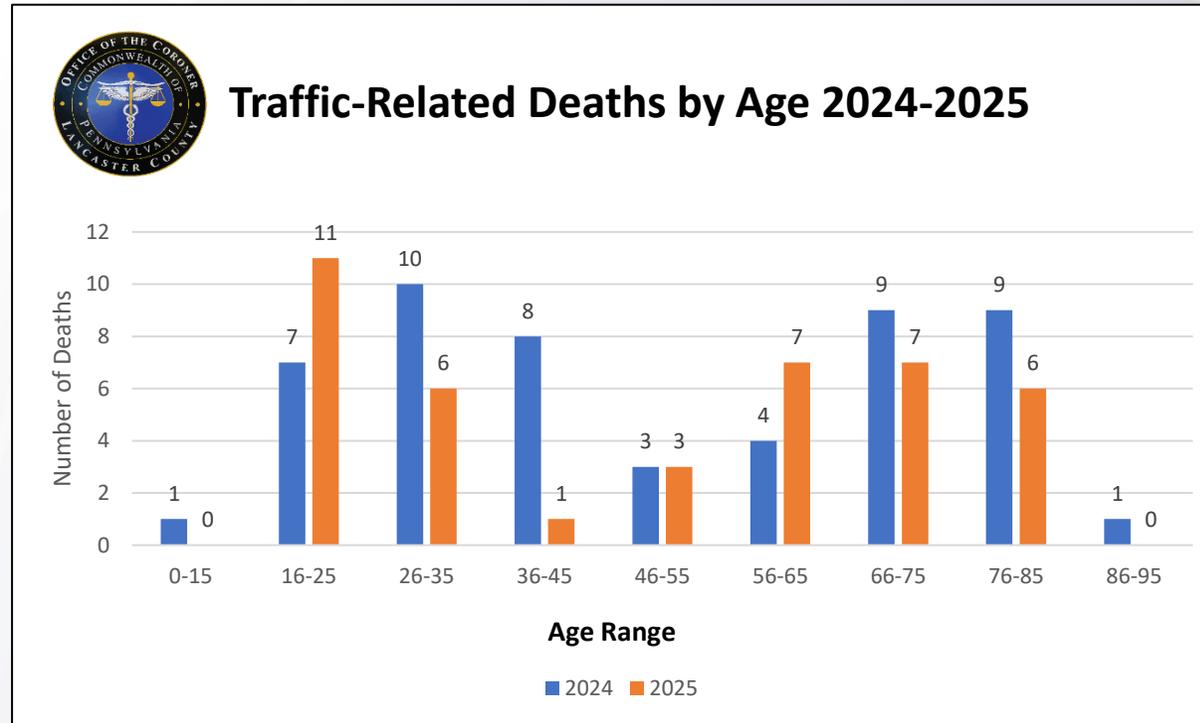
Traffic-related deaths include only those individuals whose death occurs within Lancaster County, regardless of where the traffic incident takes place. This data does not include those individuals transported by ambulance or medical helicopter to out of county hospitals.



Total number of traffic-related deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2023 broken down by age.

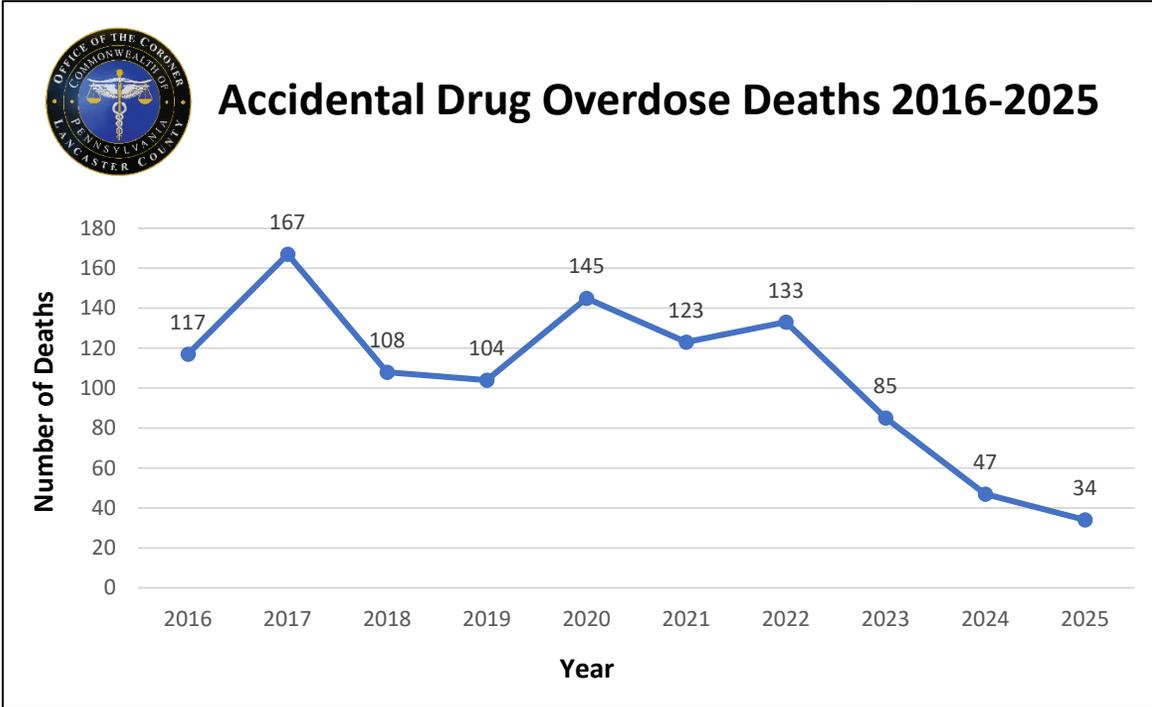
Traffic-Related Deaths

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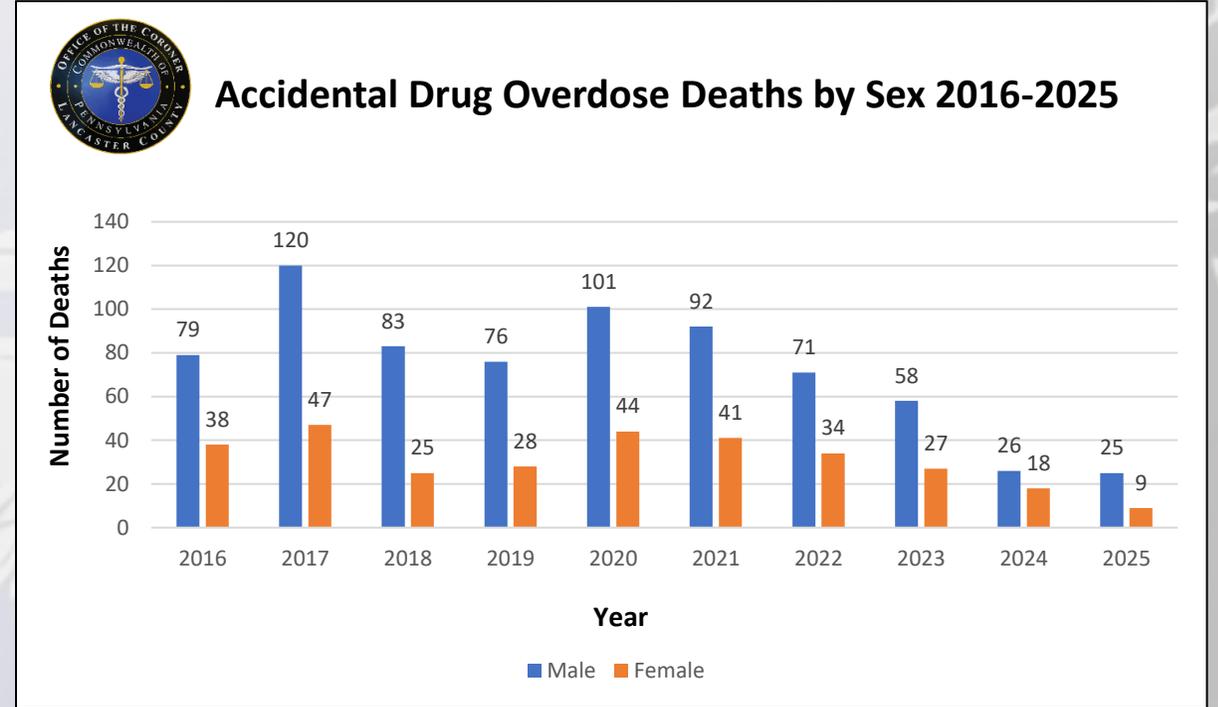


Total number of traffic-related deaths investigated from January 2024-December 2025 broken down by age.

Accidental Drug Overdose Deaths

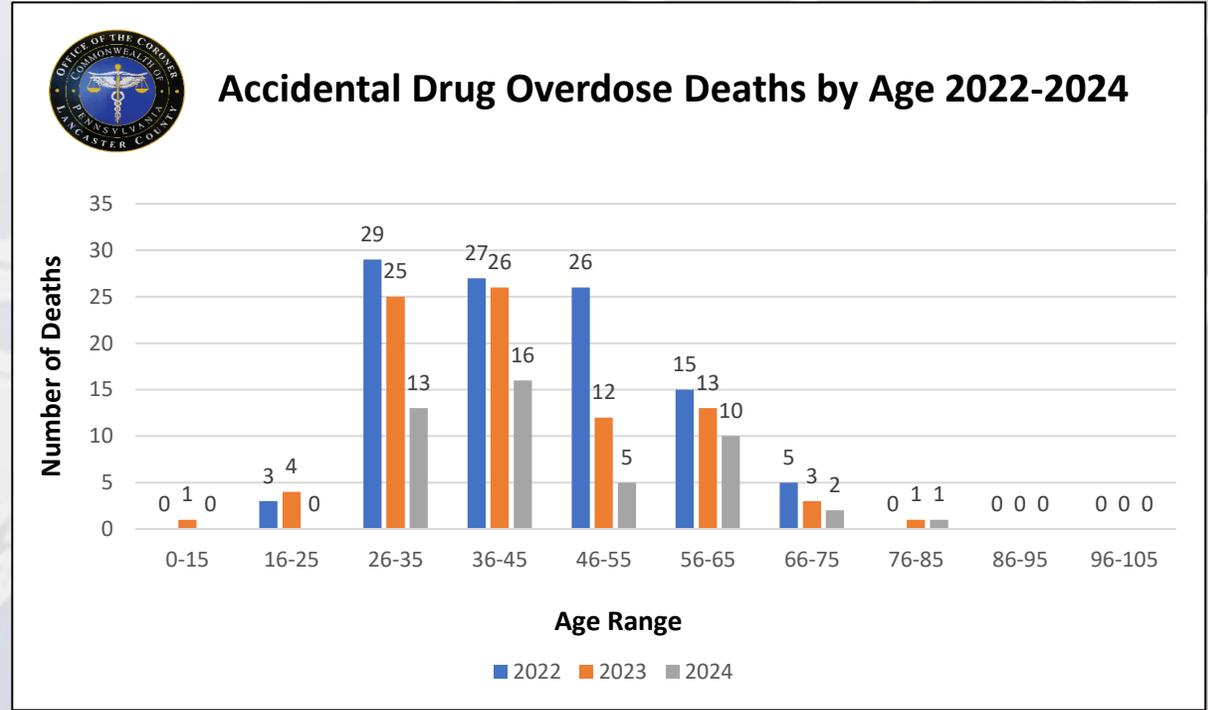
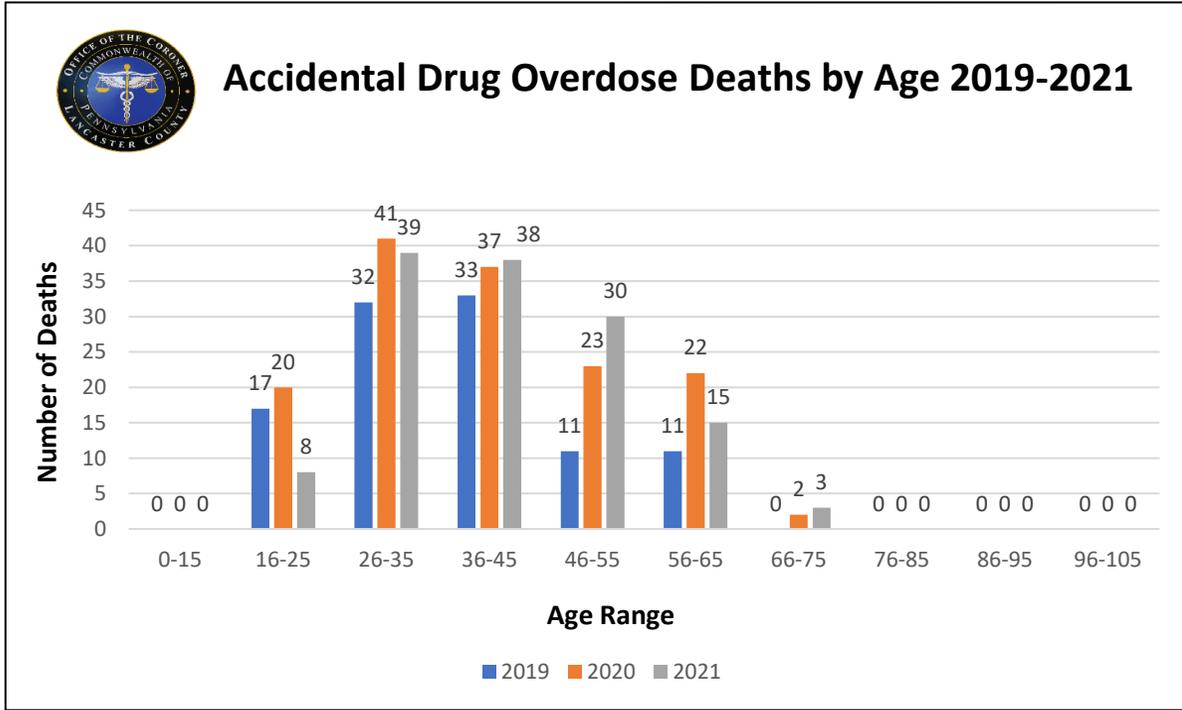


Total number of accidental drug overdose deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025.



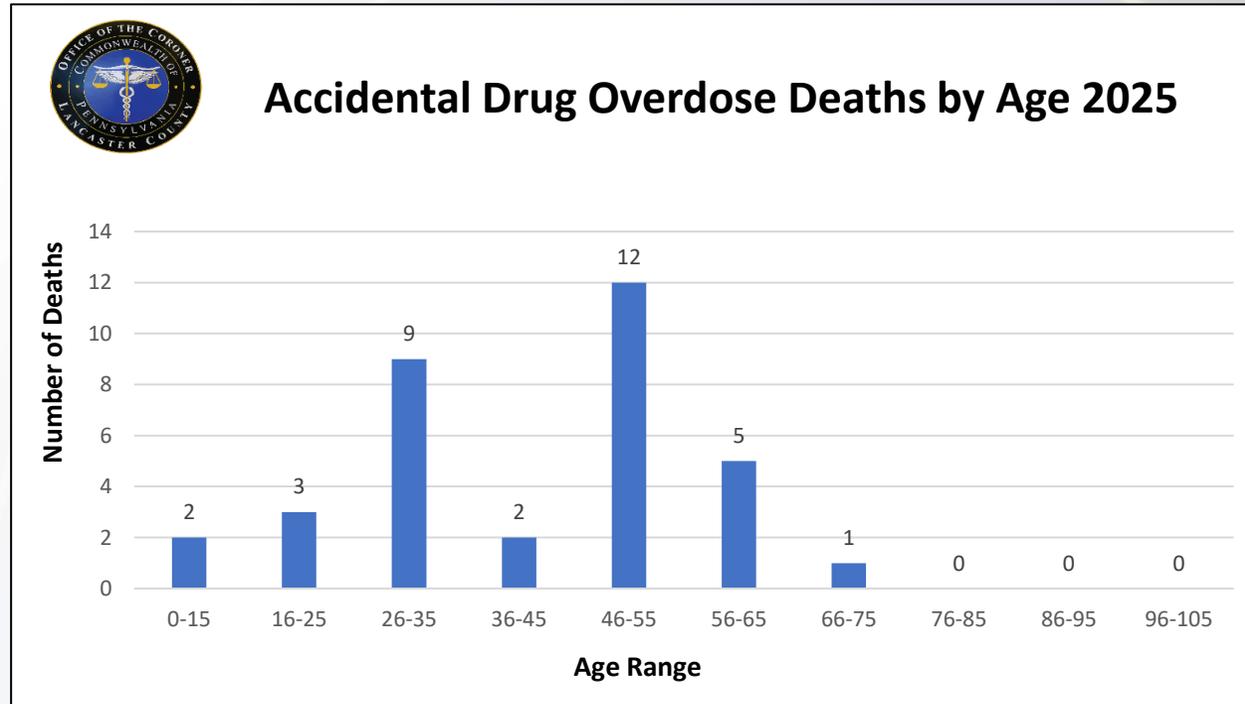
Total number of accidental drug overdose deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025 broken down by sex.

Accidental Drug Overdose Deaths



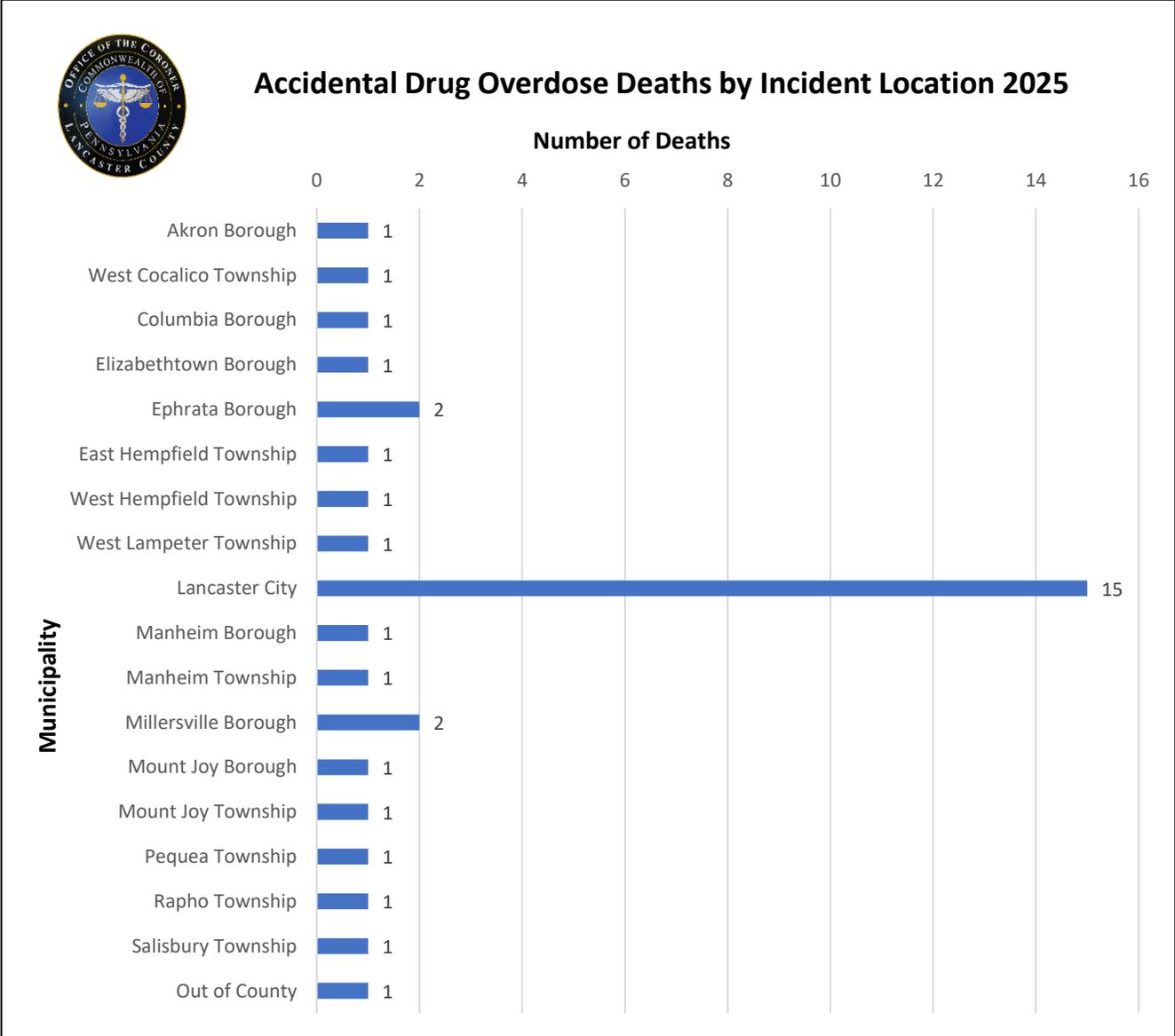
Total number of accidental drug overdose deaths investigated from January 2019-December 2024 by age.

Accidental Drug Overdose Deaths



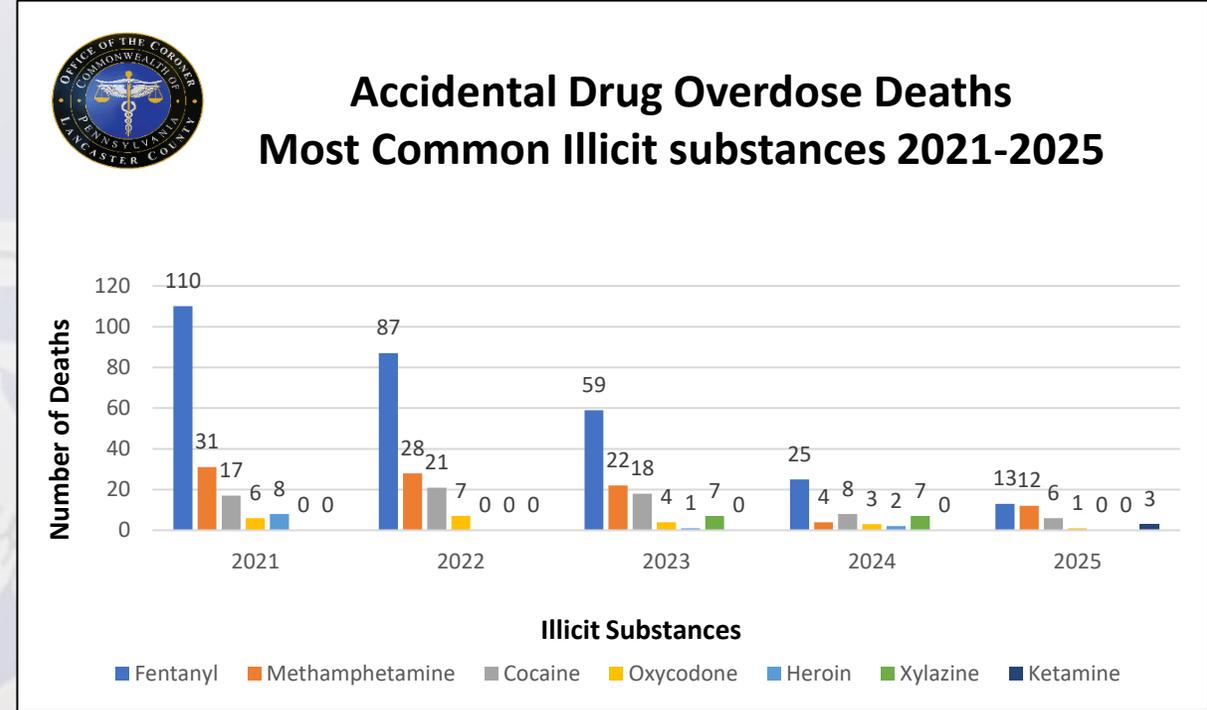
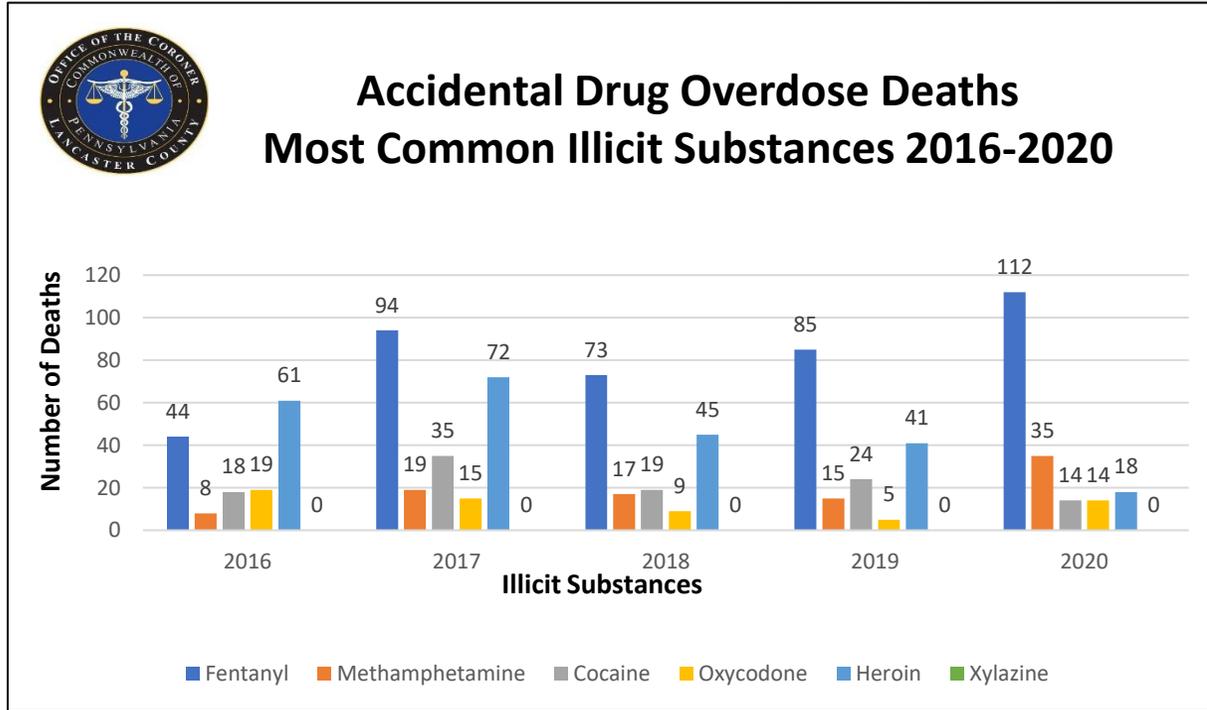
Total number of accidental drug overdose deaths investigated from January-December 2025 by age.

Accidental Drug Overdose Deaths



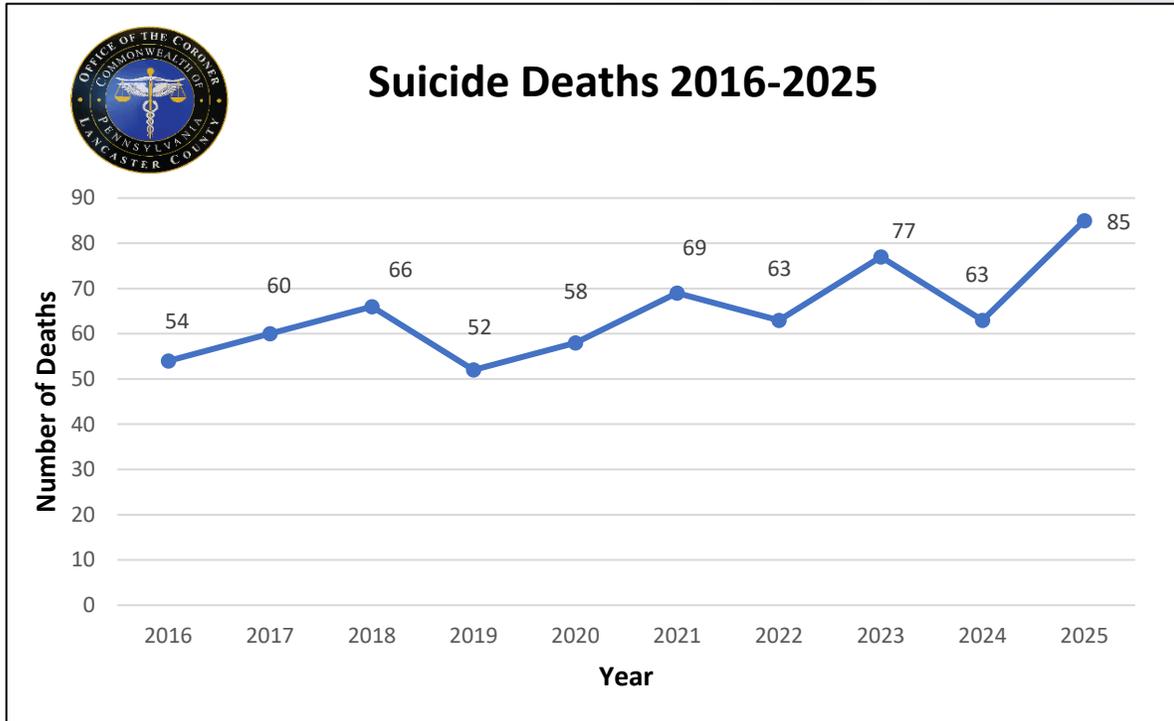
List of 2025 Accidental Drug Overdose deaths broken down by incident location. If a municipality is not listed, it indicates zero (0) accidental drug overdose deaths.

Accidental Drug Overdose Deaths

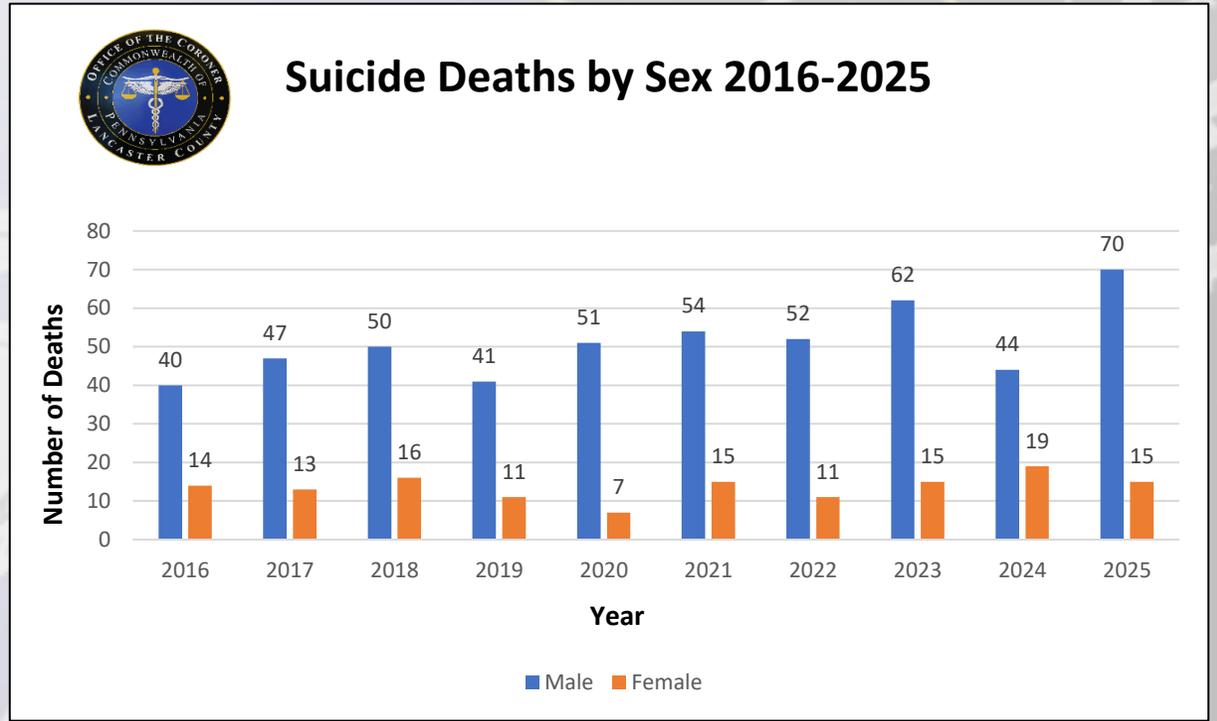


The most common substances found in accidental drug overdose deaths from January 2016-December 2025.

Suicide Deaths

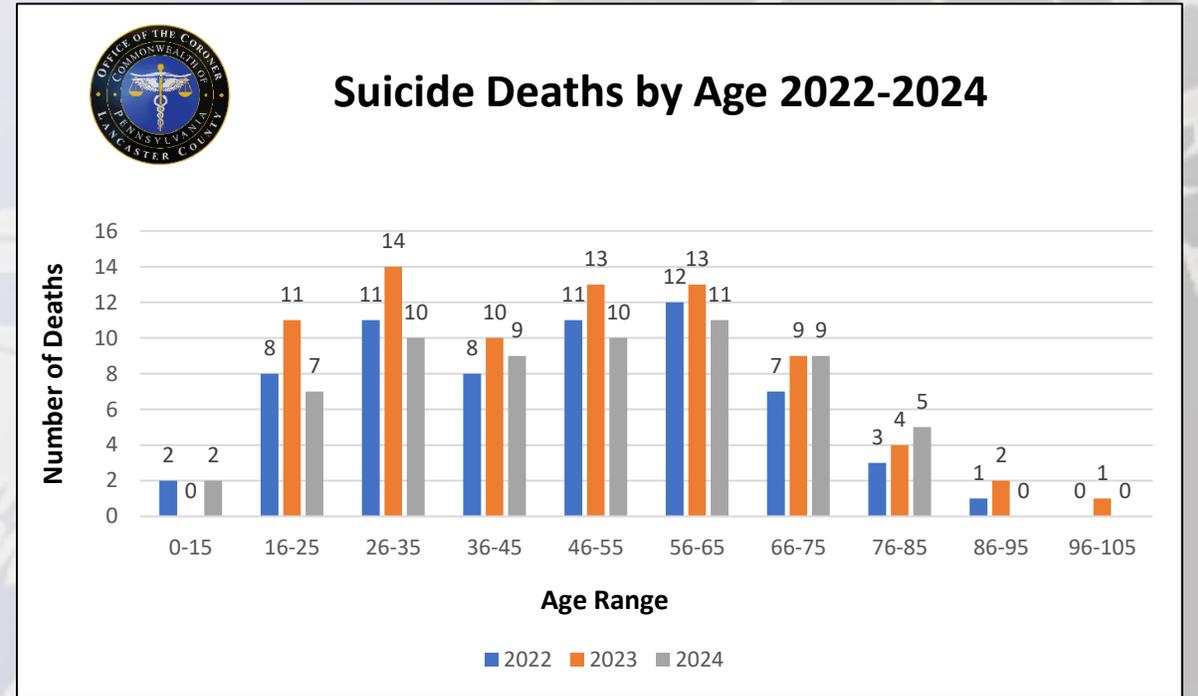
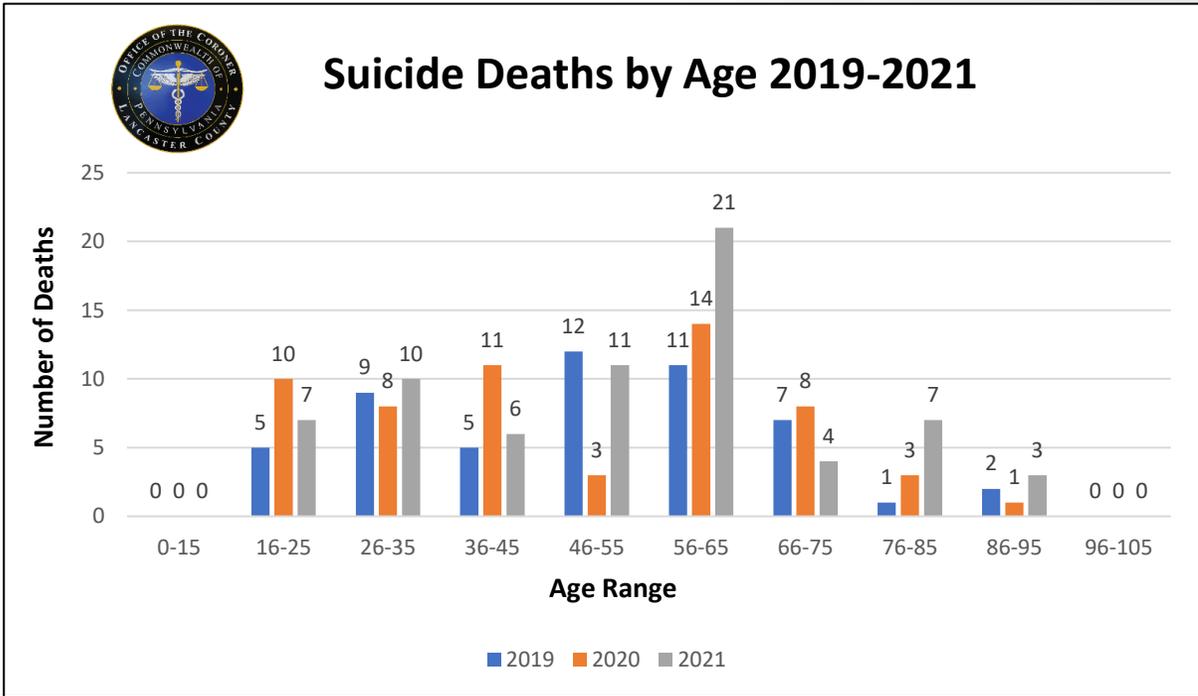


Total number of Suicide deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025.



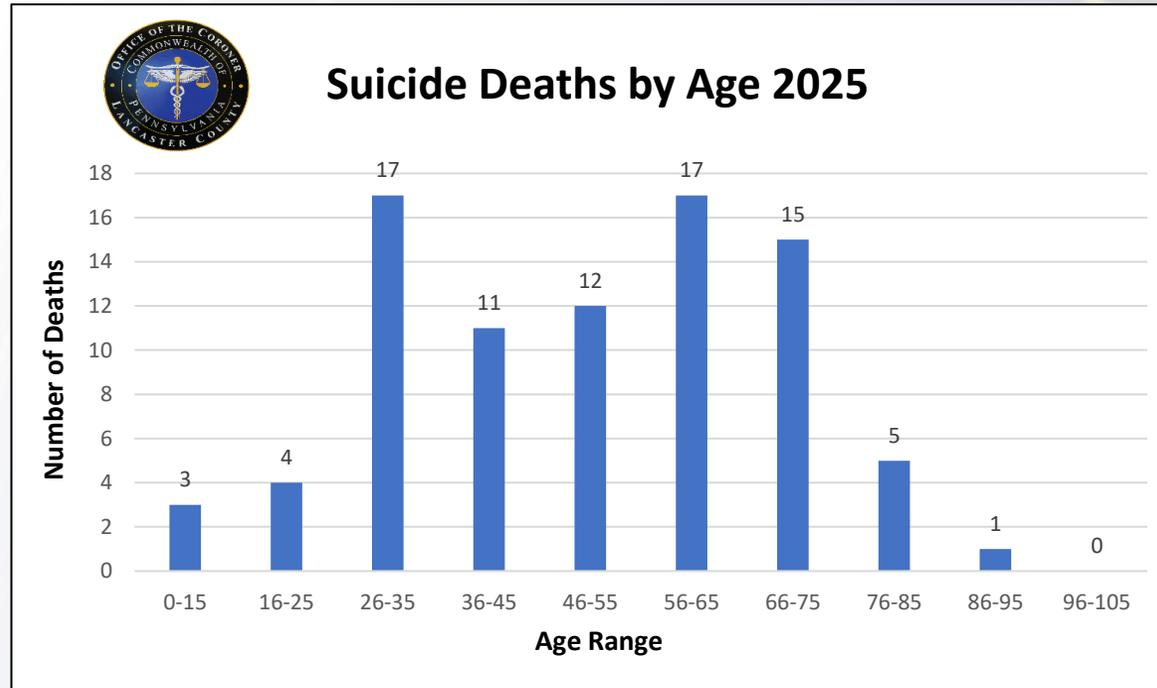
Total number of Suicide deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025 broken down by sex.

Suicide Deaths



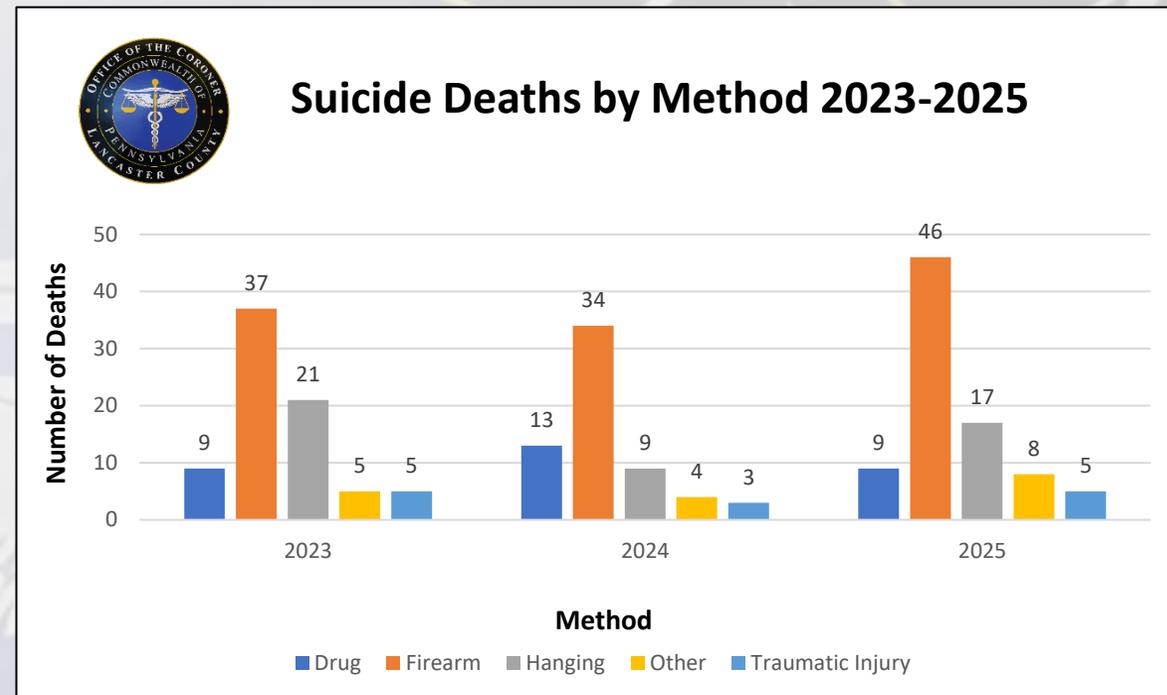
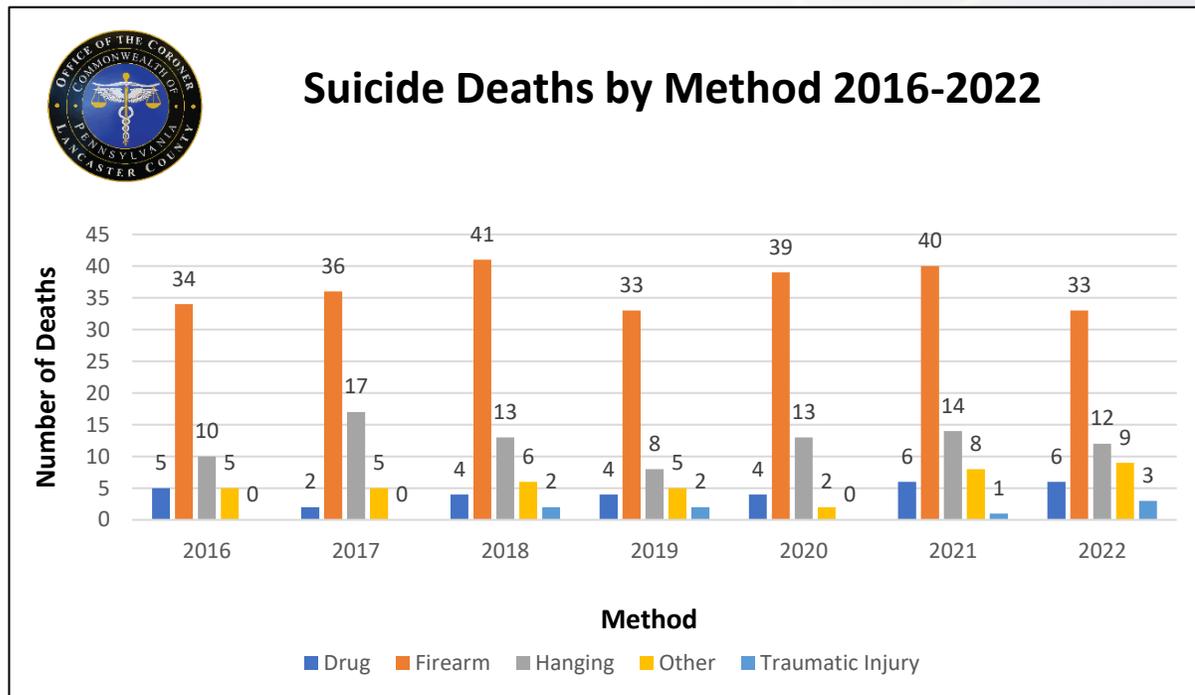
Total number of Suicide deaths investigated from January 2019-December 2024 broken down by age.

Suicide Deaths



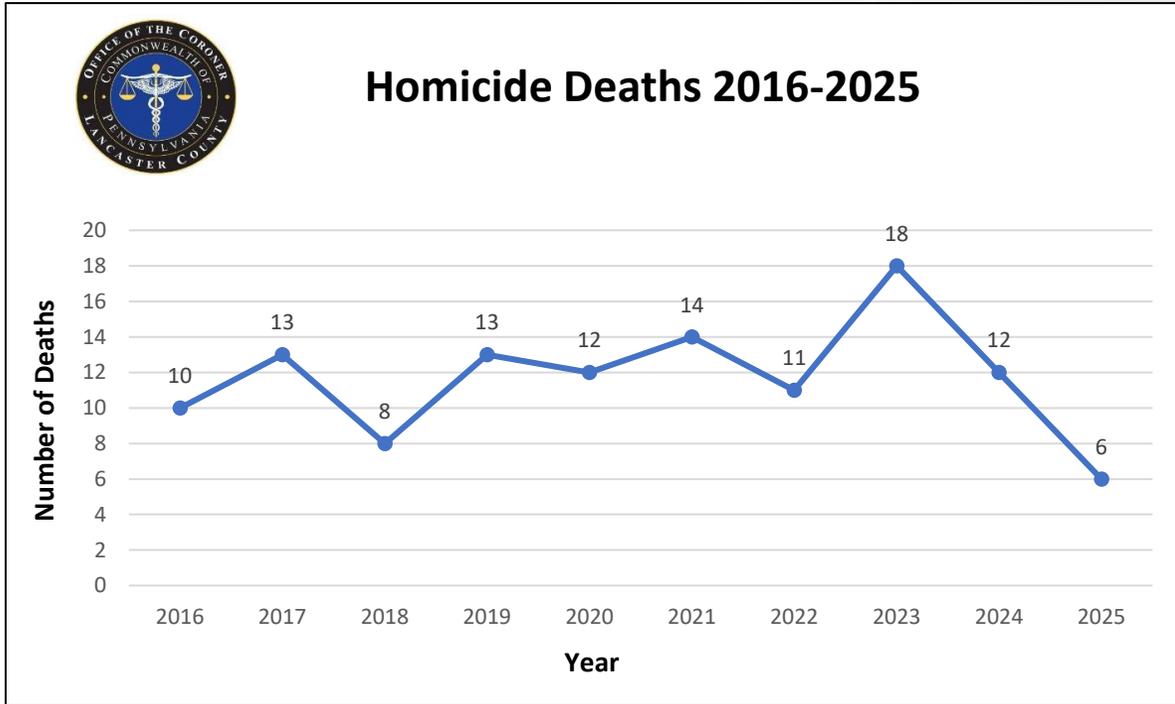
Total number of Suicide deaths investigated from January-December 2025 broken down by age.

Suicide Deaths

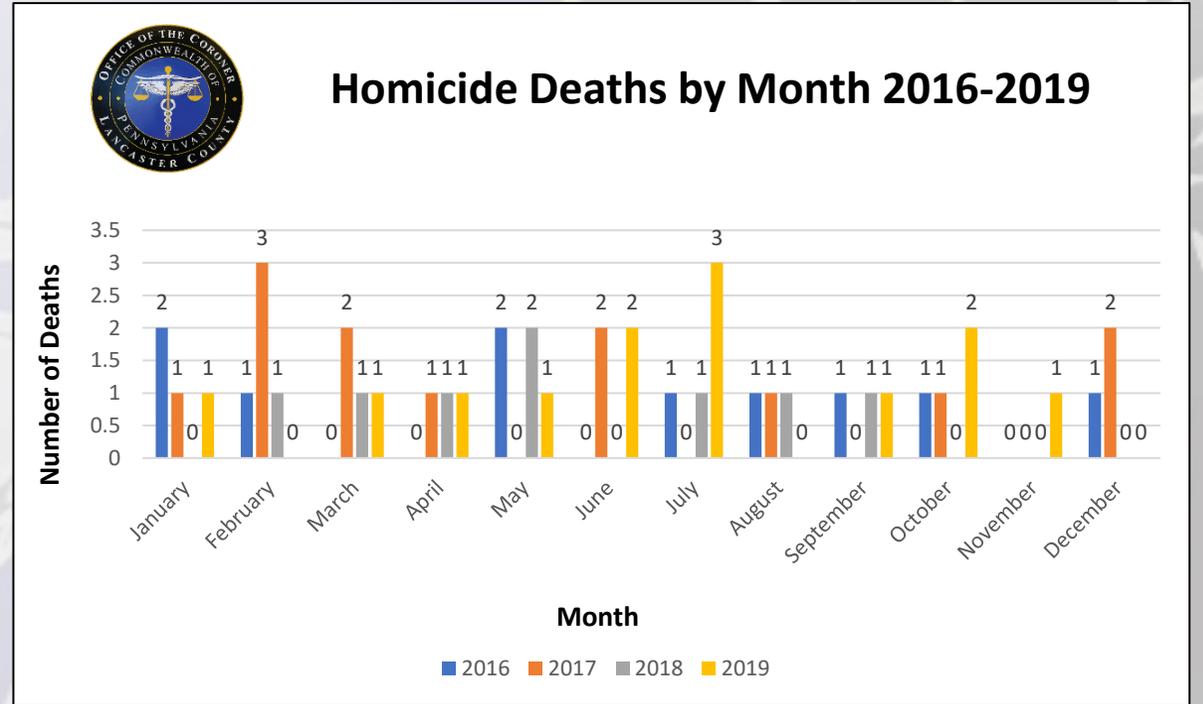


Total number of suicide deaths investigated from January 2016–December 2025 broken down by method of death.

Homicide Deaths

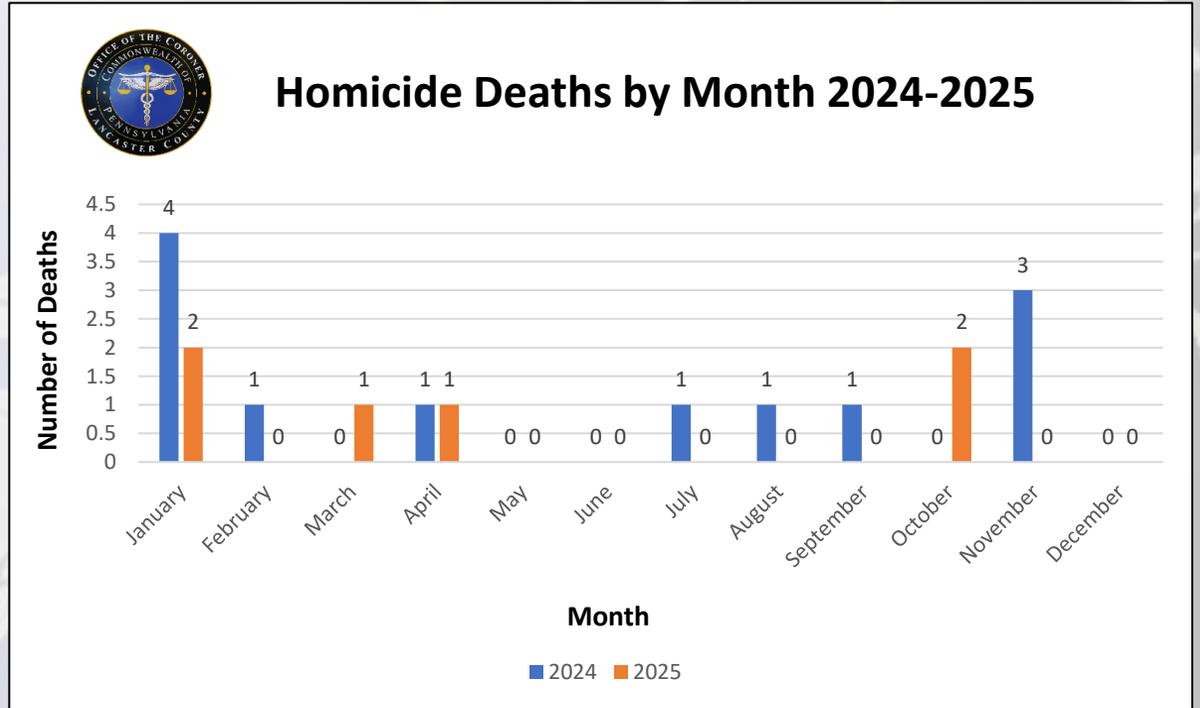
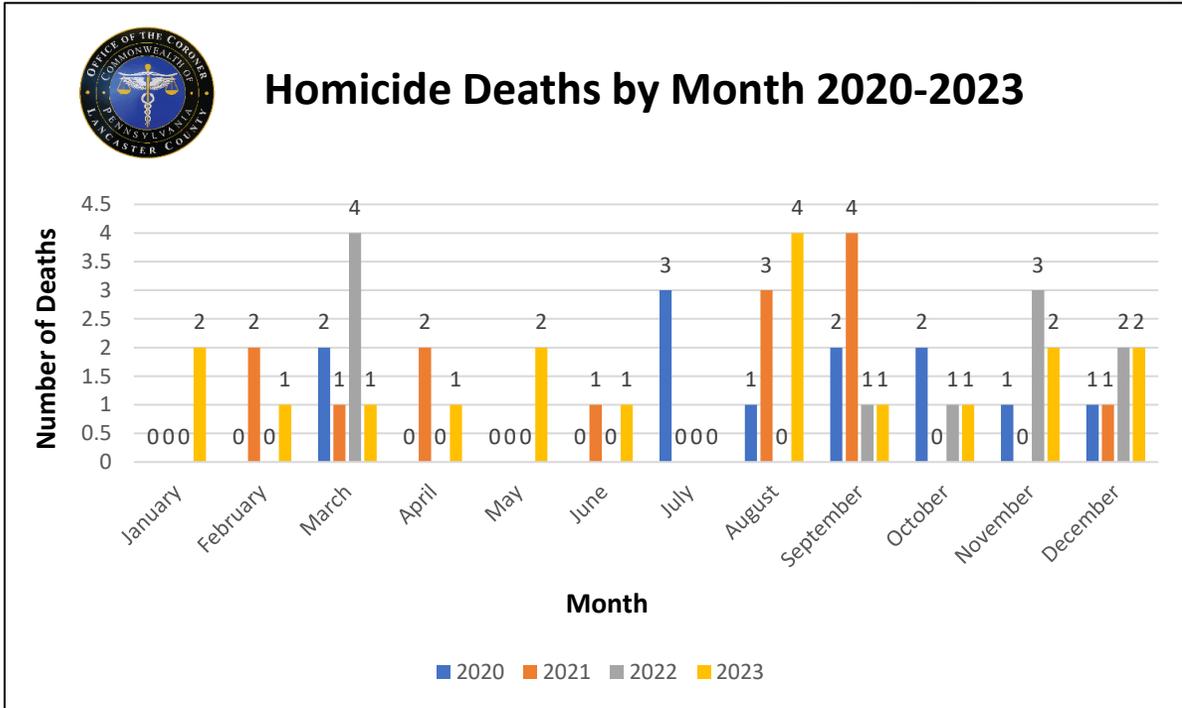


Total number of Homicide deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025.



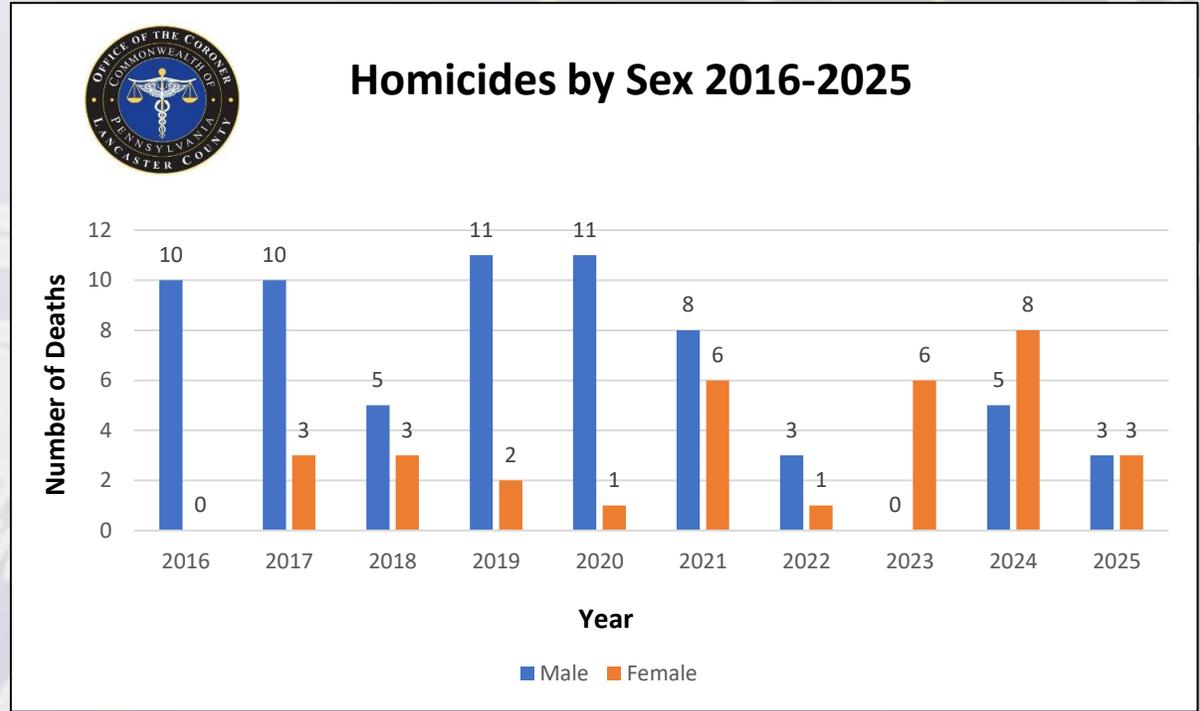
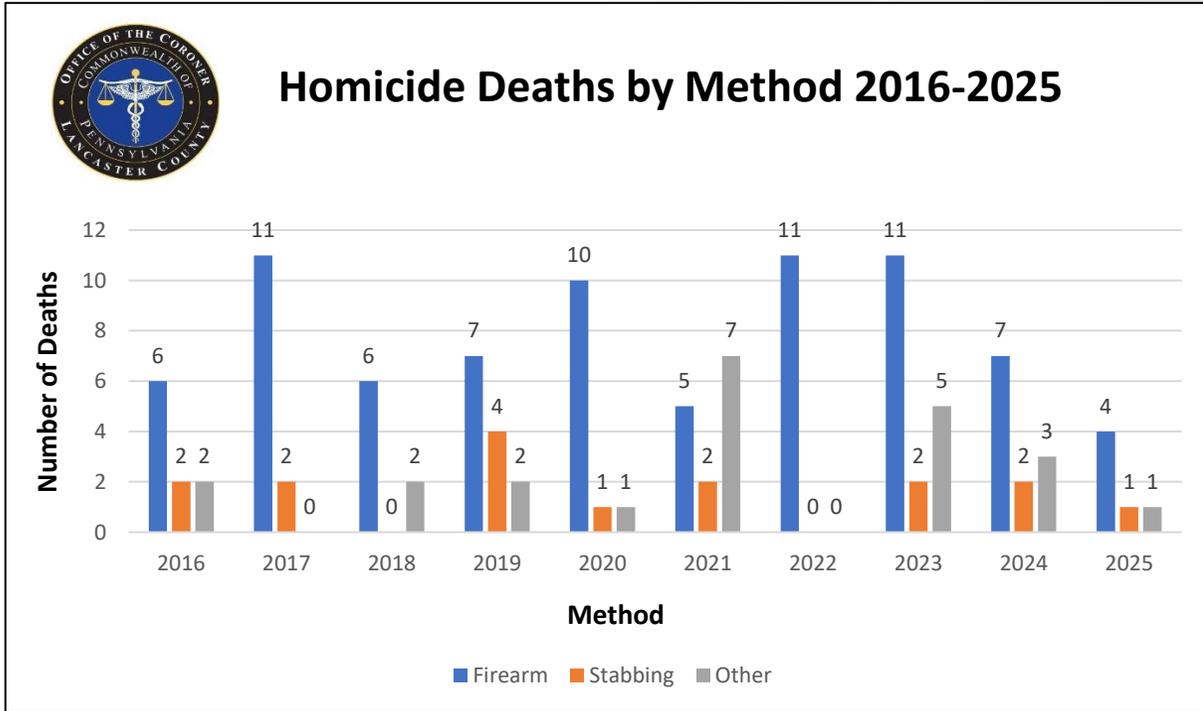
Total number of Homicide deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2019 broken down by month.

Homicide Deaths



Total number of Homicide deaths investigated from January 2020-December 2025 broken down by month.

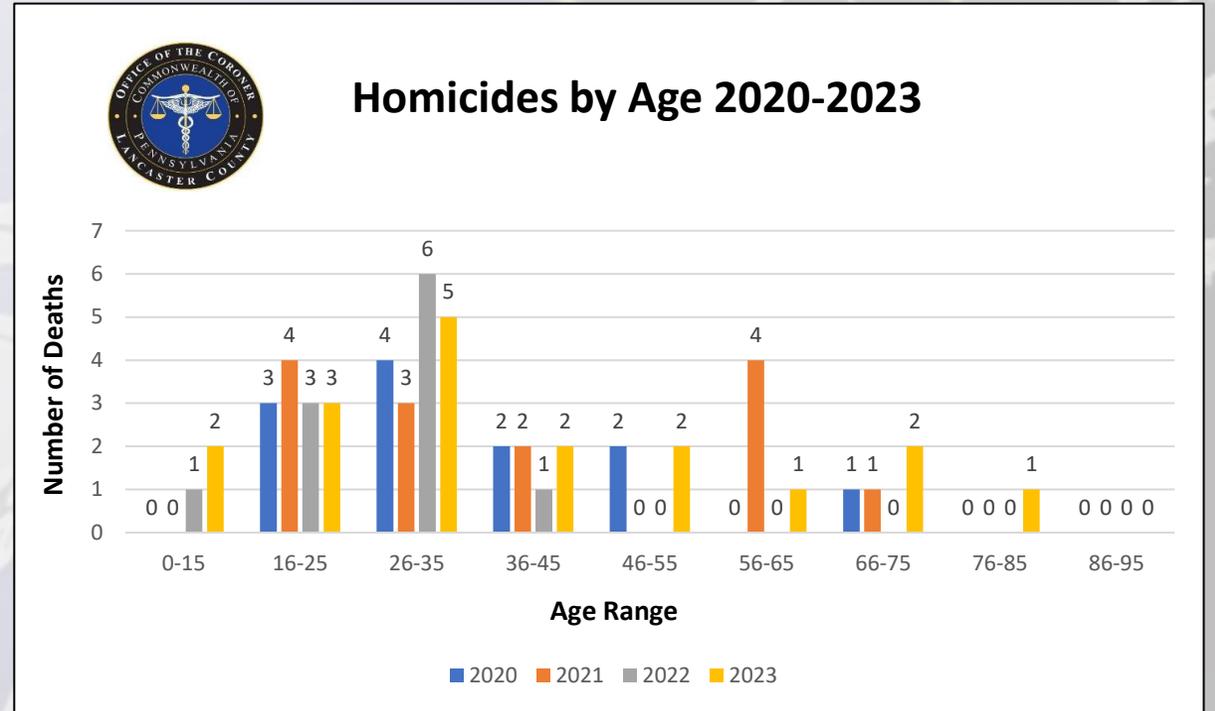
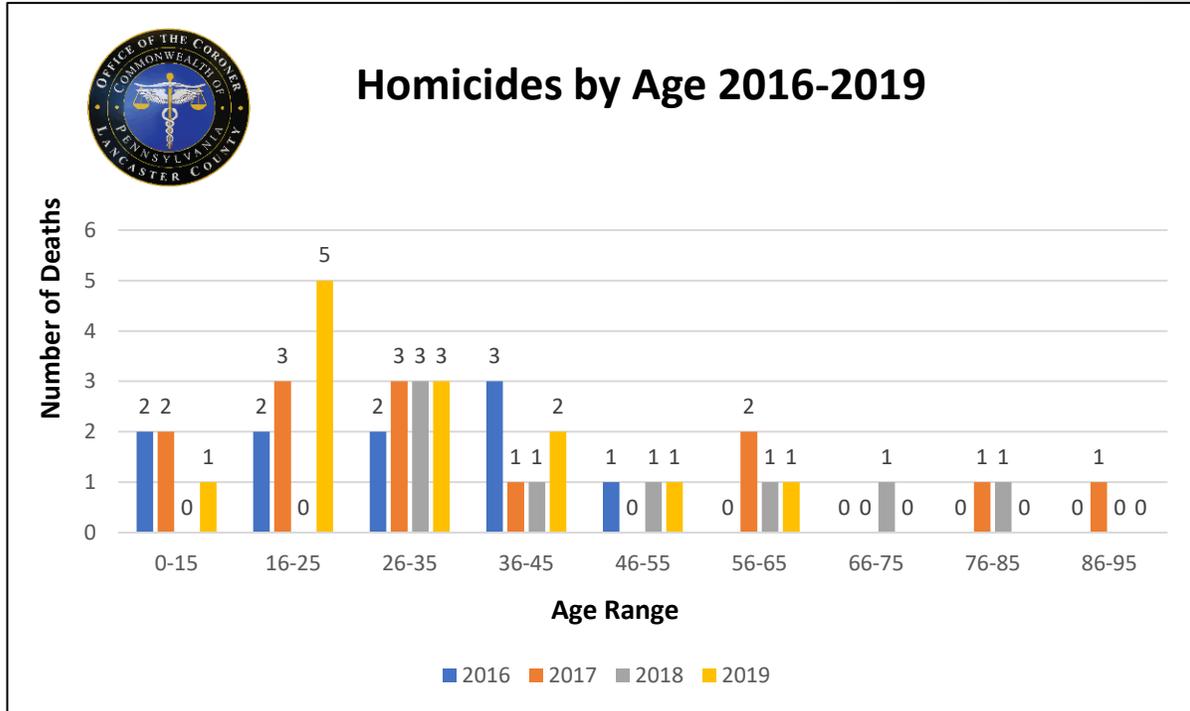
Homicide Deaths



Total number of Homicide deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025 broken down by method.

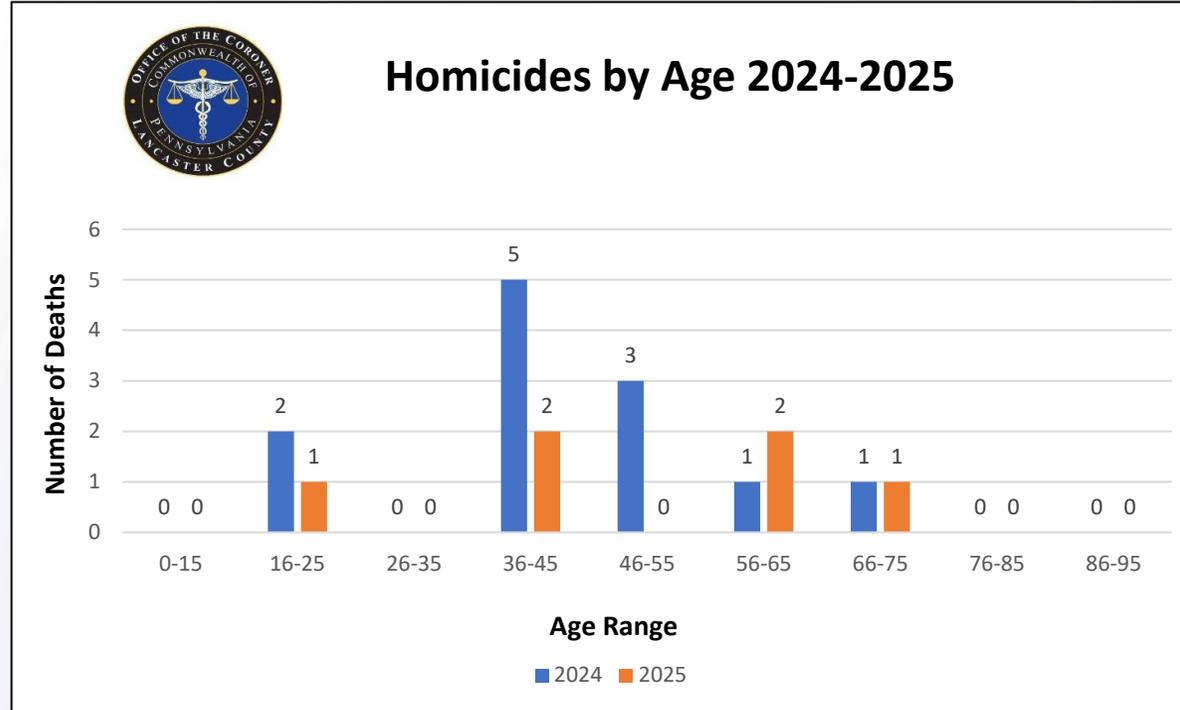
Total number of Homicide deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025 broken down by sex.

Homicide Deaths



Total number of Homicide deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2023 broken down by age.

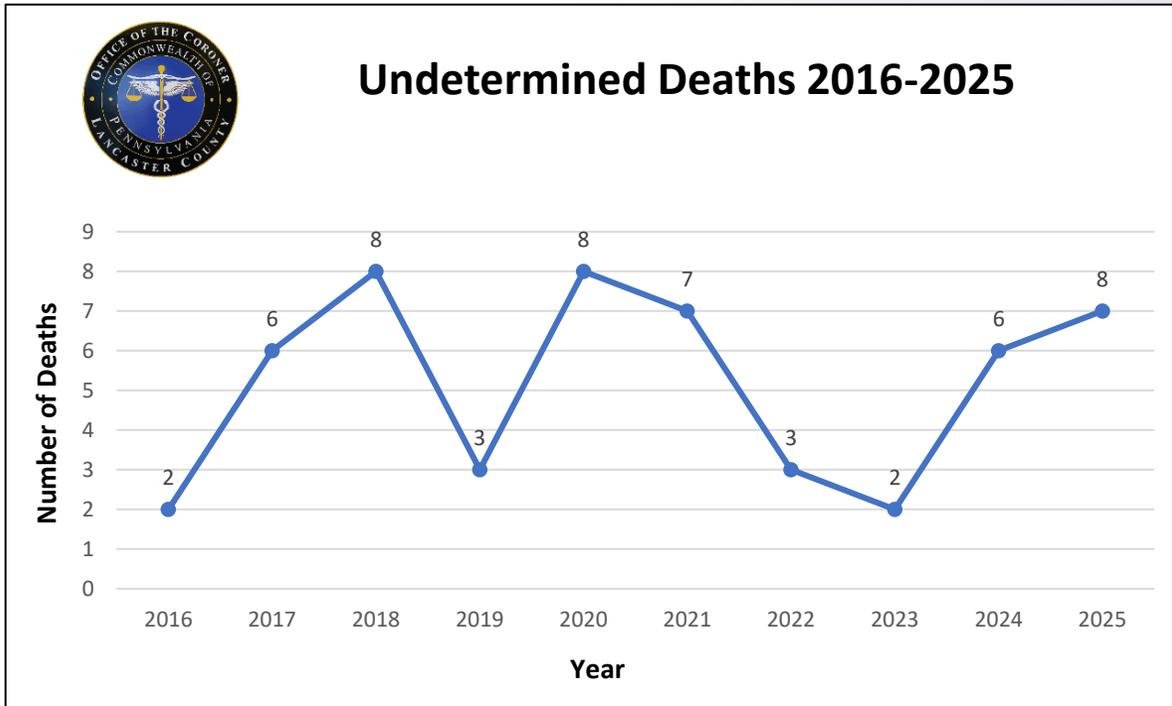
Homicide Deaths



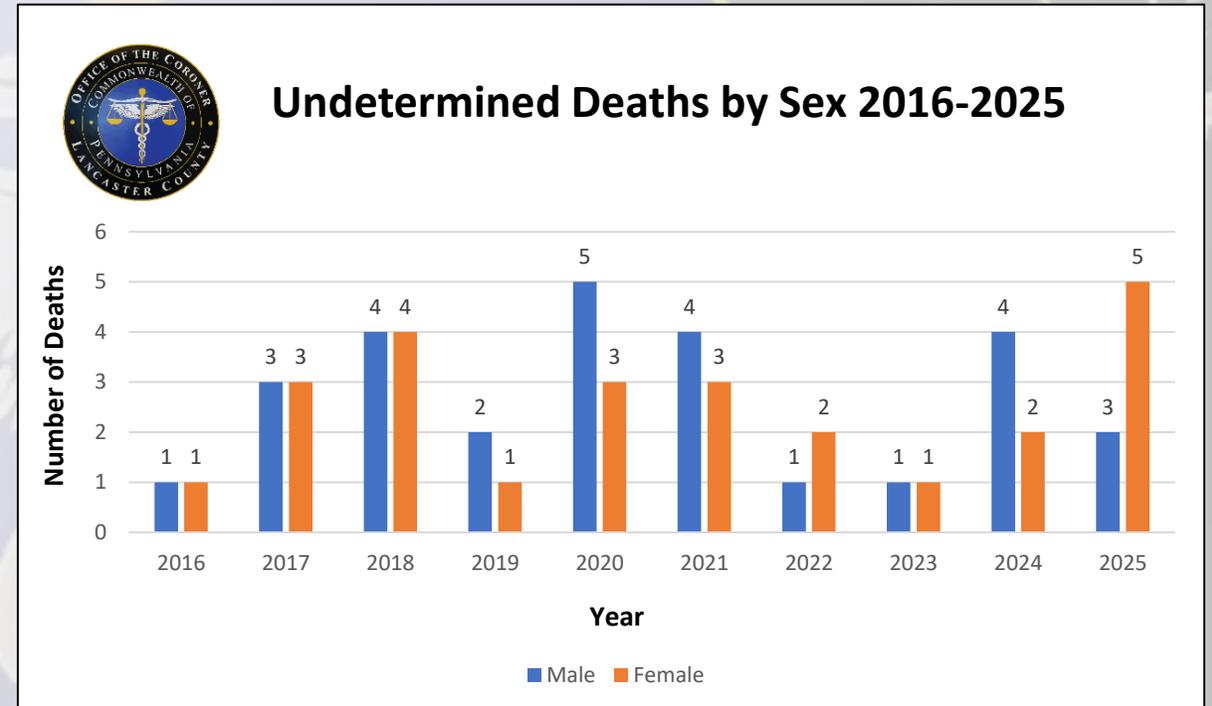
Total number of Homicide deaths investigated from January 2024-December 2025 broken down by age.

Undetermined Deaths

The cause of death may be defined as the disease or injury that resulted in the death, such as myocardial infarction or gunshot wound. The manner of death is a medicolegal term that describes the circumstances of an individual's death and may be designated as natural, accidental, suicide, homicide, or undetermined. Occasionally, coroner's offices encounter cases where the cause of death is apparent, but the evidence supporting the manner of death is equivocal or insufficient to make a determination. The determination of manner of death is an opinion based on the "preponderance of evidence". An example might be a case in which the cause of death is a drug overdose, but from the information available, it is not certain whether the manner of death is accidental or suicide. Therefore, the manner of death may be certified as undetermined.

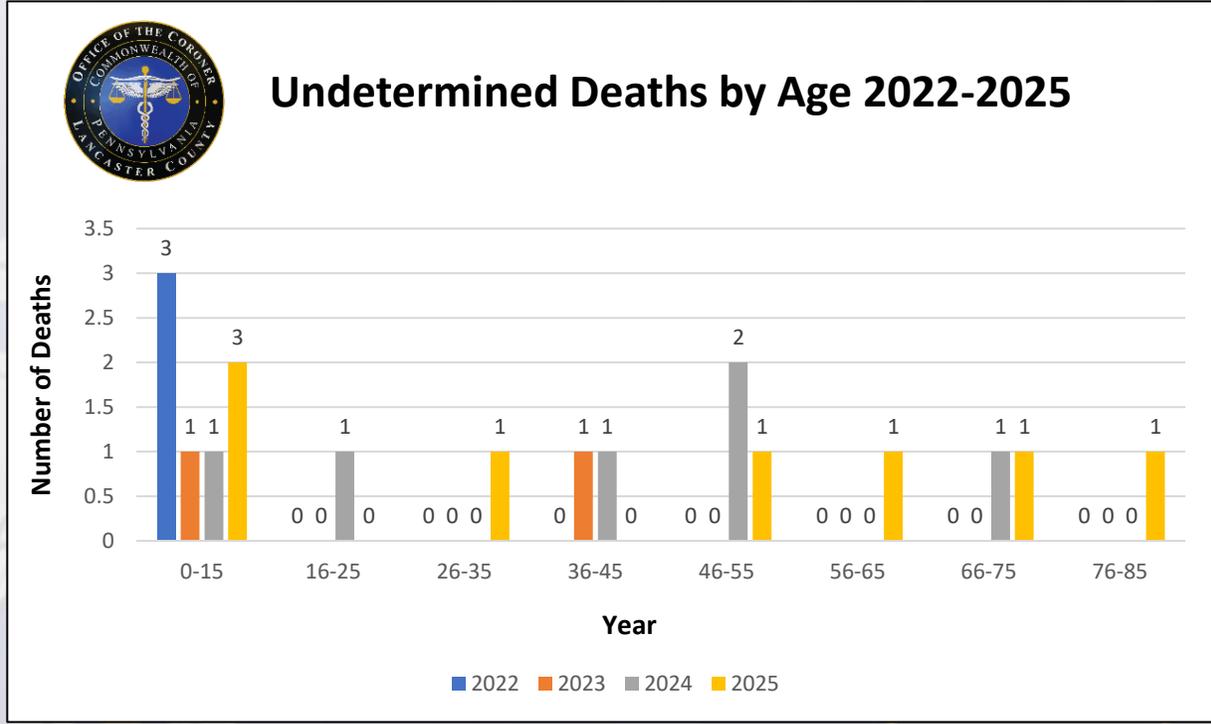
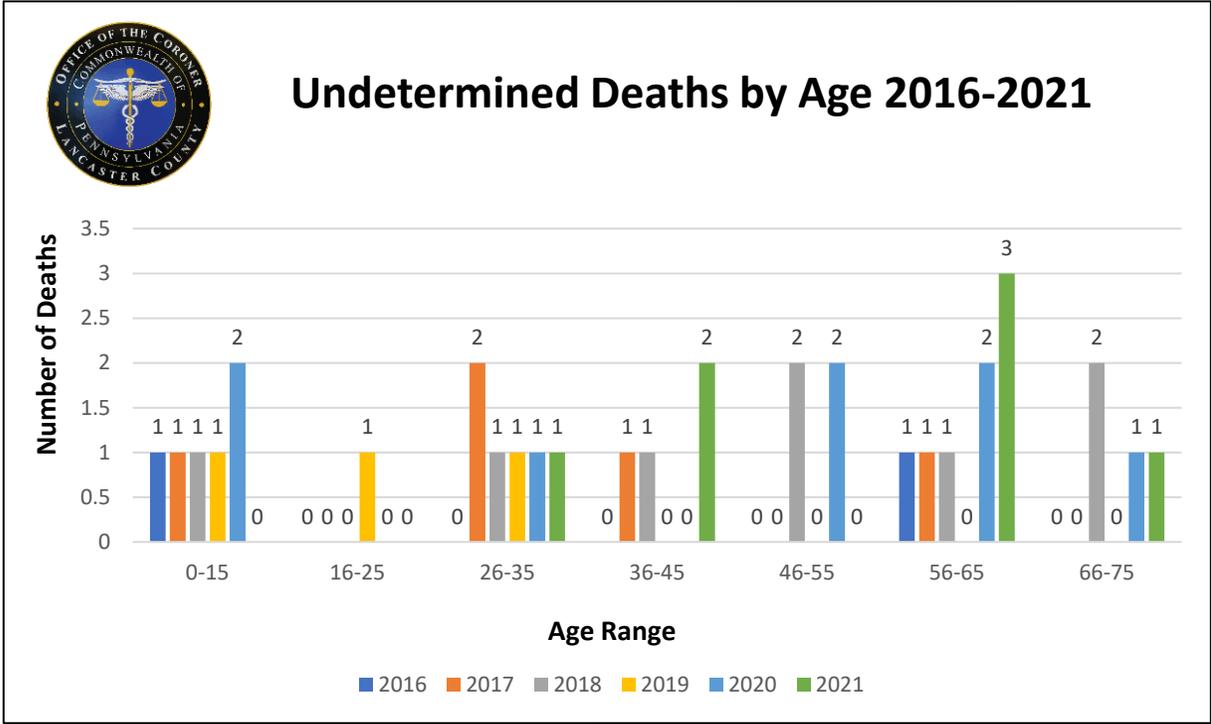


Total number of Undetermined deaths from January 2016-December 2025.



Total number of Undetermined deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025 broken down by sex.

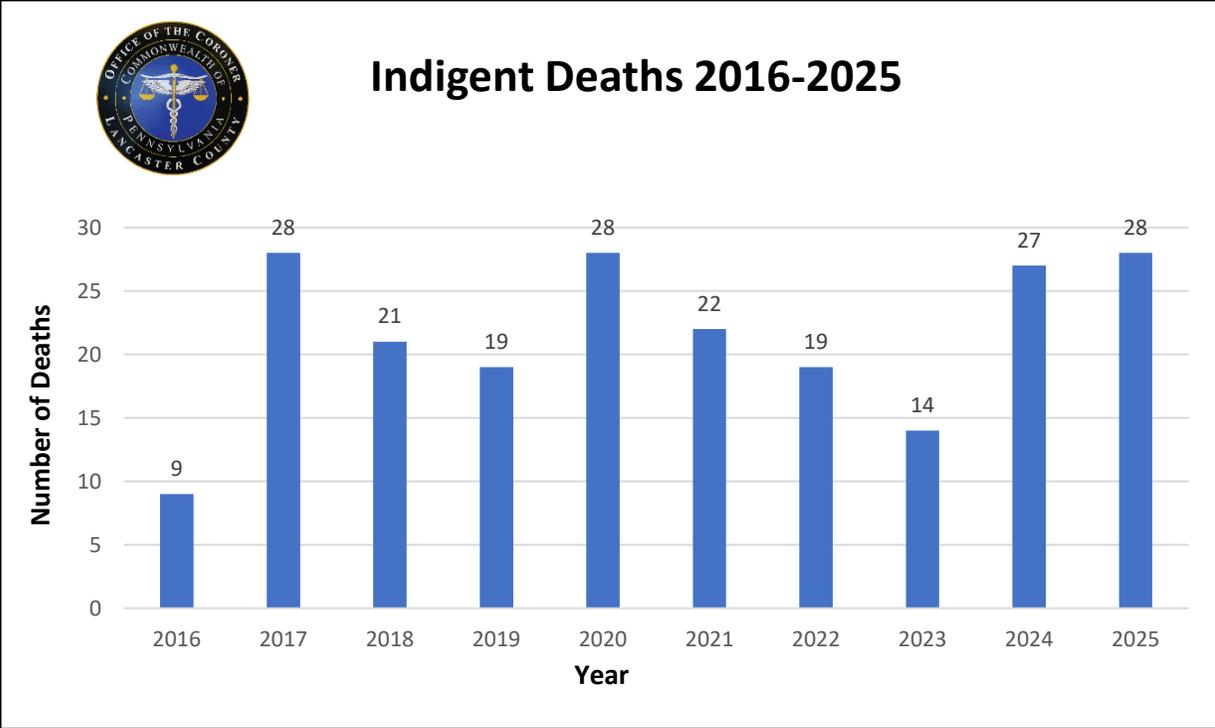
Undetermined Deaths



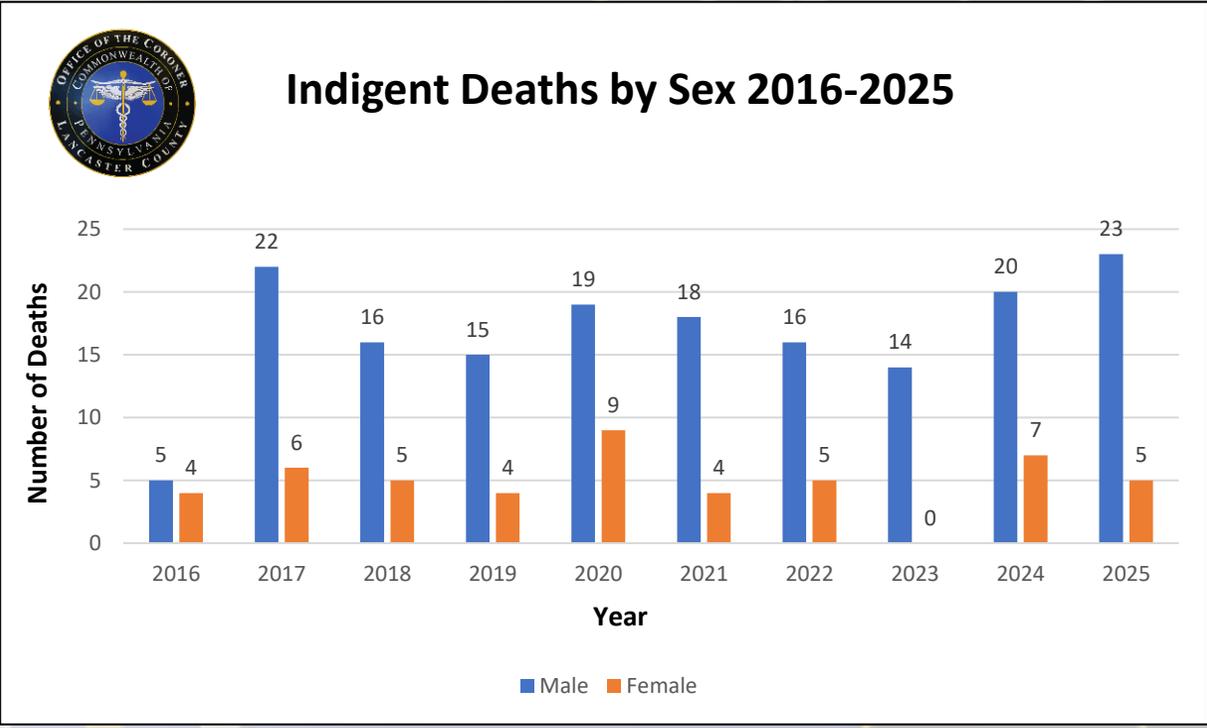
Total number of Undetermined deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025 broken down by age.

Indigent Deaths

If no family or legally authorized individuals are found to claim a decedent or if they are unwilling to claim the decedent and to pay for the final disposition, a decedent will become an indigent or unclaimed body.

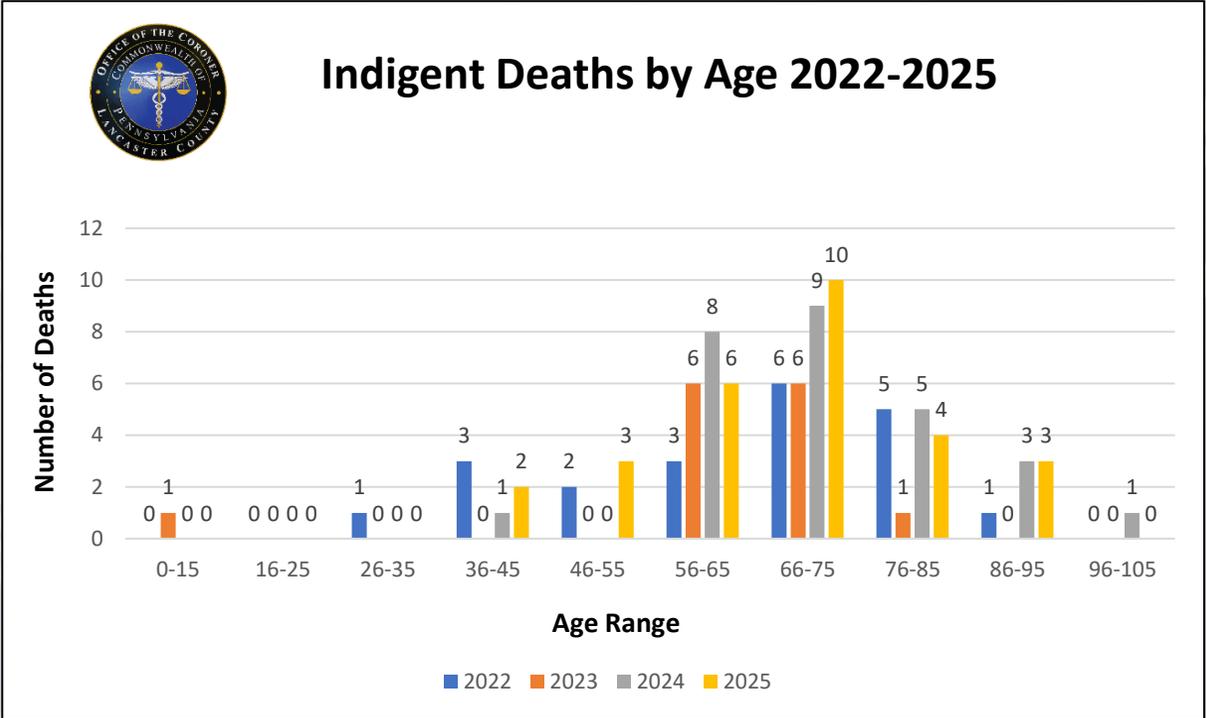
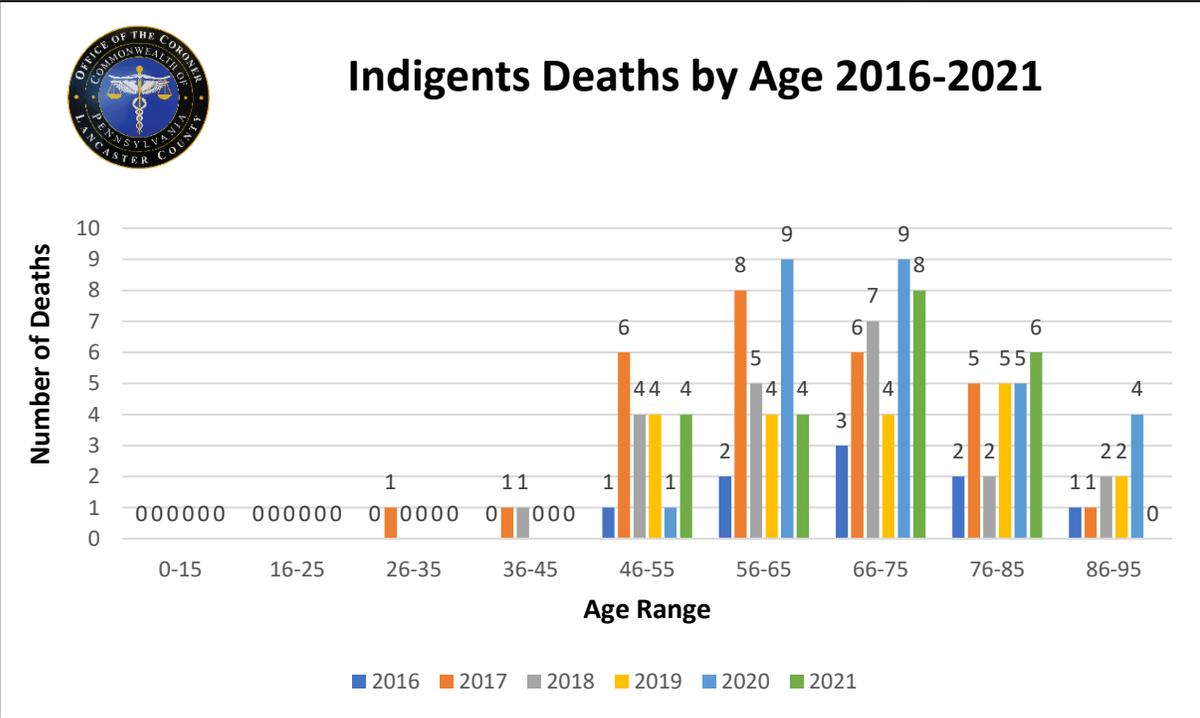


Total number of Indigent deaths from January 2016-December 2025.



Total number of Indigent deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025 broken down by sex.

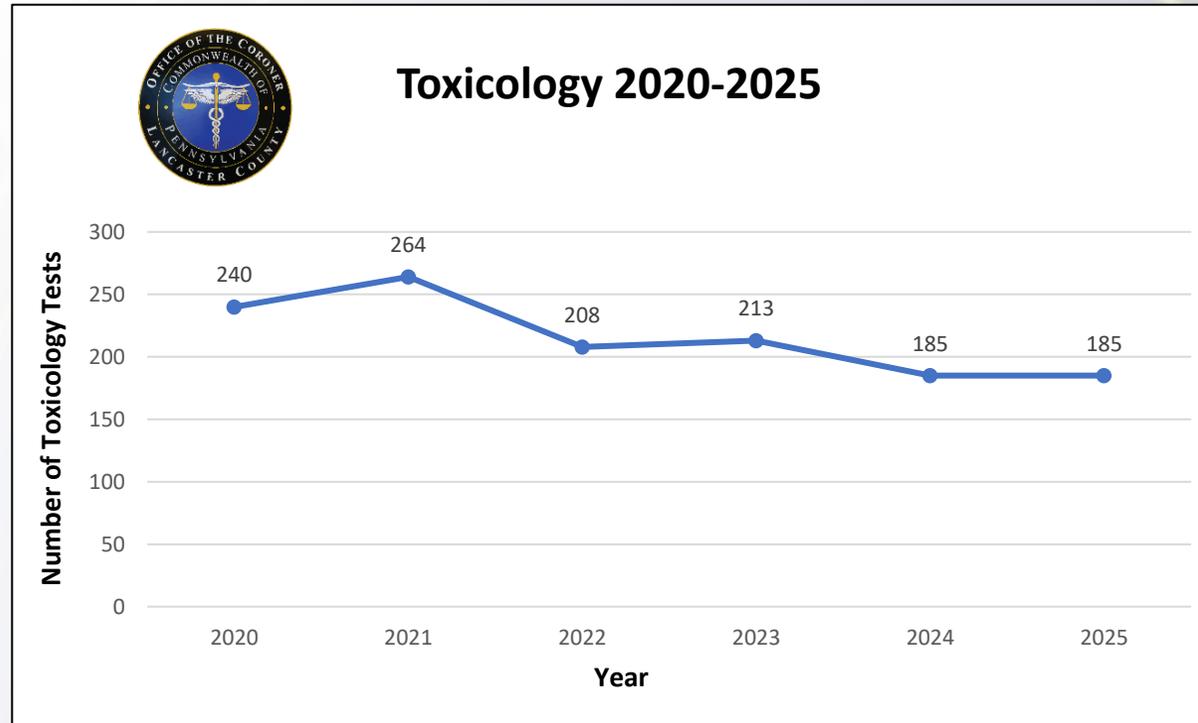
Indigent Deaths



Total number of Indigent deaths investigated from January 2016-December 2025 broken down by age.

Toxicology

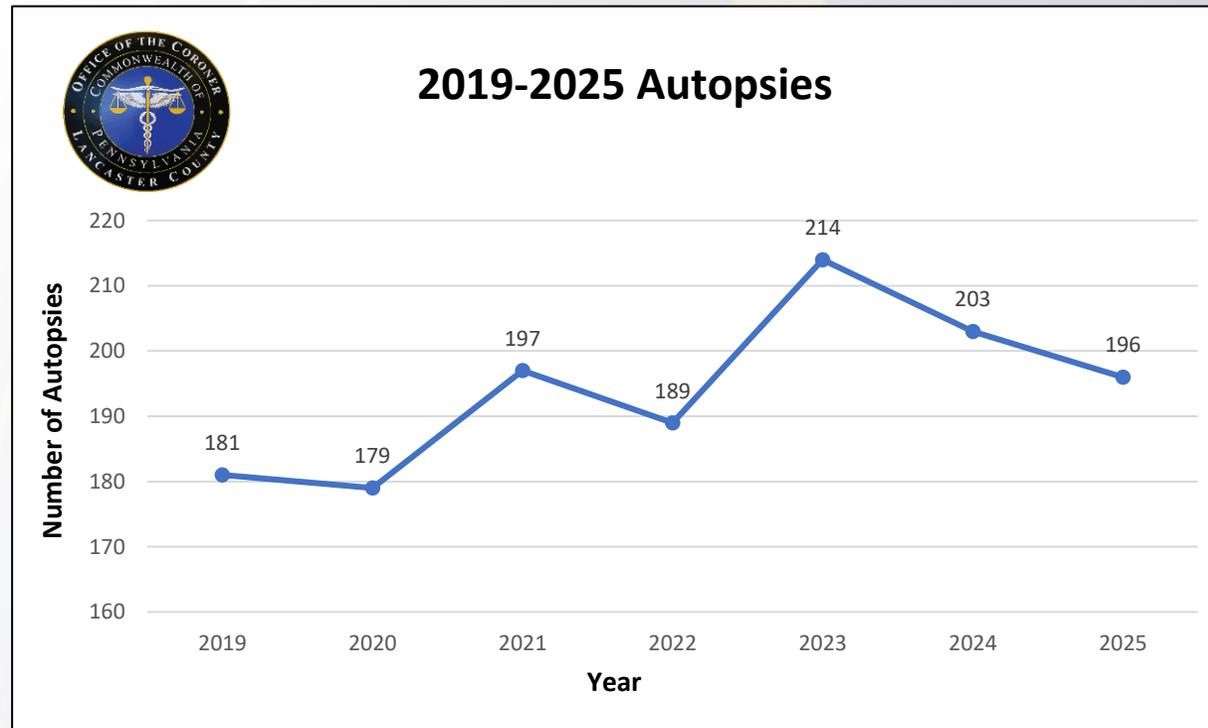
Toxicology is performed on a case-by-case basis and is determined by scene evidence and physical assessments performed by the Coroner's Office.



Number of Toxicology tests performed from January 2020-December 2025.

Autopsies

The Lancaster County Coroner's Office determines the need for an autopsy on a case-by-case basis. In 2025, the office performed 196 autopsies. All autopsies are performed by a board-certified forensic pathologist. There have been no hospital autopsies performed under coroner jurisdiction.



Number of Autopsies performed from January 2019-December 2025.

- Organ and Tissue Referrals

- Organ procurement offices routinely notify the Lancaster County Coroner's Office of all anticipated organ or tissue donors prior to the retrieval process. Investigators from the Coroner's Office review each case before providing the authorization for donation. It is important for both offices to work with each other to ensure the integrity of an investigation.

- Exhumations

- The Lancaster County Coroner's Office does not routinely conduct exhumations. All exhumations are performed on an as needed basis where cause, manner, or identity is in question. In the past 11 years, there have been 3 exhumations.

- Unidentified

- The Coroner's Office has jurisdiction over the death of those who are unidentified and make every effort to confirm an identity. In some cases, an individual's identity remains unknown. At the Lancaster County Coroner's Office, there are 5 total cases of unidentified individuals. The details for each unidentified individual are routinely uploaded to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUS) and the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). This office has had multiple successes in identifying individuals with genetic genealogy. The remaining unidentified cases are currently going through this process.