

Annual
Report

2015

Jefferson County
Coroner/Medical Examiner's
Office



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Published: May 2016

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Introduction

The Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner's Office (JCCMEO) is notified by law enforcement agencies and medical facilities to investigate approximately 25% of the deaths occurring in Jefferson County. Pursuant to State of Alabama, Act No. 79-454, notification is made when there is suspicion of criminal violence or criminal neglect, when death occurs in suspicious or unusual circumstances, when deaths are thought to result from trauma or violence, in any prison or penal institution, when in police custody, or deaths due to disease constituting a hazard to public health when requested in writing by the County Health Officer.

Mission

The mission of the Coroner/Medical Examiner office is to establish the identity of human remains and to determine the cause, manner, and circumstances surrounding death in all sudden and unexpected deaths occurring within Jefferson County, Alabama.

Death Statistics

This report contains aggregate data of the cases investigated by this office. This report does not contain data on all deaths that occurred within Jefferson County, but rather only those deaths that were investigated by the Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner's Office.

You can visit the Alabama Department of Public Health website to obtain data on all deaths that occurred within Jefferson County, Alabama: www.adph.org/healthstats

Death Certificates

The Coroner's Office cannot provide copies of death certificates; death certificates must be obtained through the Jefferson County Department of Health or the State of Alabama Vital Records office.

Jefferson County Department of Health
1400 6th Avenue South
Birmingham, Alabama 35233
(205) 933-9110
www.jcdh.org/CommunityServices/VitalRecords

State of Alabama Vital Records
P.O. Box 5625
Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5625
(334) 206-5418
www.adph.org/vitalrecords

History

Jefferson County operated under an elected coroner system since the county's inception in 1819 until 1931. In a coroner system the County Coroner was elected to office by the citizens of Jefferson County and was typically a lay person with no formal training in medicolegal death investigation.

On May 27, 1931, the office of County Coroner was abolished by Act of State Legislature. The office was subsequently reestablished with the position of County Coroner being an appointed position by the Jefferson County Commission and not an elected position by the citizens of the county. The Act referred to the coroner as the "Agent, County Commission, as Coroner".

In January 1977, by Act of State Legislature, the office of County Coroner and the coroner system in Jefferson County was abolished and the Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner's Office (JCCMEO) was established. This was the end of the coroner system and the beginning of the medical examiner system in Jefferson County. The new law required the Coroner/Medical Examiner of Jefferson County to be a board certified forensic pathologist.

On July 26, 1979, pursuant to State of Alabama Act 79-454, the office of County Coroner in Jefferson County was once again abolished and the Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner's Office (JCCMEO) as it is known today was established. As with the previous Act, the new Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner Act set forth that the Coroner/Medical Examiner shall be an appointed position by the Jefferson County Commission and that the Coroner/Medical Examiner shall be a board certified forensic pathologist. The act also established a new regulatory commission, the "Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner's Commission", to promulgate rules and regulations governing the reviews and investigations of the Coroner/Medical Examiner's Office and the conditions upon which such investigations shall be conducted. The act also retained in the office all the authority vested in coroners by the state laws of Alabama.

The Coroner retained a physical office on the second floor of the [Jefferson County Courthouse](#) and at the [Bessemer Courthouse](#) until 1977, when at that time both offices were consolidated and moved to its current location at [Cooper Green Mercy Health Services](#).

Medicolegal Death Investigation

A medicolegal death investigation is an official investigation or inquest into the manner, cause, and circumstances surrounding death. As it applies a medicolegal death investigation is a combination of medicine and law, with a purpose to answer the questions of death. The answers obtained in these investigations can assist with criminal and civil litigation, insurance claims, the distribution of estates, and the health and safety of the public. These investigations are performed by trained medicolegal death investigators (MDIs) and can represent multiple different disciplines. The MDI investigators can be a coroner, deputy coroner, forensic pathologist, morgue technologist, forensic odontologist, forensic anthropologist, forensic toxicologist, or a criminalist.

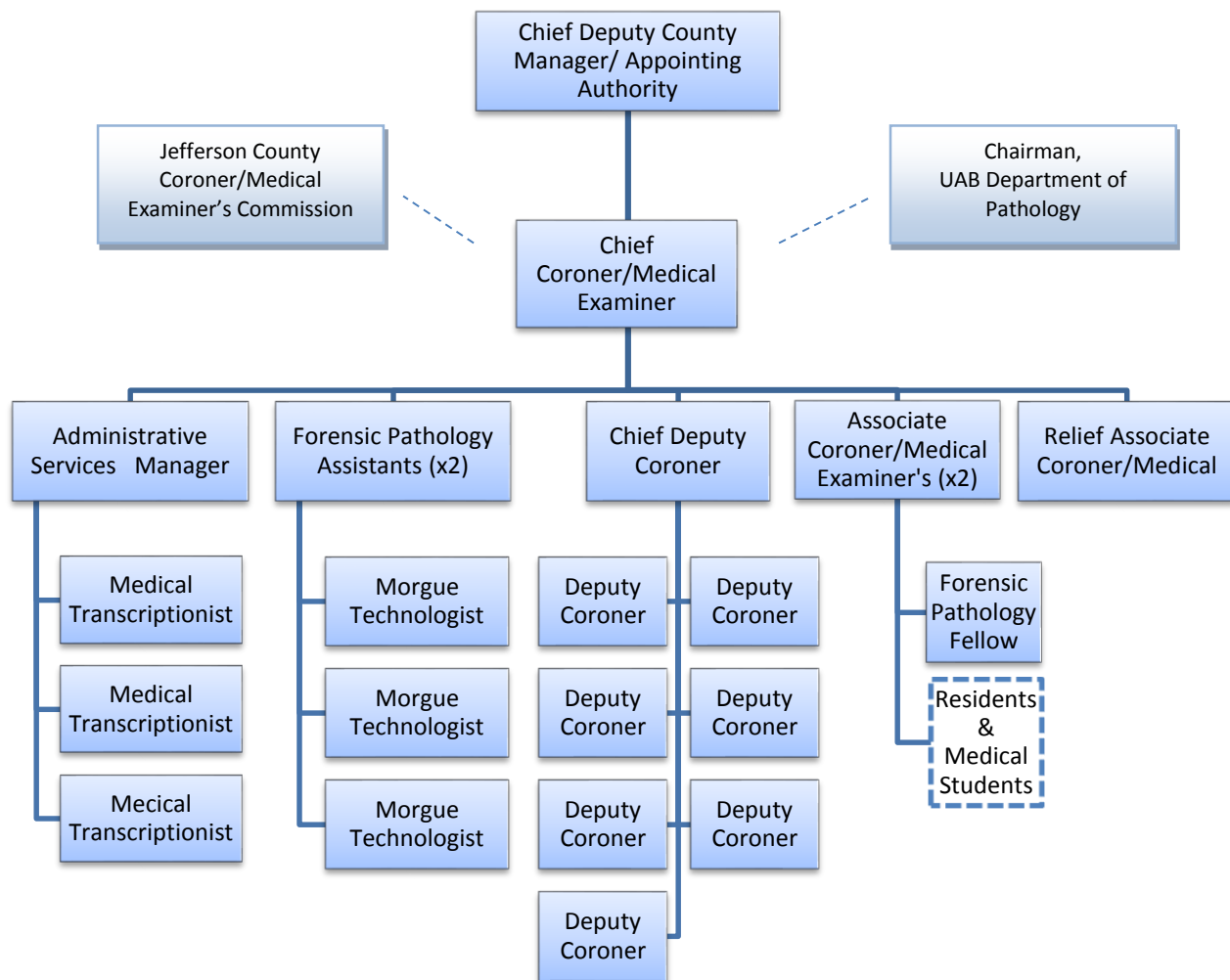
At the JCCMEO these investigations are begun by deputy coroners who are formally trained MDIs. When a death is reported to the JCCMEO it is the responsibility of the deputy coroner to determine if the death falls under the statutory jurisdiction of the JCCMEO and if so, will jurisdiction be assumed or declined. Pursuant to State of Alabama Code 11-5-35 (*Act 2006-581, p. 1527, §6.*) the Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner's Office only has the authority to certify a death if the offense, occurrence, or incident that ultimately resulted in the death occurred within the geographical boundaries of Jefferson County, Alabama. Therefore, if the sequence of events that ultimately resulted in the death began in a county or state other than Jefferson County, Alabama then the coroner's office of that county should be notified of the death.

Declined Jurisdiction: Jurisdiction is declined if investigators (i.e. law enforcement, paramedics, and/or medical staff, and the deputy coroner) find no signs of foul play, injury, and/or evidence of current substance abuse associated with the death and; if the decedent has a documented significant medical history and is currently under the care of a primary care physician.

Assumed Jurisdiction: Jurisdiction is assumed if there is suspicion of criminal violence or criminal neglect, when death occurs in suspicious or unusual circumstances, when deaths are thought to result from trauma or violence, in any prison or penal institution, when in police custody, or a death due to disease constituting a hazard to public health when requested in writing by the County Health Officer.

If jurisdiction is to be assumed a deputy coroner in most cases responds to the scene of the death to begin the investigation. The decedent is transported from the scene to the JCCMEO for examination, which is usually completed within 24 hours from the time of death by one of the forensic pathologist on staff. An examination/autopsy is necessary to accurately determine cause, manner, and circumstances surrounding the death, so to satisfy statutory requirements, for the good of public health, and to assist with potential civil and criminal litigation. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the death and the evidence that is needed to substantiate the death an autopsy may not be performed in every case, but rather a less invasive external examination is performed. The final examination/autopsy report is usually available 4-6 weeks after the date of death.

Organizational Chart



Section 1: Summary Data

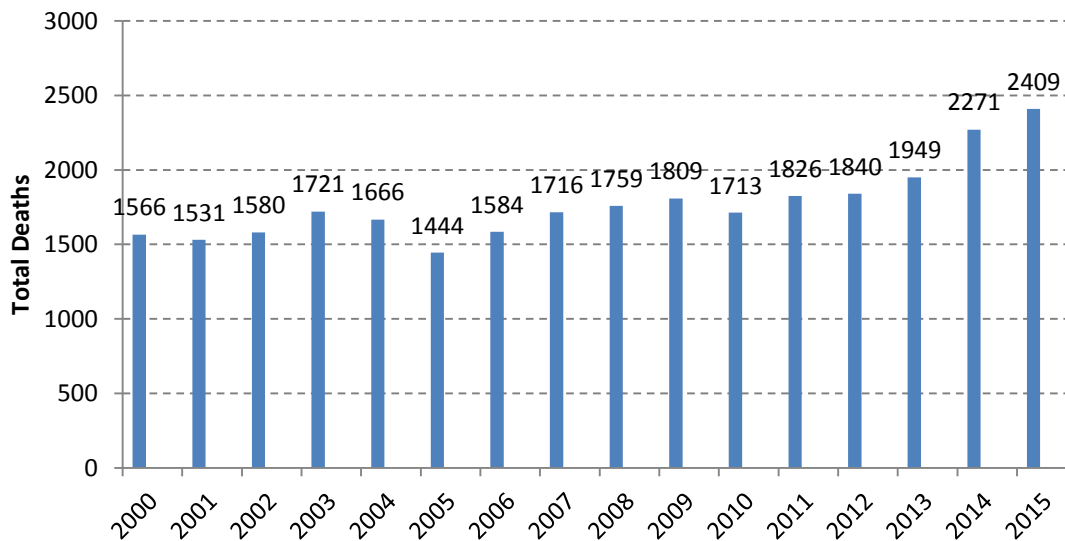
2014-2015 Comparison

Table 1.1: previous year comparison data.

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Total deaths reported to the JCCMEO:	2,271	2,409
Jurisdiction Assumed:	832	906
Accident	397	370
Homicide	90	143
Natural	228	268
Suicide	73	95
Undetermined	44	30
Pending	0	0
Jurisdiction Declined:	1,439	1,503
Natural	779	775
Cremation	395	330
Hospice (began recording data in April 2014)	191	303
Safekeeping	74	95
Non-human	0	0
Death Certificate Reviews of Declined Cases:	116	155
Total bodies transported by JCCMEO:	906	1,001
Examination	832	906
Safekeeping	74	95
Total Examinations:	832	906
Autopsies	644	660
Externals	188	246
Organ/Tissue procurements:	26	26
Organs/tissues	13	12
Corneas	13	14
Toxicology performed:		
Yes	823	885
No	9	21
Total scenes visited by investigators:	638	675
Unclaimed bodies (county burials):	34	37
Exhumations:	0	8
Unidentified remains (cumulative total):	52	51

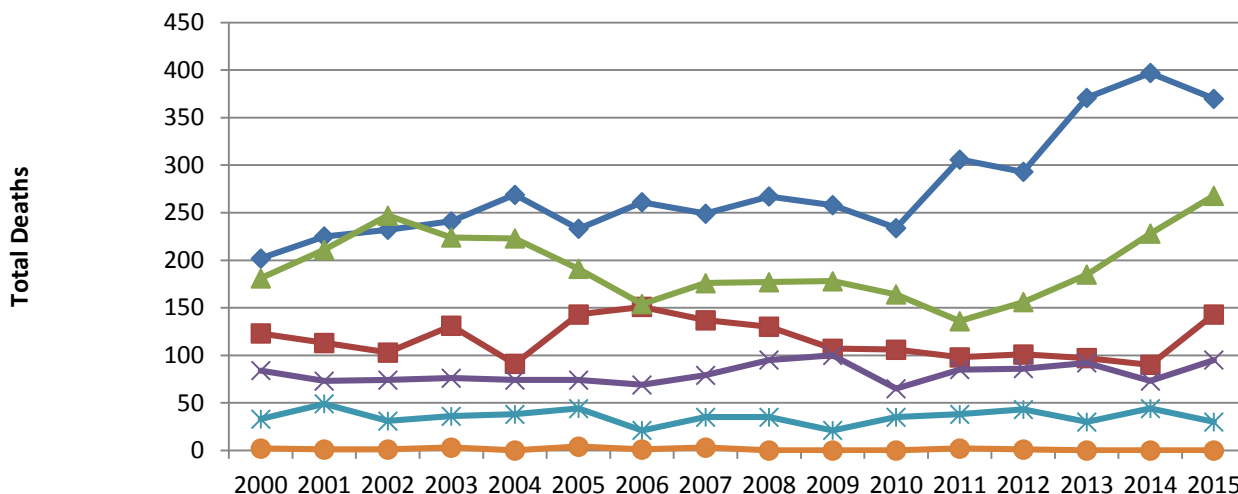
Historical Summary: Year of Death, 2000-2015

Figure 1.1: represents the total number of cases reported to the JCCMEO by year of death.



Historical Summary: Manner of Death, 2000-2015

Figure 1.2: represents the total number of cases by manner of death, includes only Assumed cases.



	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
◆ Accident	202	225	232	241	269	233	261	249	267	258	234	306	293	371	397	370
■ Homicide	123	113	103	131	91	143	151	137	130	107	106	98	101	97	90	143
▲ Natural	181	211	247	224	223	191	154	176	177	178	164	136	156	185	228	268
× Suicide	84	73	74	76	74	74	69	79	95	100	65	85	86	92	73	95
* Undetermined	33	49	31	36	38	44	21	35	35	21	35	38	43	30	44	30
● Pending	2	1	1	3	0	4	1	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0

Section 2: 2015 Total Case Data

General Statistics and Notable Trends

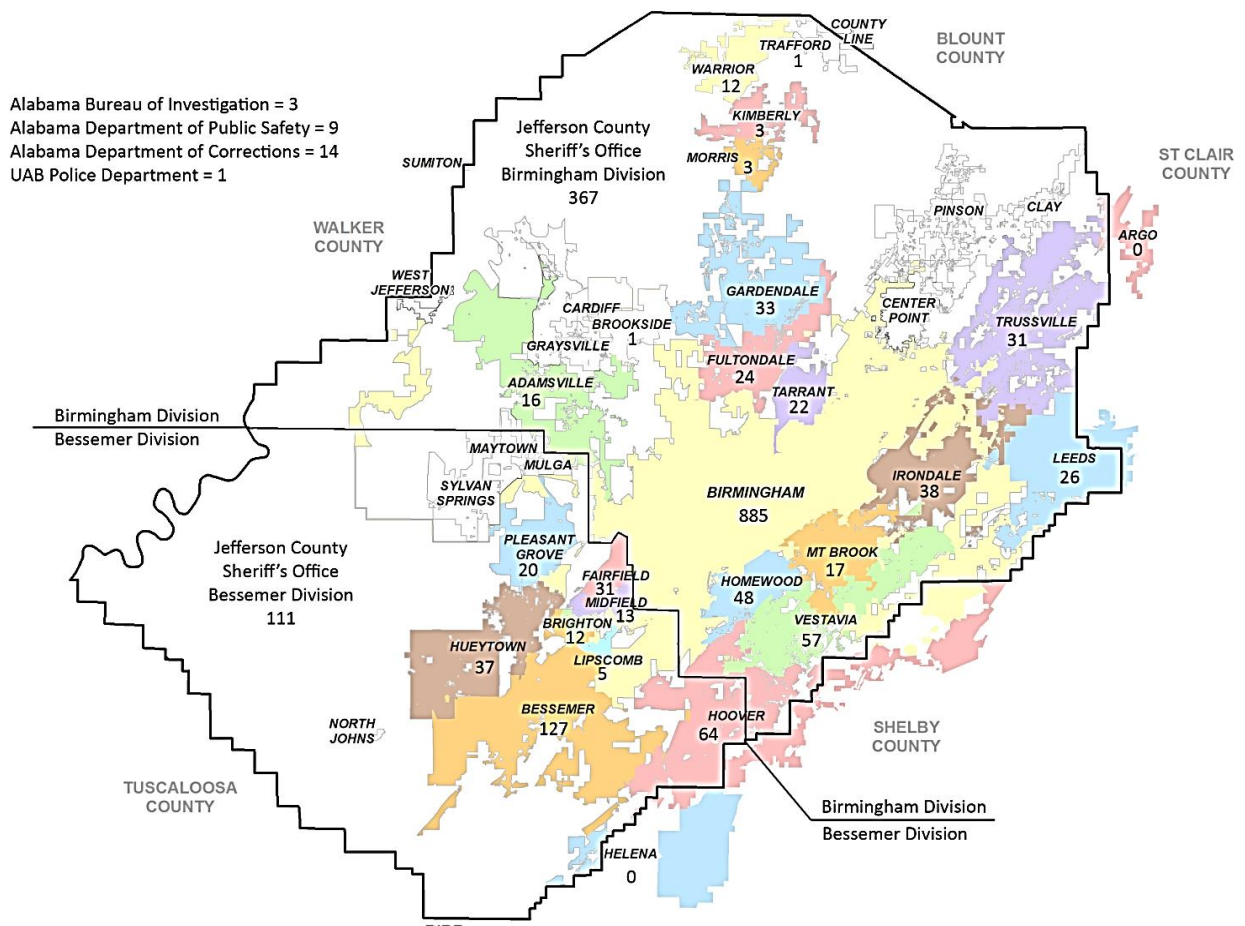
There was a 6% increase in the total number of deaths reported to the JCCMEO this past year, from 2,271 deaths in 2014 to 2,409 deaths in 2015.

There was an 8.8% increase in the total number of deaths where jurisdiction was assumed, from 832 cases in 2014 to 906 cases in 2015; resulting in a proportional 8.8% increase in the number of examinations and the number of bodies transported.

The total number of homicide, natural, and suicide deaths increased in 2015 compared to 2014, while accidents and undetermined deaths decreased.

Map: Total Deaths Reported by Law Enforcement Agency and Jurisdiction, 2015

Figure 2.1: N=2,079, represents total deaths reported, by law enforcement jurisdiction; includes Assumed, Declined, Hospice, and Safekeeping cases.



Total Deaths Reported by Law Enforcement Agency and Jurisdiction, 2015

Table 2.1: N=2,079, represents the total deaths reported to the JCCMEO. Table includes Assumed, Declined, Hospice, and Safekeeping cases and, excludes Cremations which are reported to the JCCMEO by funeral homes.

<u>Law Enforcement Agency</u>	<u>Assumed</u>	<u>Declined</u>	<u>Hospice</u>	<u>Safekeeping</u>	<u>Total</u>
Alabama Bureau of Investigation	3	0	0	0	3
Alabama Dept. of Public Safety	9	0	0	0	9
Alabama Dept. of Corrections	14	0	0	0	14
Adamsville Police Department	5	8	2	1	16
Argo Police Department	0	0	0	0	0
Bessemer Police Department	40	56	20	11	127
Birmingham Police Department	399	330	109	47	885
Birmingham Division	392	314	107	43	856
Bessemer Division	7	16	2	4	29
Brighton Police Department	10	2	0	0	12
Brookside Police Department	0	1	0	0	1
Fairfield Police Department	14	12	4	1	31
Fultondale Police Department	15	5	4	0	24
Gardendale Police Department	9	19	5	0	33
Helena Police Department	0	0	0	0	0
Homewood Police Department	30	14	2	2	48
Hoover Police Department	36	24	2	2	64
Birmingham Division	28	20	2	2	52
Bessemer Division	8	4	0	0	12
Hueytown Police Department	14	17	2	4	37
Irondale Police Department	18	9	9	2	38
Jefferson County Sheriff's Office	203	180	81	14	478
Birmingham Division	149	140	66	12	367
Bessemer Division	54	40	15	2	111
Kimberly Police Department	0	0	1	2	3
Leeds Police Department	12	7	7	0	26
Lipscomb Police Department	3	1	1	0	5
Midfield Police Department	6	5	2	0	13
Morris Police Department	1	2	0	0	3
Mountain Brook Police Department	5	7	4	1	17
Pleasant Grove Police Department	10	8	0	2	20
Tarrant Police Department	9	10	3	0	22
Trafford Police Department	0	1	0	0	1
Trussville Police Department	19	10	1	1	31
UAB Police Department	0	1	0	0	1
Vestavia Hills Police Department	17	28	11	1	57
Warrior Police Department	5	5	2	0	12
Totals:	906	775	303	95	2,079

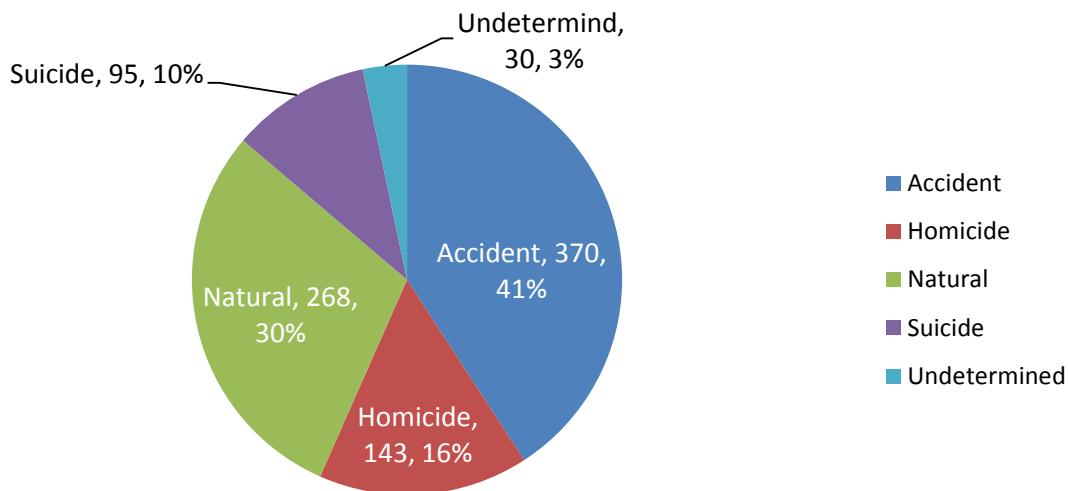
Total Assumed Cases by Law Enforcement Agency and Manner of Death, 2015

Table 2.2: N=906, represents all Assumed cases by law enforcement agency and manner of death.

<u>Law Enforcement Agency</u>	<u>Accidental</u>	<u>Homicide</u>	<u>Natural</u>	<u>Suicide</u>	<u>Undetermined</u>	<u>Total</u>
Alabama Bureau of Investigation	0	2	1	0	0	3
Alabama Dept. of Public Safety	9	0	0	0	0	9
Alabama Dept. of Corrections	0	1	10	3	0	14
Adamsville Police Department	4	0	0	1	0	4
Argo Police Department	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bessemer Police Department	18	9	10	3	0	40
Birmingham Police Department	155	92	115	23	14	399
Birmingham Division	151	89	115	23	14	392
Bessemer Division	4	3	0	0	0	7
Brighton Police Department	2	6	2	0	0	10
Brookside Police Department	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fairfield Police Department	4	4	6	0	0	14
Fultondale Police Department	8	1	6	0	0	15
Gardendale Police Department	2	0	5	2	0	9
Helena Police Department	0	0	0	0	0	0
Homewood Police Department	16	1	11	2	0	30
Hoover Police Department	15	4	10	7	0	36
Birmingham Division	14	4	6	4	0	28
Bessemer Division	1	0	4	3	0	8
Hueytown Police Department	9	0	2	2	1	14
Irondale Police Department	5	1	9	3	0	18
Jefferson County Sheriff's Office	93	14	47	38	11	203
Birmingham Division	70	9	36	28	6	149
Bessemer Division	23	5	11	10	5	54
Kimberly Police Department	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leeds Police Department	4	1	6	1	0	12
Lipscomb Police Department	0	2	0	1	0	3
Midfield Police Department	2	1	3	0	0	6
Morris Police Department	1	0	0	0	0	1
Mountain Brook Police Department	1	0	2	1	1	5
Pleasant Grove Police Department	5	0	4	1	0	10
Tarrant Police Department	2	3	3	0	1	9
Trafford Police Department	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trussville Police Department	7	1	5	5	1	19
UAB Police Department	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vestavia Hills Police Department	7	0	8	2	0	17
Warrior Police Department	2	0	2	0	1	5
Totals:	370	143	268	95	30	906

Percentage of Assumed Cases by Manner of Death, 2015

Figure 2.2: N=906, represents number and percentage of cases by manner of death, includes only Assumed jurisdiction.



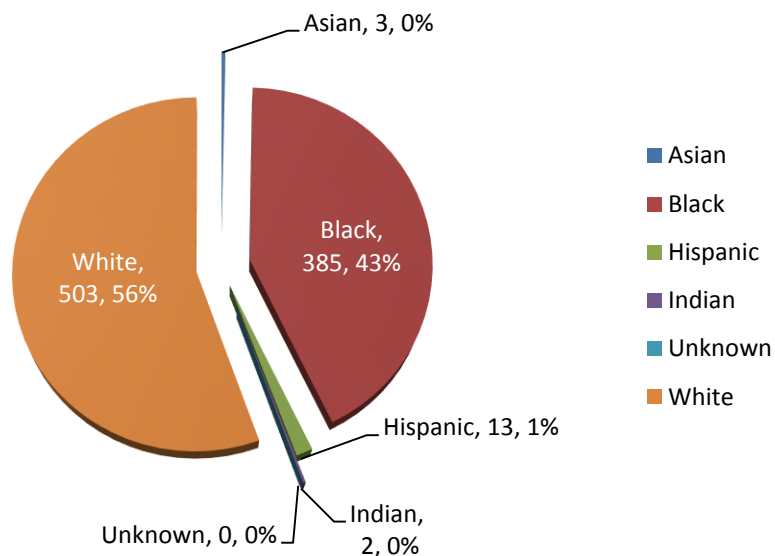
Total Assumed Cases by Manner of Death and Type of Examination, 2015

Table 2.3: N=906, represents all Assumed cases by manner of death and type of examination.

Examination	Accident / %	Homicide / %	Natural / %	Suicide / %	Undetermined / %	Total
Autopsy	281 / 75.9%	141 / 98.6%	178 / 66.4%	32 / 33.6%	28 / 93.3	660
External	89 / 24.0%	2 / 1.3%	90 / 33.5%	63 / 66.3%	2 / 6.6%	246
Total	370	143	268	95	30	906

Total Assumed Cases by Race, 2015

Figure 2.3: N=906, represents all Assumed cases by race, with totals and percentages.



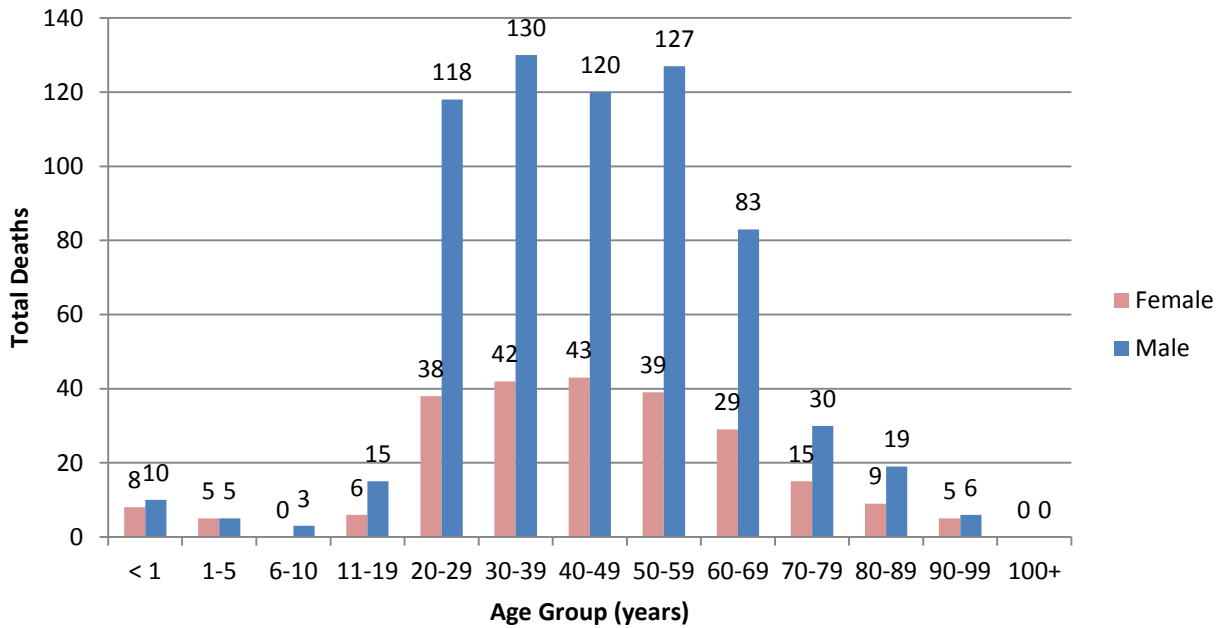
Total Assumed Cases by Race and Manner of Death, 2015

Table 2.4: N=906, represents all Assumed cases by race and manner of death.

Race	Accident	Homicide	Natural	Suicide	Undetermined	Total
Asian	2	0	1	0	0	3
Black	125	116	118	12	14	385
Hispanic	5	4	2	1	1	13
Indian	0	0	1	0	1	2
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	238	23	146	82	14	503
Total	370	143	268	95	30	906

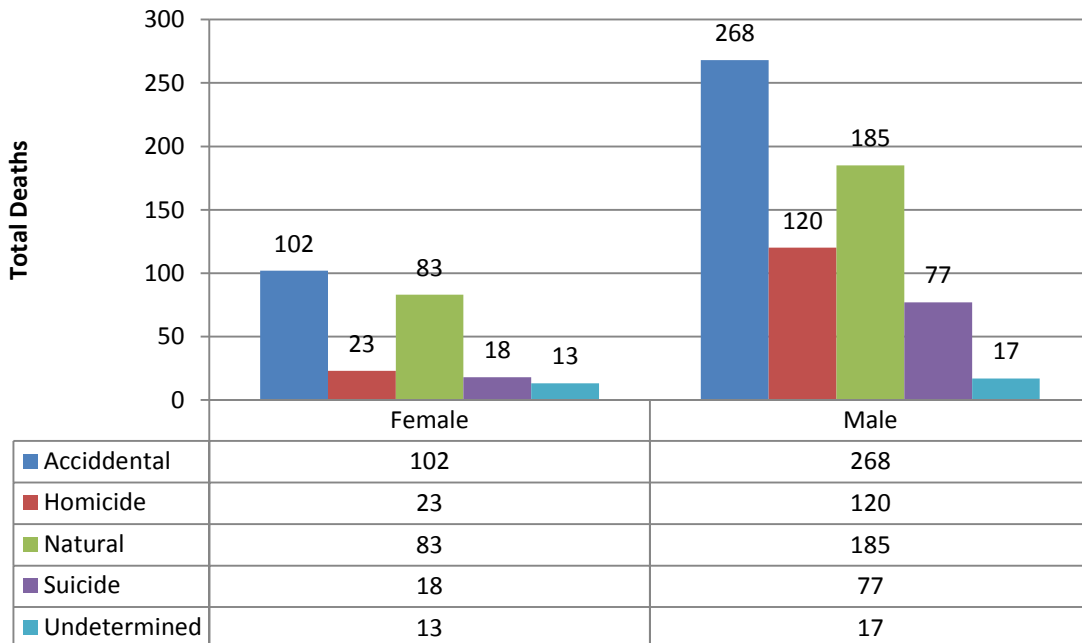
Total Assumed Cases by Gender and Age Group, 2015

Figure 2.4: N=906, represents all Assumed cases by gender and age group.



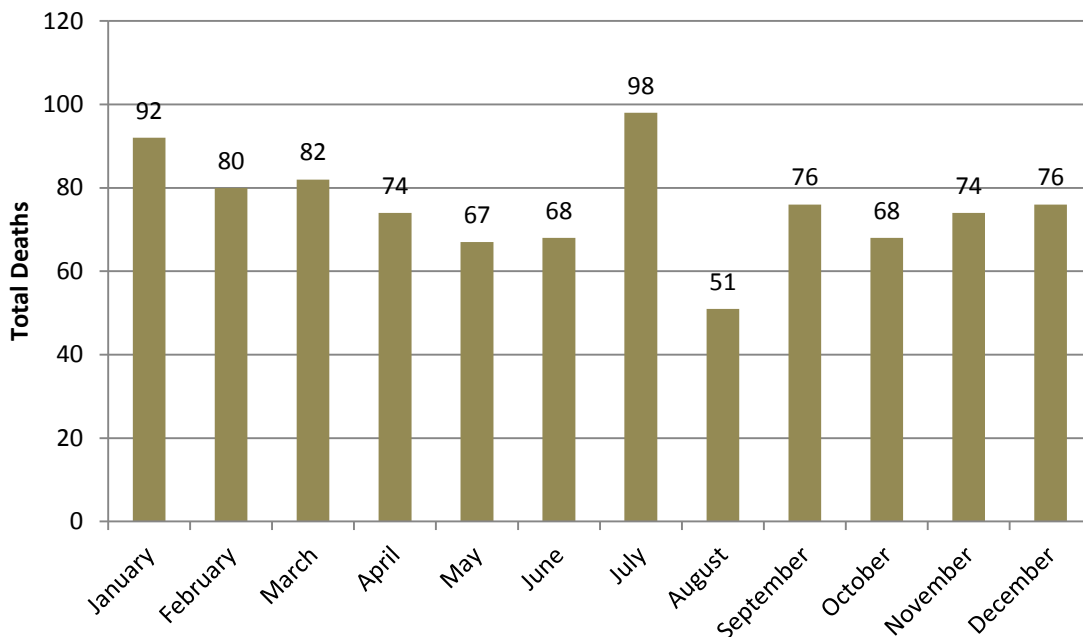
Total Assumed Cases by Gender and Manner of Death, 2015

Figure 2.5: N=906, represents all Assumed cases by gender and manner of death.



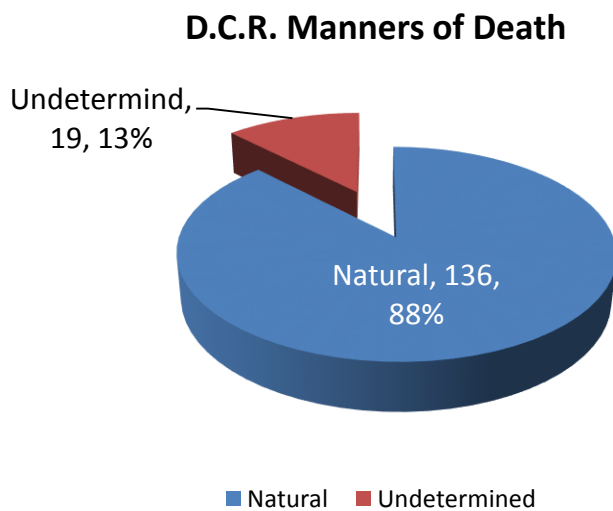
Total Assumed Cases by Month of Death, 2015

Figure 2.6: N=906, represents all Assumed cases by month of death.



Death Certificate Reviews of Declined Cases, 2015

Figure 2.7: N=155, represents all death certificate reviews (D.C.R.) of declined jurisdiction cases, by manner of death.



Section 3: Manner of Death

Accident

Accidental deaths accounted for 41.0% of the deaths investigated by the JCCMEO in 2015, and is the largest percentage of all manners of death.

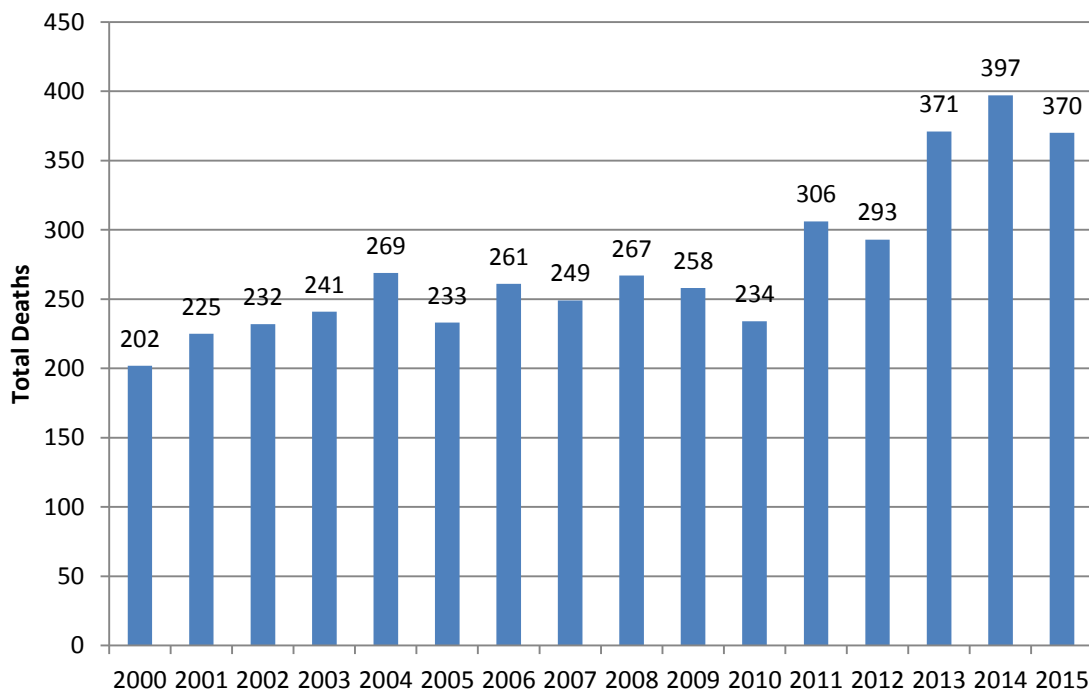
There was a 6.8% decrease in the total number of accidental deaths, from 397 deaths in 2014 to 370 deaths in 2015, and is the third highest year since 2000.

Drug deaths were the most common cause of accidental death in 2015 accounting for 57.8% of the deaths, followed by motor vehicle deaths at 28.3% of the deaths.

The most common race was white representing 64.3% of the accidental deaths, while male was the most common gender representing 72.4% of the accidental deaths.

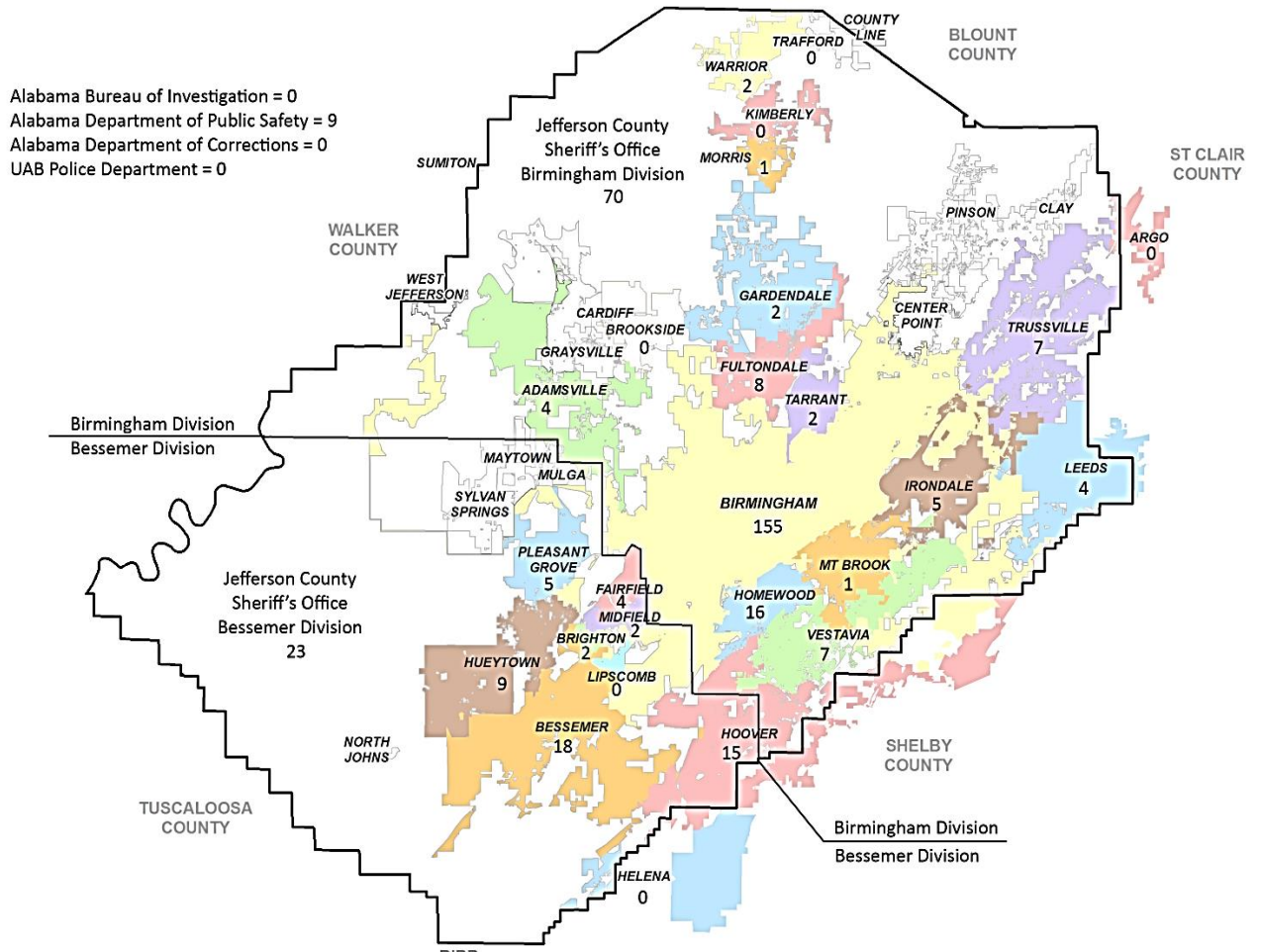
Total Number of Accidental Deaths by Year of Death 2000-2015

Figure 3.1: represents all accidental deaths investigated by the JCCMEO.



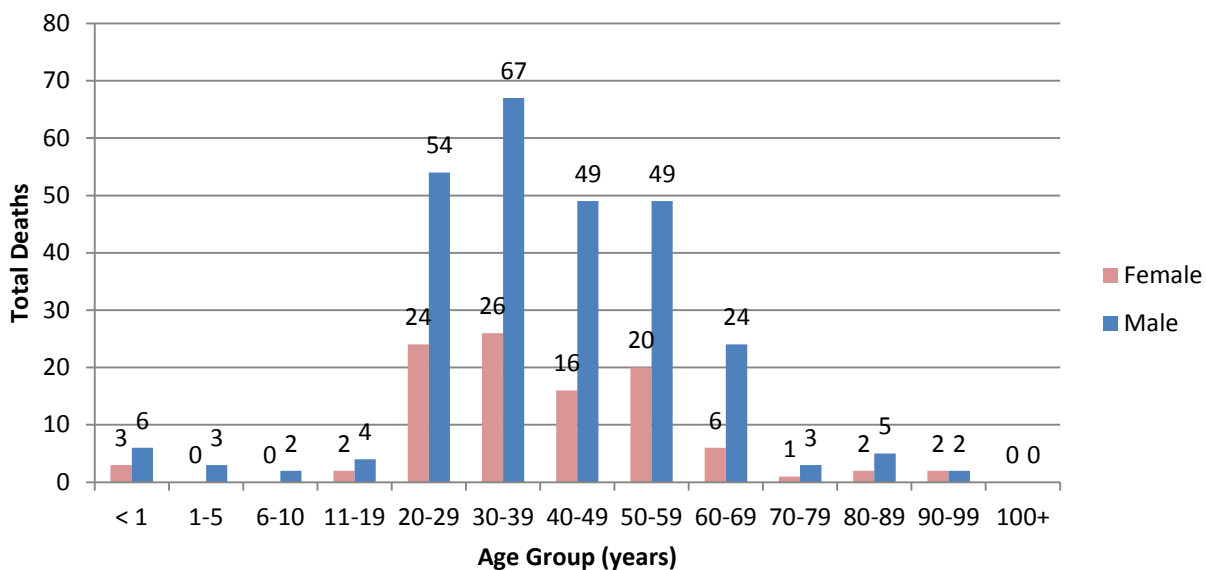
Total Number of Accidental Deaths by Law Enforcement Agency, 2015

Figure 3.2: N=370, represents all accidental deaths by law enforcement agency.



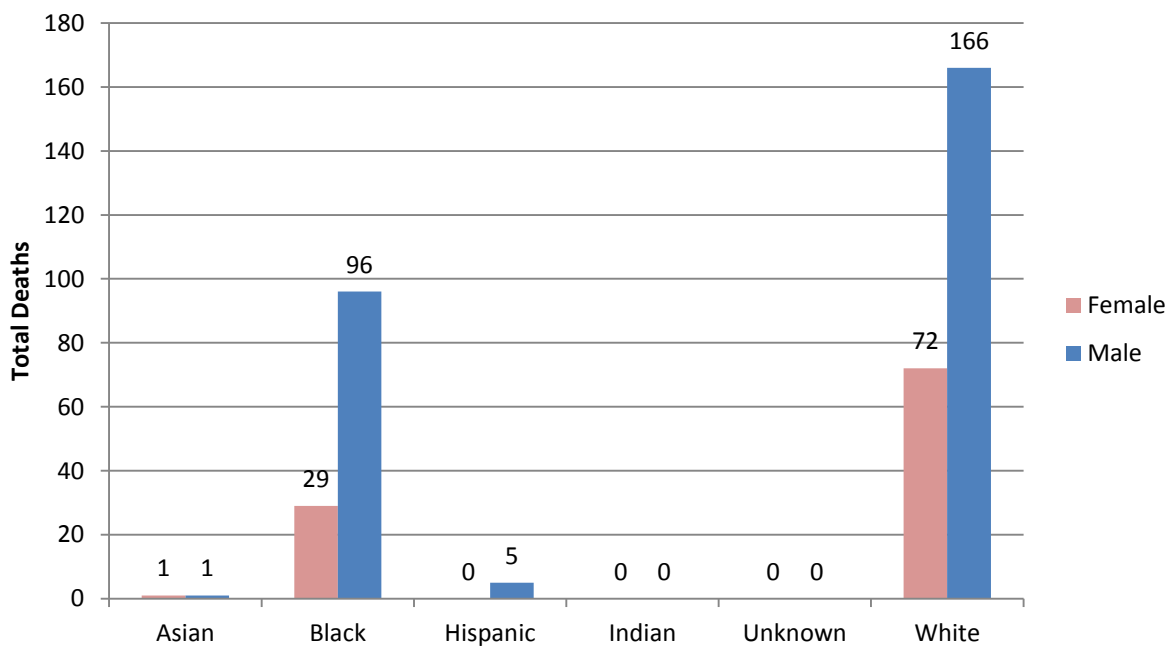
Total Number of Accidental Deaths by Gender and Age Group, 2015

Figure 3.3: N=370, represents all accidental deaths by gender and age group.



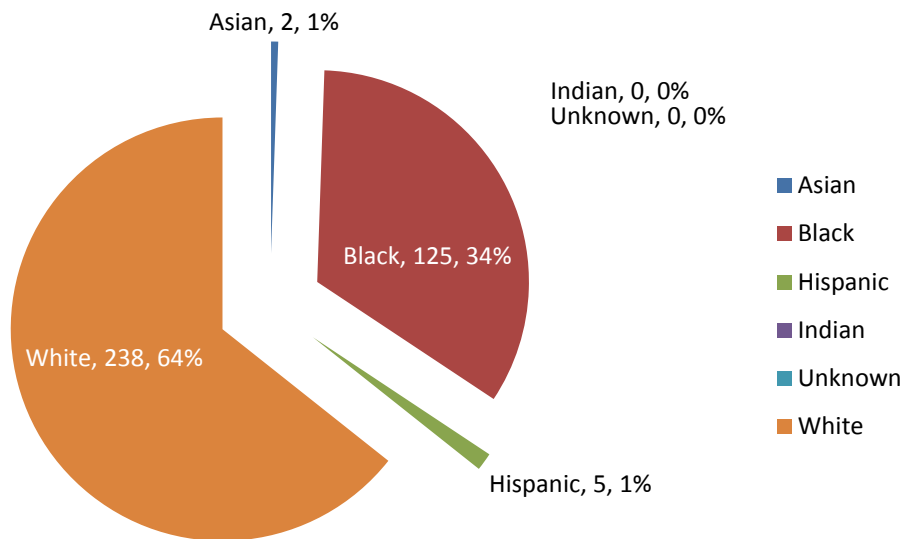
Total Number of Accidental Deaths by Gender and Race, 2015

Figure 3.4: N=370, represents all accidental deaths by gender and race.



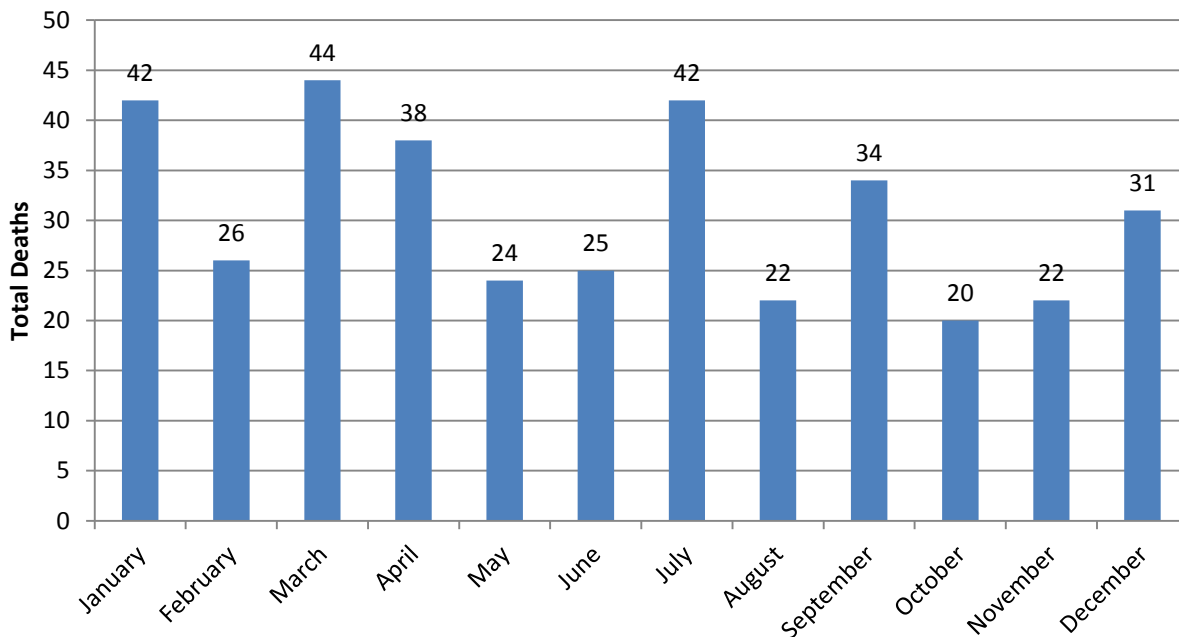
Percentage of Accidental Deaths by Race, 2015

Figure 3.5: N=370, represents all accidental deaths by race.



Total Number of Accidental Deaths by Month of Death, 2015

Figure 3.6: N=370, represents all Accidental deaths by month of death.



Total Number of Accidental Deaths by Means of Death, 2015

Table 3.1: N=370, represents all Accidental deaths by means of death.

Means of Death	Total
Alcohol (ethanol)	5
Asphyxia:	
Food	2
Pillow	1
Pipe	1
Tree	1
Walker	1
Carbon Monoxide:	
Generator	1
Co-Sleeping:	
Bed	6
Couch	2
Drowning:	
Bathtub	2
Lake	1
Pool	1
Pond	1
Drug:	
Illicit	130
Prescription medication	10
Prescription opioid	73
Fall:	
Balcony	1
Bed	1
Floor	2
Hill	1
Stairs	1
Table	1
Wall	1
Fire:	
Apartment	1
Home	12
Firearm	1
Heat (thermal burns)	1
Huffing (aerosol)	1
Motor-vehicle:	
Bicycle	0
Single vehicle	38
Multiple vehicles	43
Train	3
Pedestrian:	
Motor vehicle	22
Train	2
Other	5
Total	370

Homicide

Homicides accounted for 15.78% of the deaths investigated by the JCCMEO in 2015.

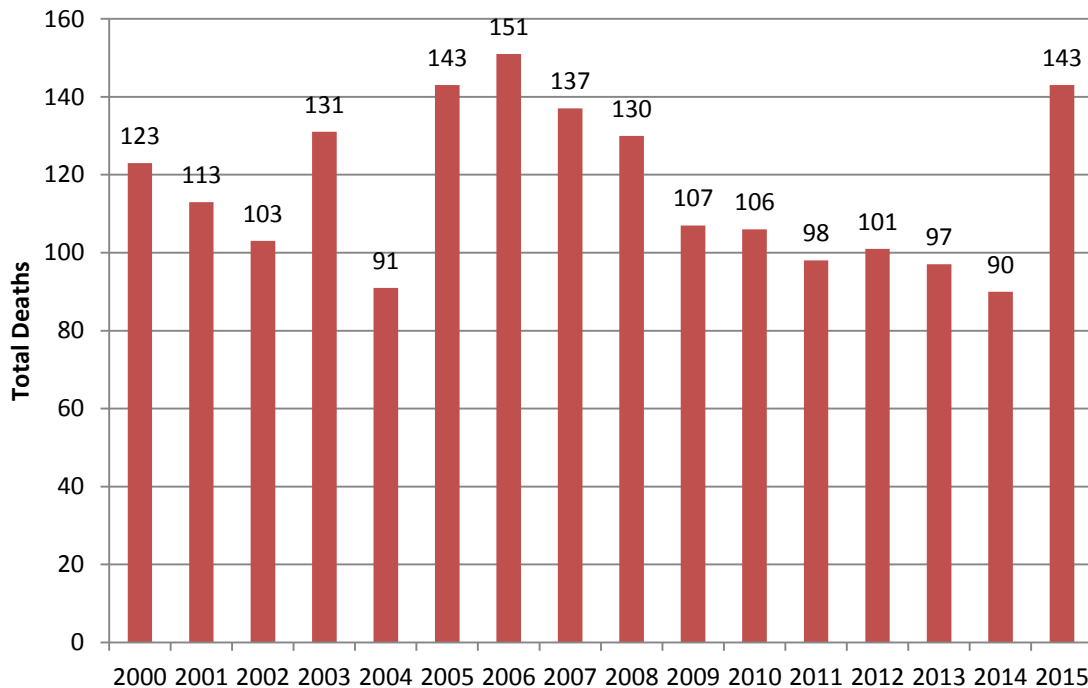
There was a 58.8% increase in the total number of homicides, from 90 deaths in 2014 to 143 deaths in 2015; ending a general decline in homicides that began in 2007 and, in the past 15 years is only surpassed by 151 homicides recorded in 2006.

Death due to firearms was the most common cause of homicide in 2015 accounting for 88.1% of the deaths, followed by both blunt and sharp force deaths accounting for 4.8% of the deaths respectively.

The most common race was black representing 81.1% of the homicides, while males were the most common gender representing 83.9% of homicide deaths.

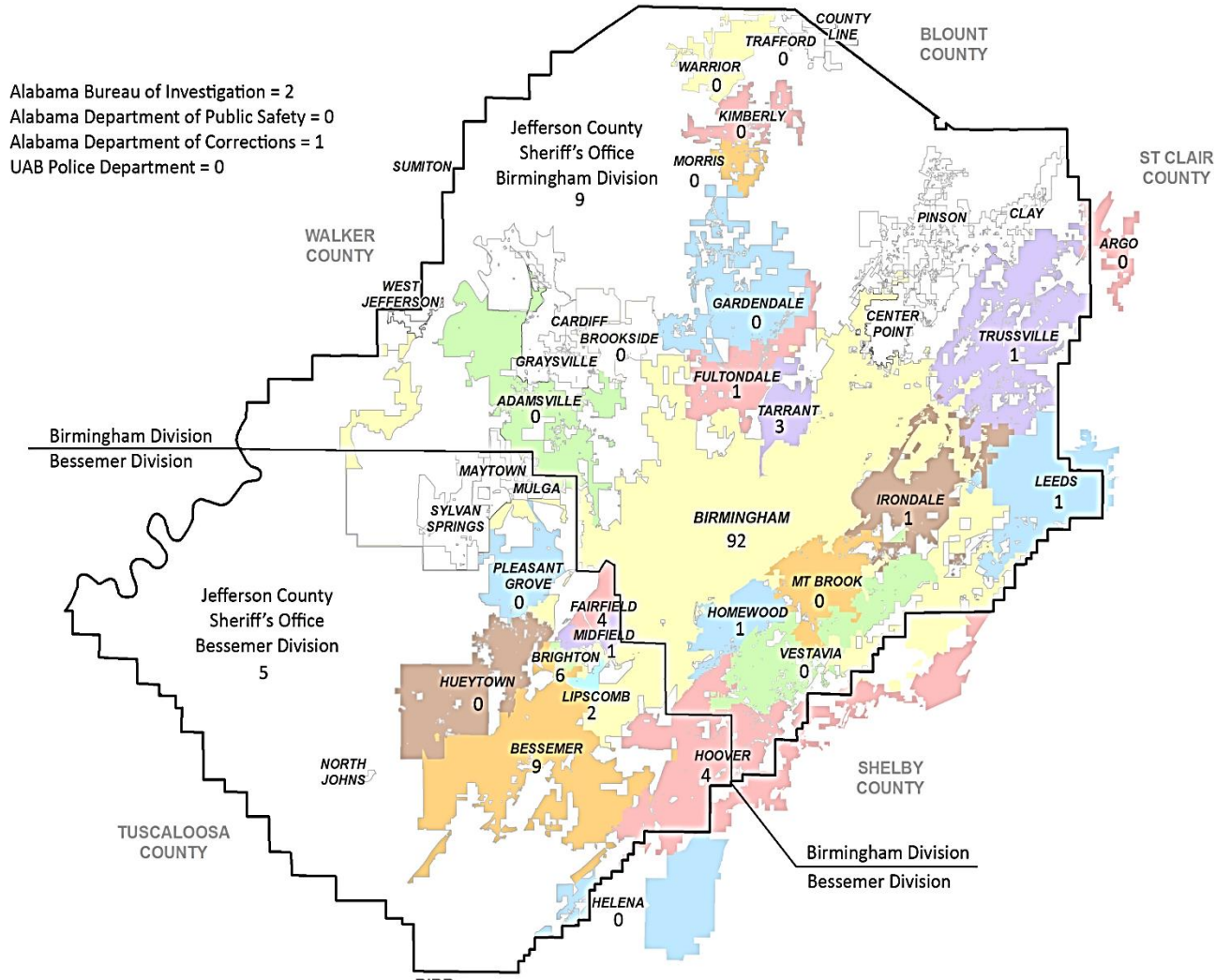
Total Number of Homicides by Year of Death 2000-2015

Figure 3.7: represents all homicides investigated by the JCCMEO.



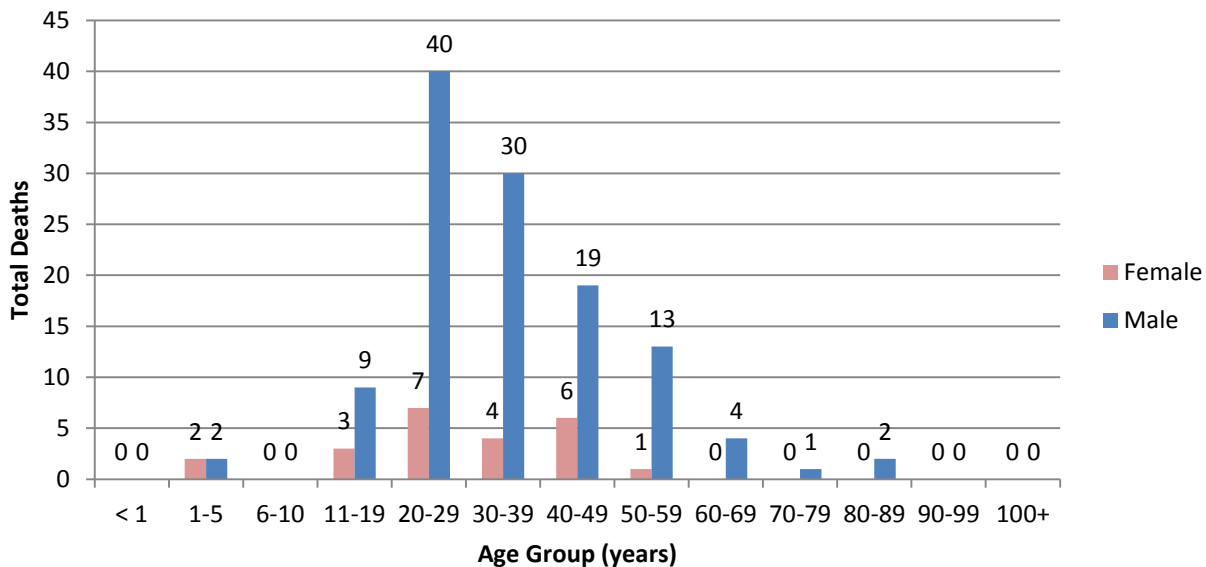
Total Number of Homicides by Law Enforcement Agency, 2015

Figure 3.8: N=143, represents all homicide deaths by law enforcement agency.



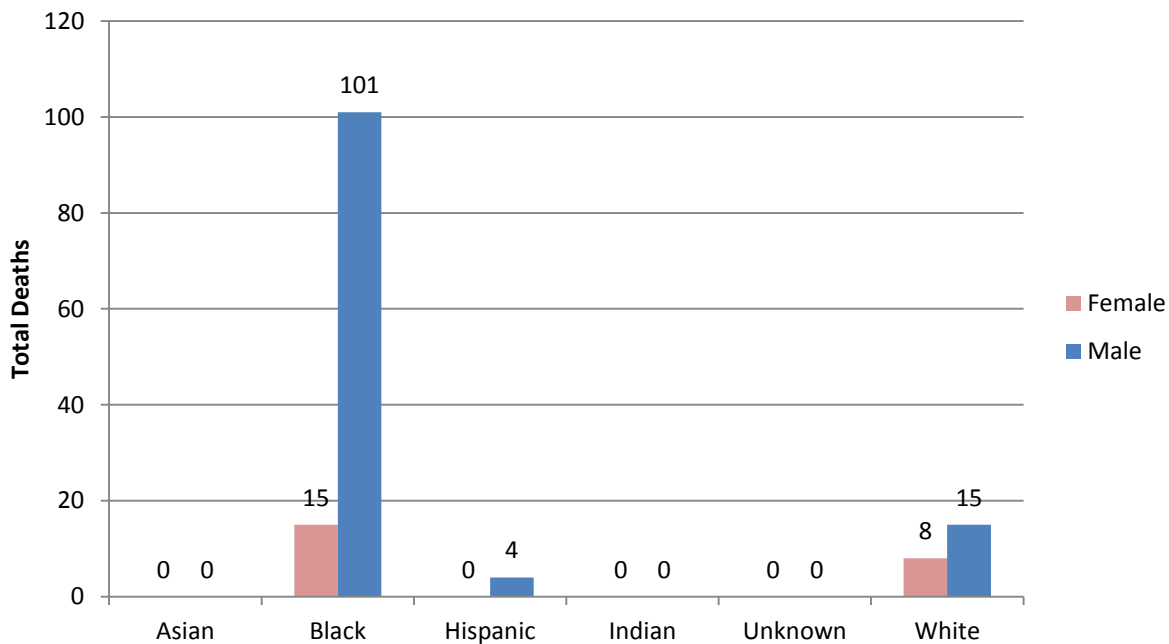
Total Number of Homicides by Gender and Age Group, 2015

Figure 3.9: N=143, represents all homicides by gender and age group.



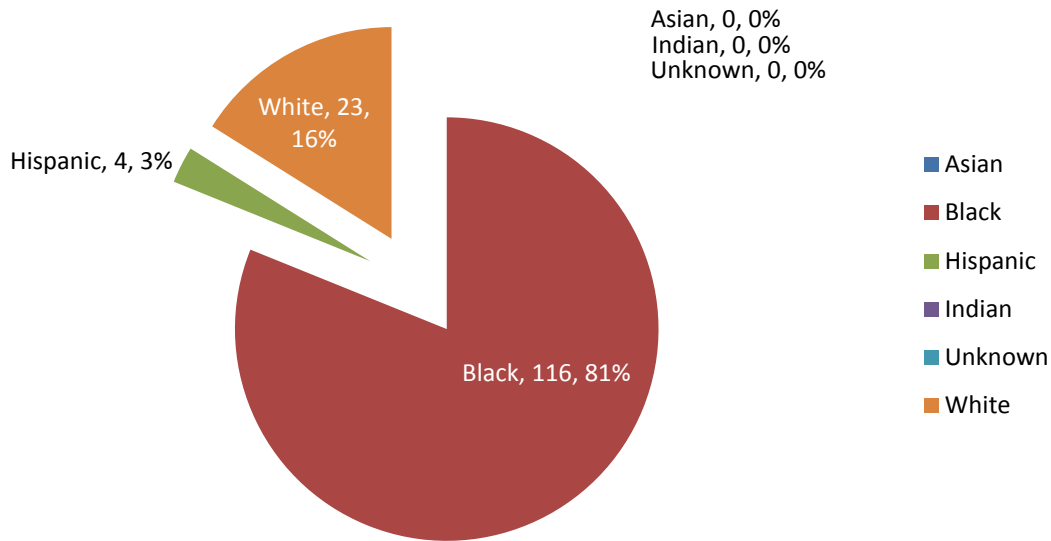
Total Number of Homicides by Gender and Race, 2015

Figure 3.10: N=143, represents all homicides by gender and race.



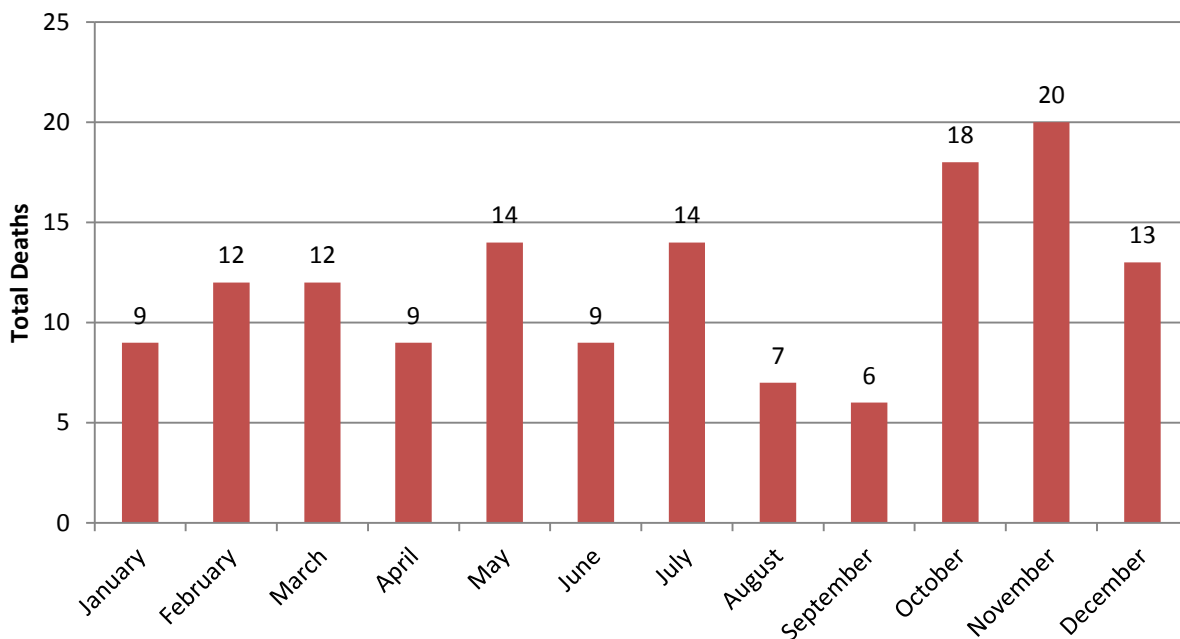
Percentage of Homicides by Race, 2015

Figure 3.11: N=143, represents all homicides by race.



Total Number of Homicides by Month of Death, 2015

Figure 3.12: N=143, represents all homicides by month of death.



Total Number of Homicides by Means of Death, 2015

Table 3.2: N=143, represents all Homicides by means of death.

Means of Death	Total
Asphyxia:	
Electrical cord	1
Hands	1
Blunt:	
Bottle	1
Hands	2
Unknown	4
Firearm:	
Handgun	56
Rifle	1
Shotgun	5
Unknown	64
Sharp:	
Box cutter	1
Knife	6
Undetermined	1
Total	143

Natural

Natural deaths accounted for 29.5% of the deaths investigated by the JCCMEO in 2015.

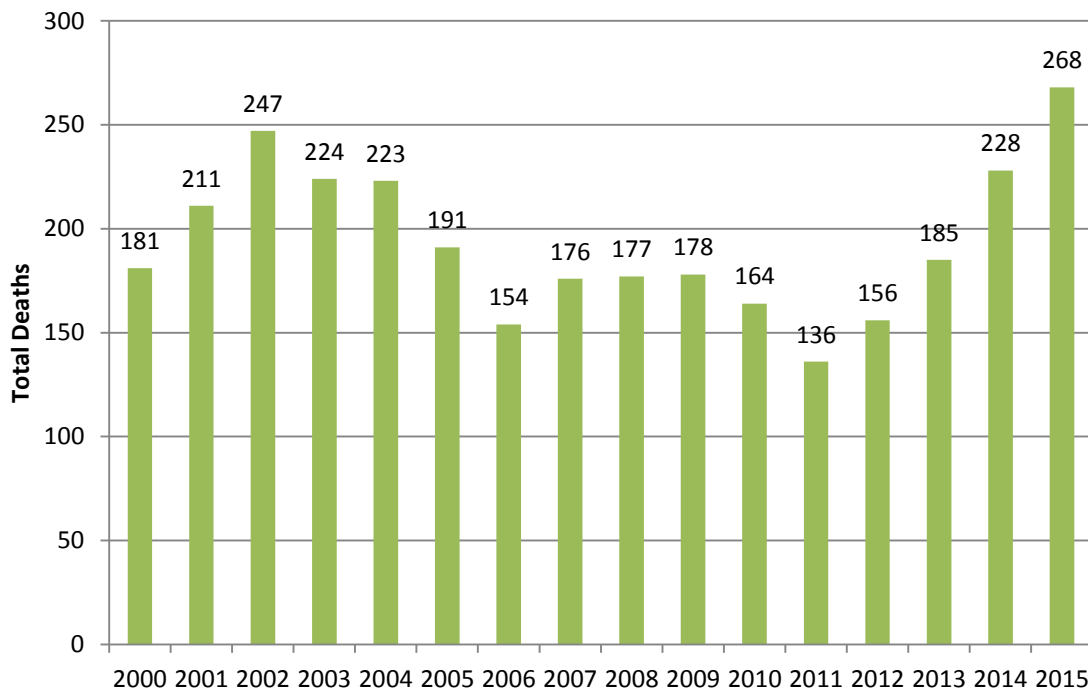
There was a 17.5% increase in the total number of natural deaths, from 228 deaths in 2014 to 268 deaths in 2015; continuing a four year increase in natural deaths that began in 2011 and, in the past 15 years 2015 is the highest recorded year.

Deaths due to heart disease were the most common cause of natural death in 2015 accounting for 57.4% of the deaths.

The most common race was white representing 54.4% of the natural deaths, while males were the most common gender representing 69% of natural deaths.

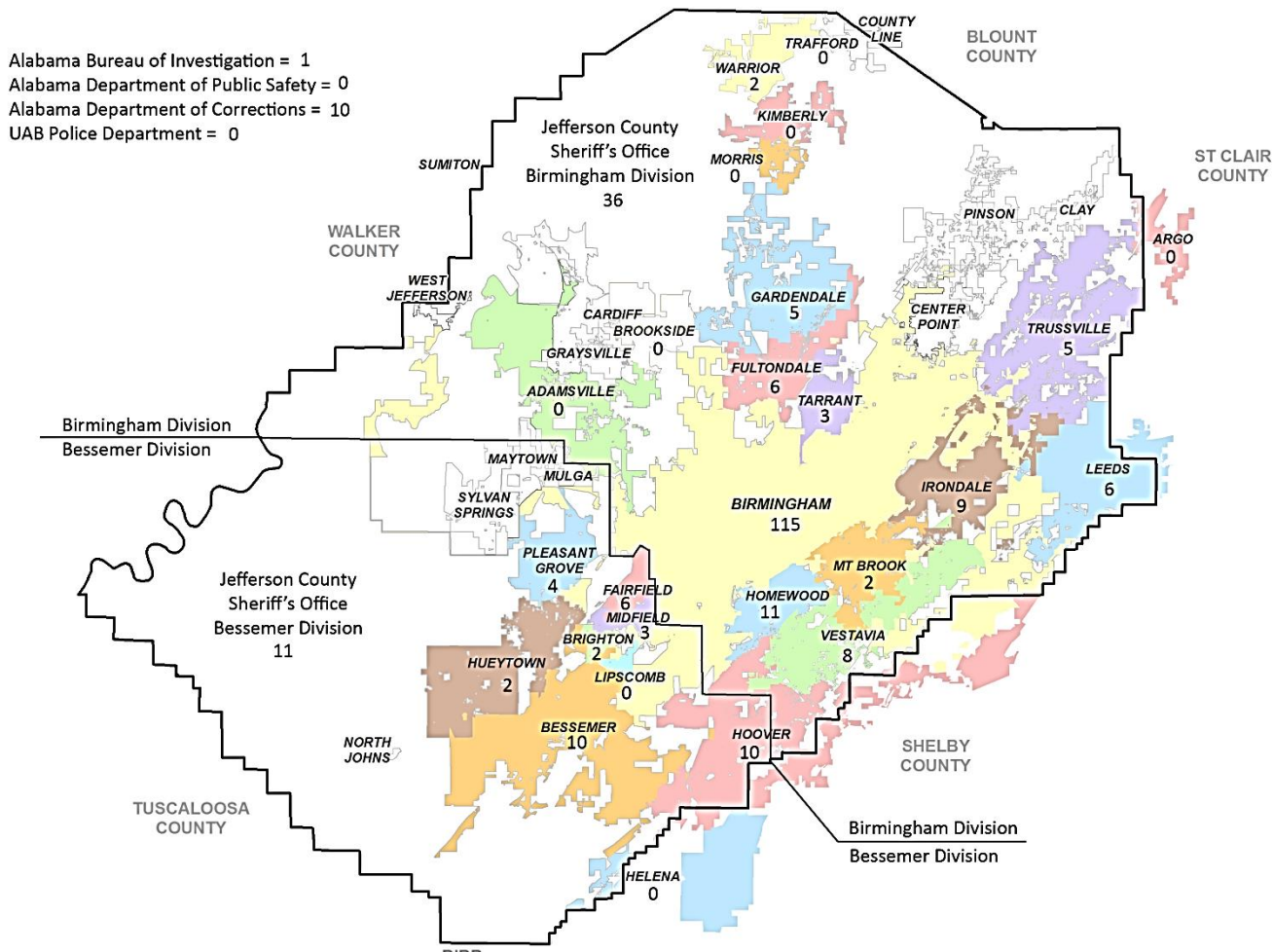
Total Number of Natural Deaths by Year of Death 2000-2015

Figure 3.13: represents all natural deaths investigated by the JCCMEO.



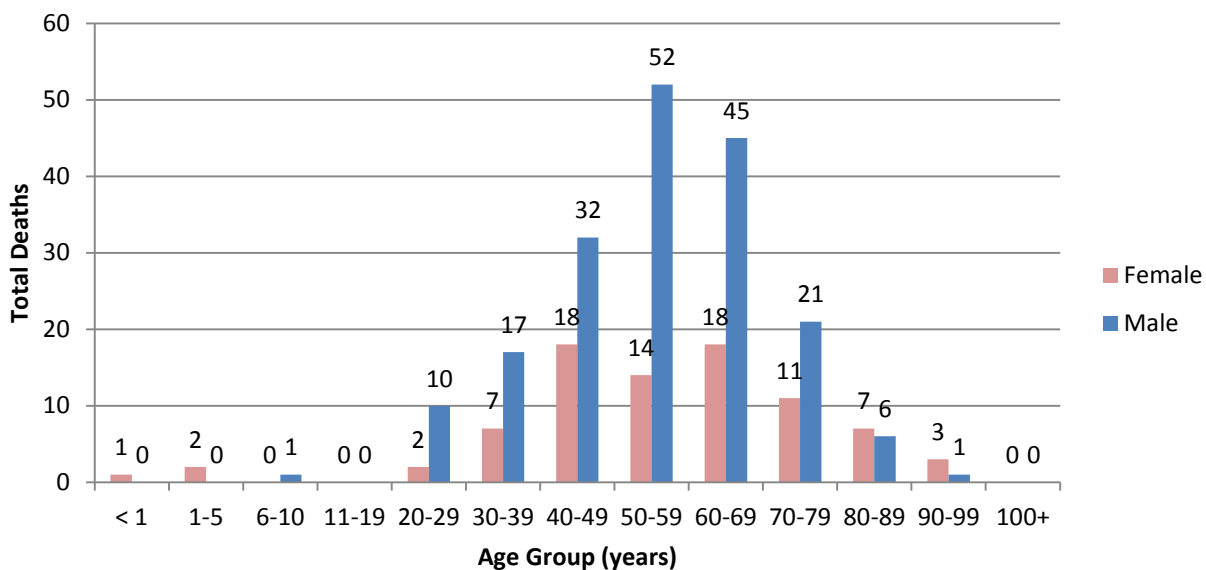
Total Number of Natural Deaths by Law Enforcement Agency, 2015

Figure 3.14: N=268, represents all natural deaths by law enforcement agency.



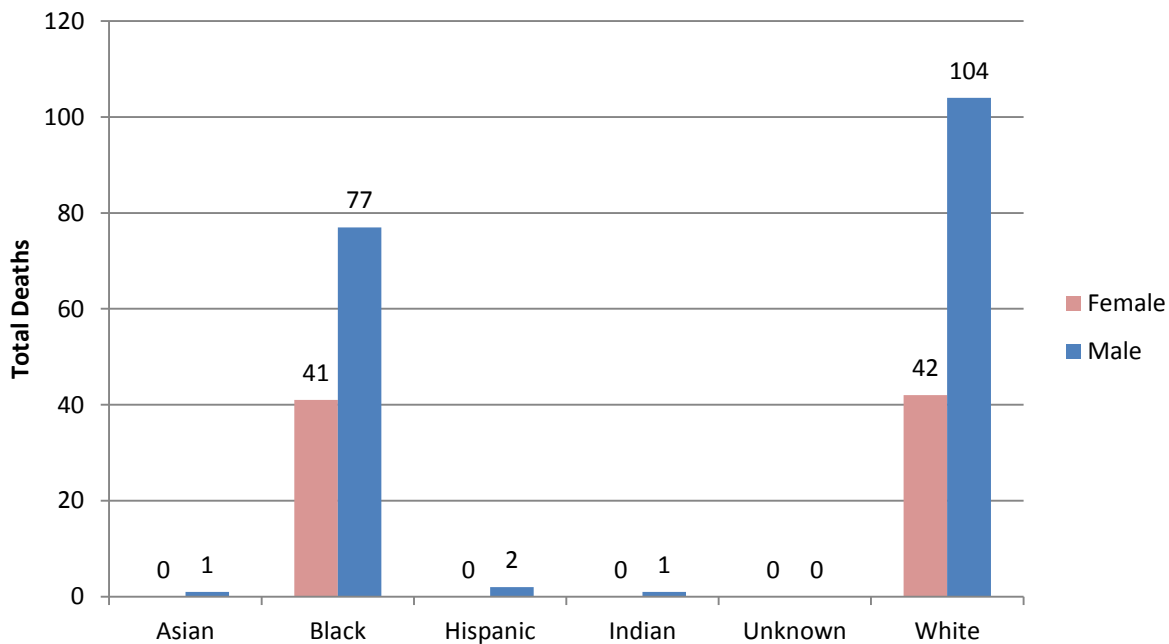
Total Number of Natural Deaths by Gender and Age Group, 2015

Figure 3.15: N=268, represents all natural deaths by gender and age group.



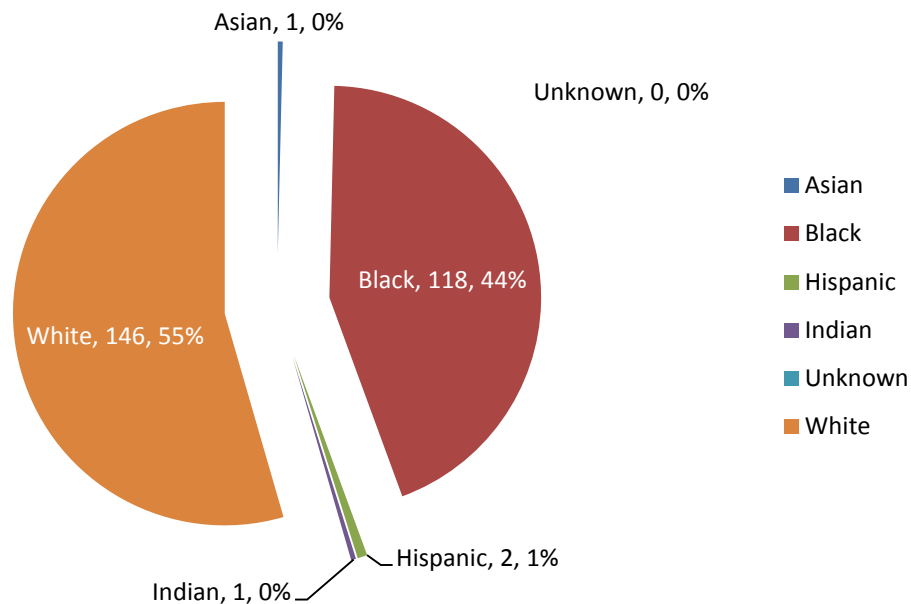
Total Number of Natural Deaths by Gender and Race, 2015

Figure 3.16: N=268, represents all natural deaths by gender and race.



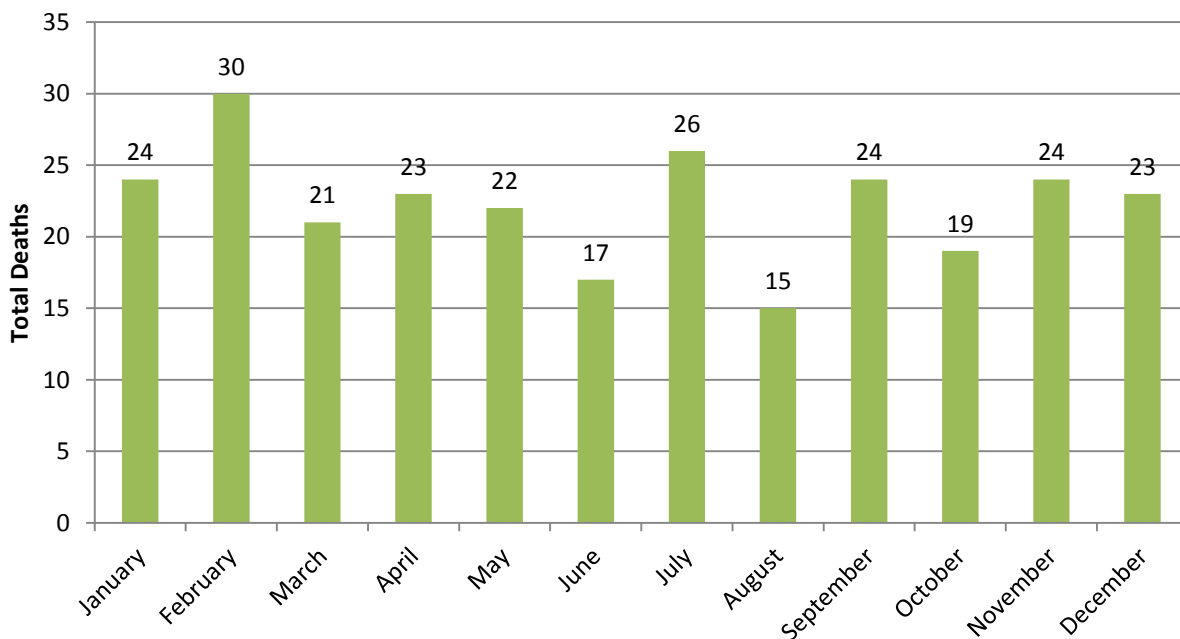
Percentage of Natural Deaths by Race, 2015

Figure 3.17: N=268, represents all natural deaths by race.



Total Number of Natural Deaths by Month of Death, 2015

Figure 3.18: N=268, represents all natural deaths by month of death.



Total Number of Natural Deaths by Means of Death, 2015

Table 3.3: N=268, represents all natural deaths by means of death.

Means of Death	Total
Heart:	
Coronary artery atherosclerosis	39
Hypertensive heart disease	42
Arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease	34
Other heart disease	39
Lungs:	
Pneumonia	15
COPD / asthma	3
Pulmonary thromboembolism	6
Liver:	
Cirrhosis	2
Brain:	
Seizure disorder (epilepsy)	5
Meningitis	0
Nontraumatic intracranial hemorrhage	3
Malignancy NOS (includes all organ systems)	10
Chronic ethanol/drug use	22
Diabetes	6
Gastrointestinal bleeding	2
Other	40
Total	268

Suicide

Suicide deaths accounted for 10.4% of the deaths investigated by the JCCMEO in 2015.

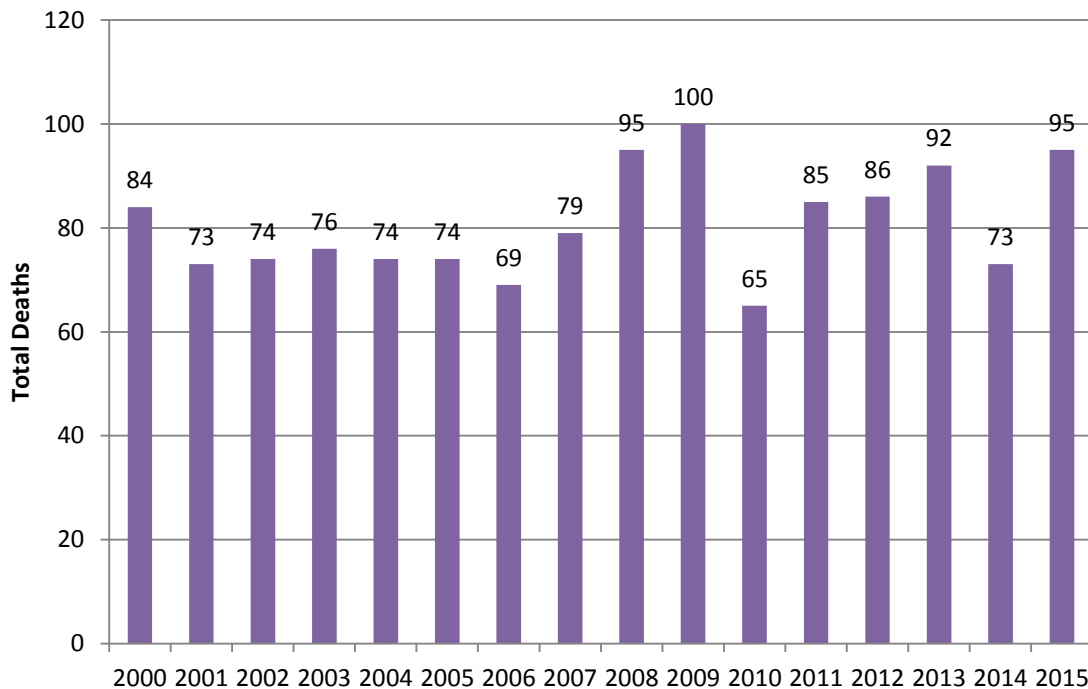
There was a 30.1% increase in the total number of suicide deaths, from 73 deaths in 2014 to 95 deaths in 2015; which in the past 15 years is the second highest year, tied with 95 deaths in 2008 and surpassed only by 100 deaths in 2009.

Deaths due to gunshot wounds were the most common cause of suicide death in 2015 accounting for 61.0% of the deaths and, followed by deaths due to hanging accounting for 18.9% of the suicide deaths.

The most common race was white representing 68.4% of the suicide deaths, while males were the most common gender representing 81.0% of suicide deaths.

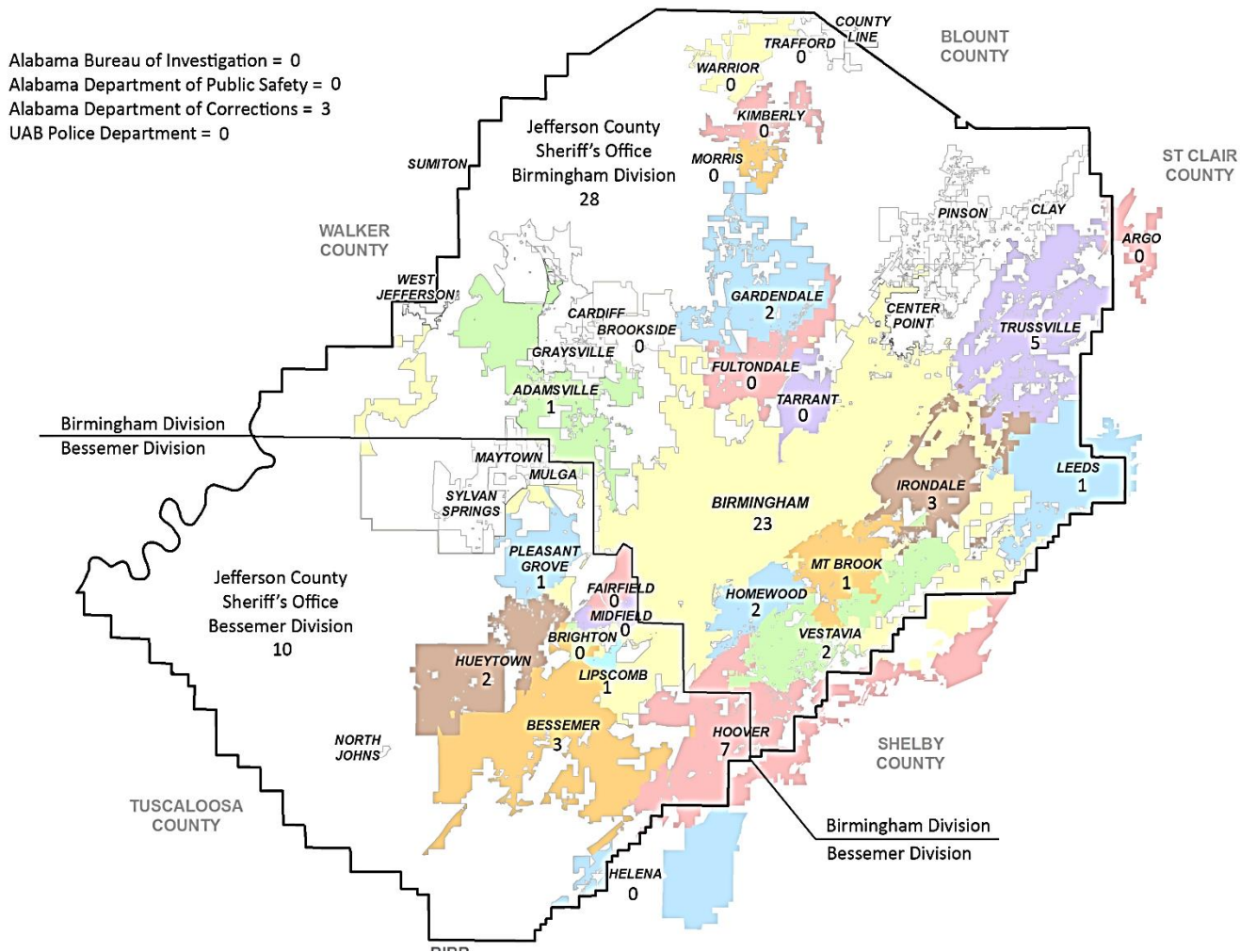
Total Number of Suicide Deaths by Year of Death 2000-2015

Figure 3.19: represents all suicide deaths investigated by the JCCMEO.



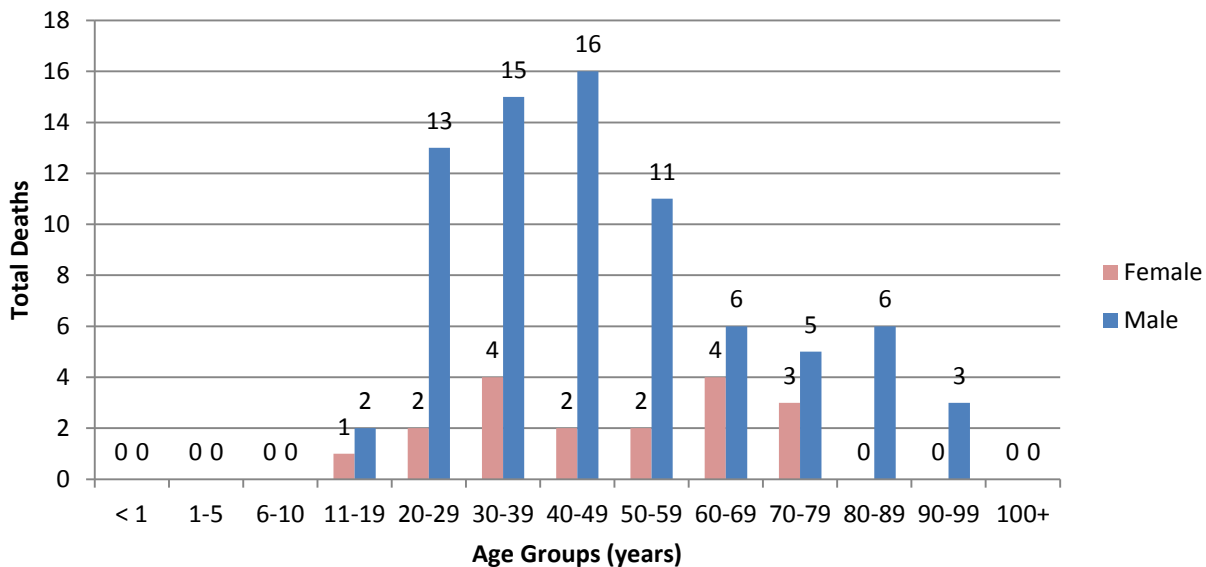
Total Number of Suicide Deaths by Law Enforcement Agency, 2015

Figure 3.20: N=95, represents all suicide deaths by law enforcement agency.



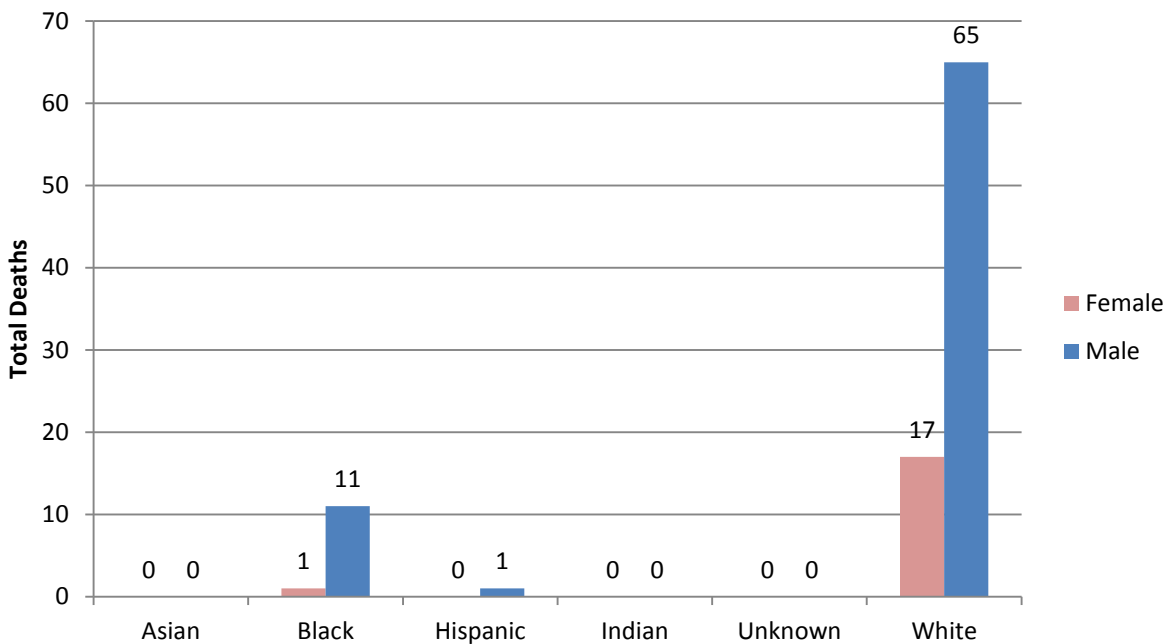
Total Number of Suicide Deaths by Gender and Age Group, 2015

Figure 3.21: N=95, represents all suicide deaths by gender and age group.



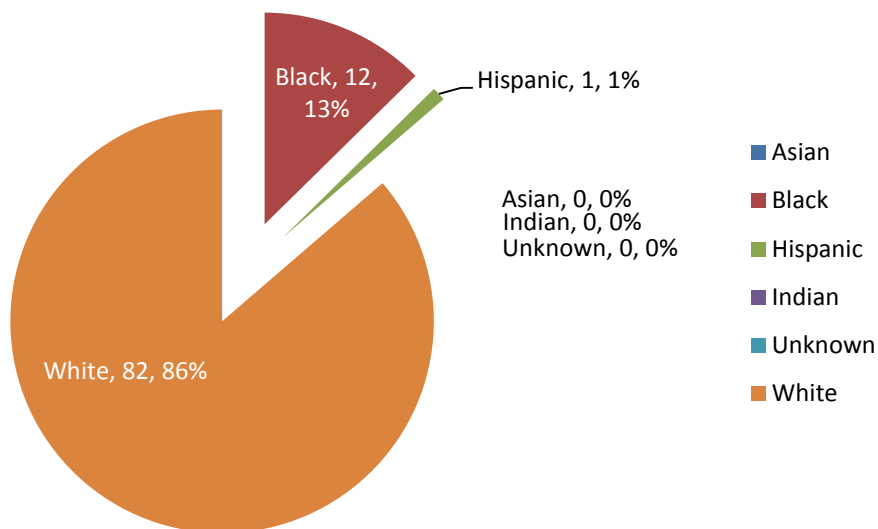
Total Number of Suicide Deaths by Gender and Race, 2015

Figure 3.22: N=95, represents all suicide deaths by gender and race.



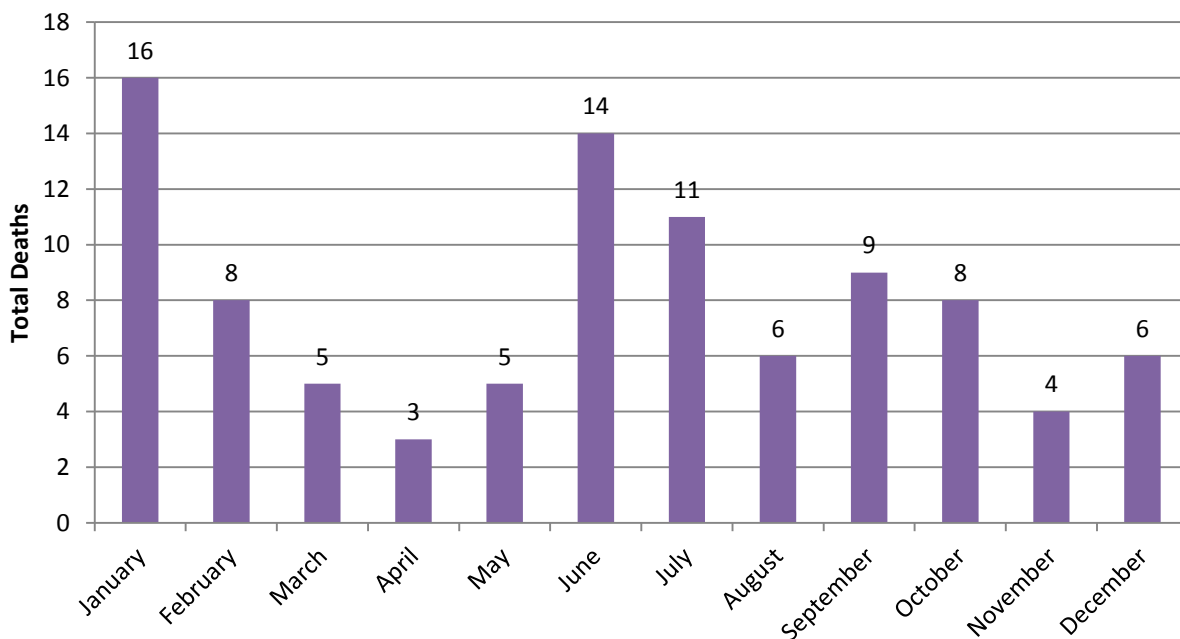
Percentage of Suicide Deaths by Race, 2015

Figure 3.23: N=95, represents all suicide deaths by race.



Total Number of Suicide Deaths by Month of Death, 2015

Figure 3.24: N=95, represents all suicide deaths by month of death.



Total Number of Suicide Deaths by Means of Death, 2015

Table 3.4: N=95, represents all suicide deaths by means of death.

Means of Death	Total
Asphyxia:	
Helium	1
Plastic bag	1
Carbon Monoxide:	
Fire	1
Lawnmower:	1
Motor vehicle	3
Drowning:	
Lake	1
Drug:	
Illicit	2
Prescription medication	4
Prescription opioid	1
Fall:	
Stairs	1
Firearm:	
Handgun	52
Rifle	4
Shotgun	4
Hanging:	
Belt	2
Electrical cord	2
Laundry bag	1
Ratchet strap	1
Rope	8
Sheet	4
Sharp:	
Knife	1
Razor blade	1
Total	95

Undetermined

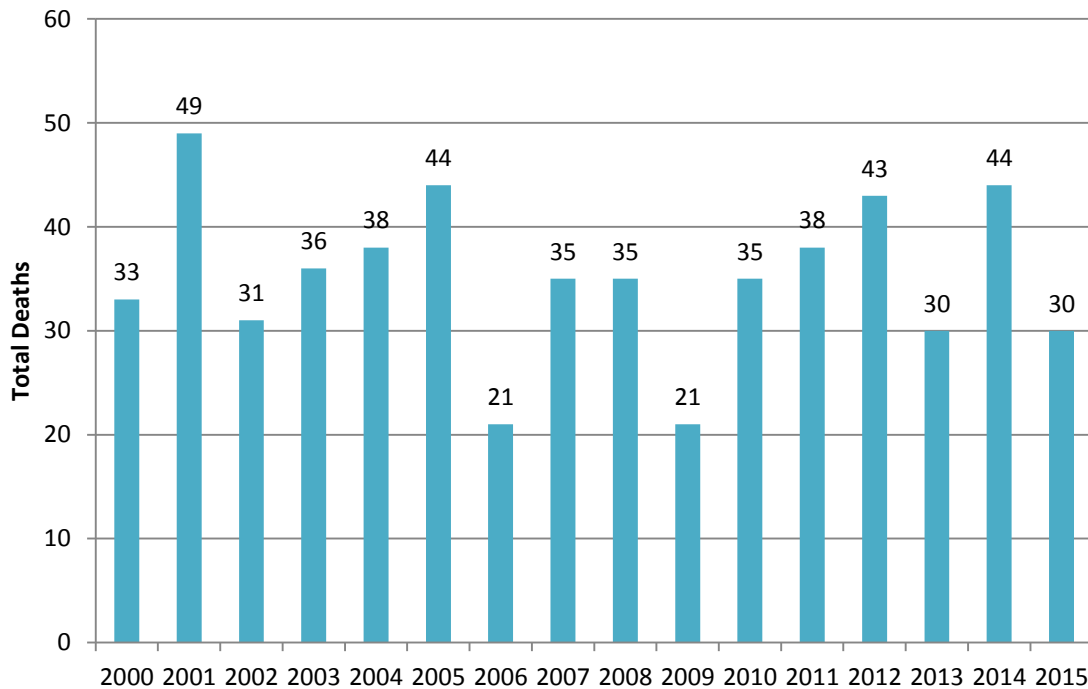
Undetermined deaths accounted for 3.3% of the deaths investigated by the JCCMEO in 2015.

There was a 31.8% decrease in the total number of undetermined deaths, from 44 deaths in 2014 to 30 deaths in 2015.

Undetermined was the most common means of Undetermined death, accounting for 36.6% of the deaths, followed by co-sleeping accounting for 23.3% of the deaths and decomposing remains accounting for 20.0% of the deaths.

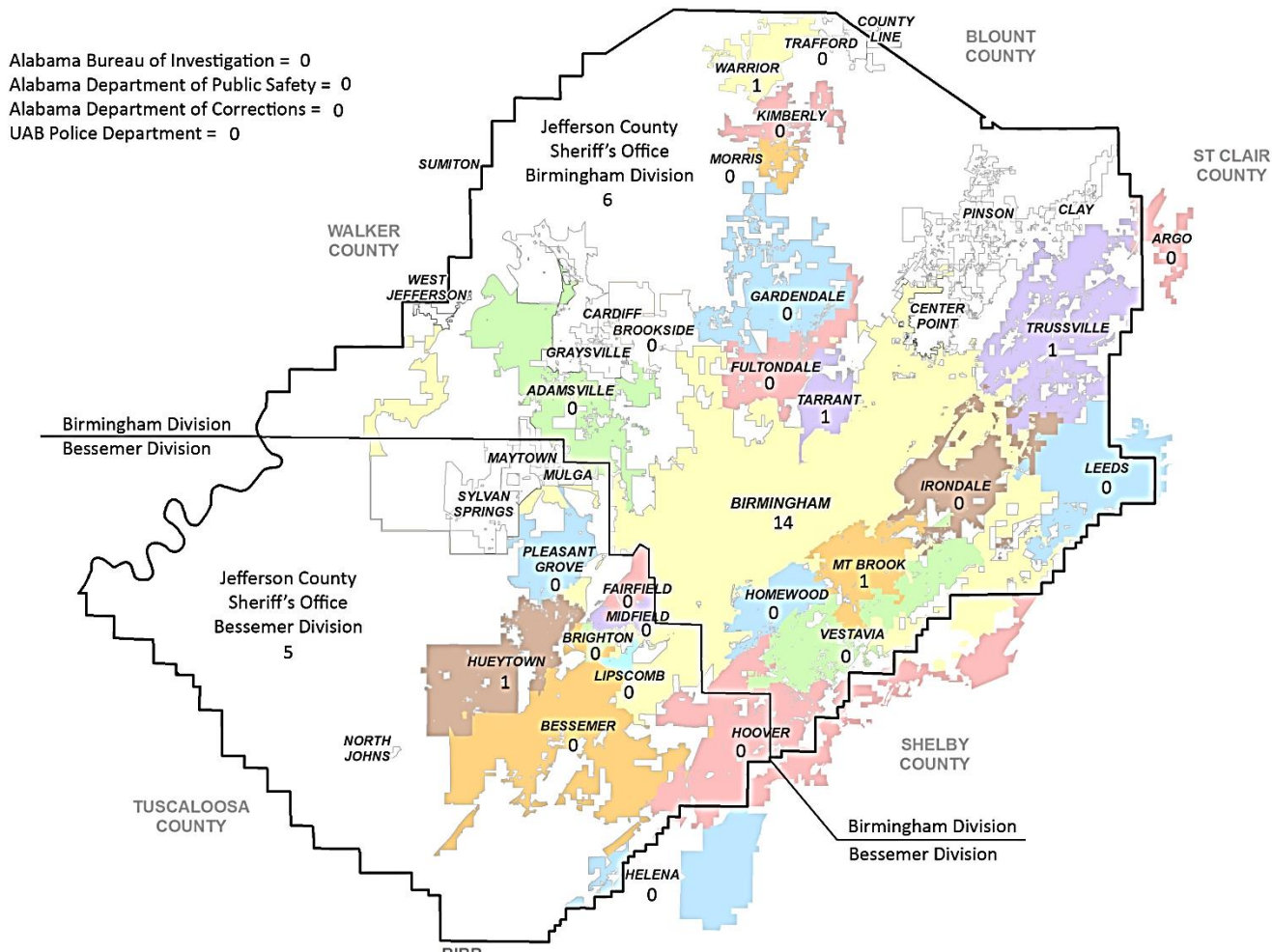
Total Number of Undetermined Deaths by Year of Death 2000-2015

Figure 3.25: represents all undetermined deaths investigated by the JCCMEO.



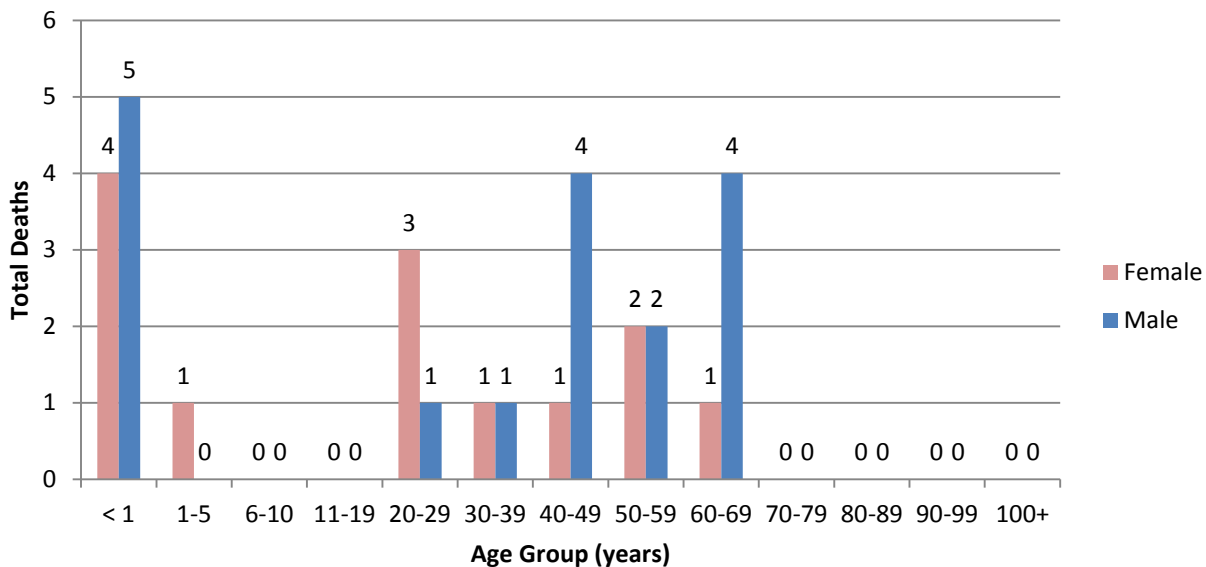
Total Number of Undetermined Deaths by Law Enforcement Agency, 2015

Figure 3.26: N=30, represents all undetermined deaths by law enforcement agency.



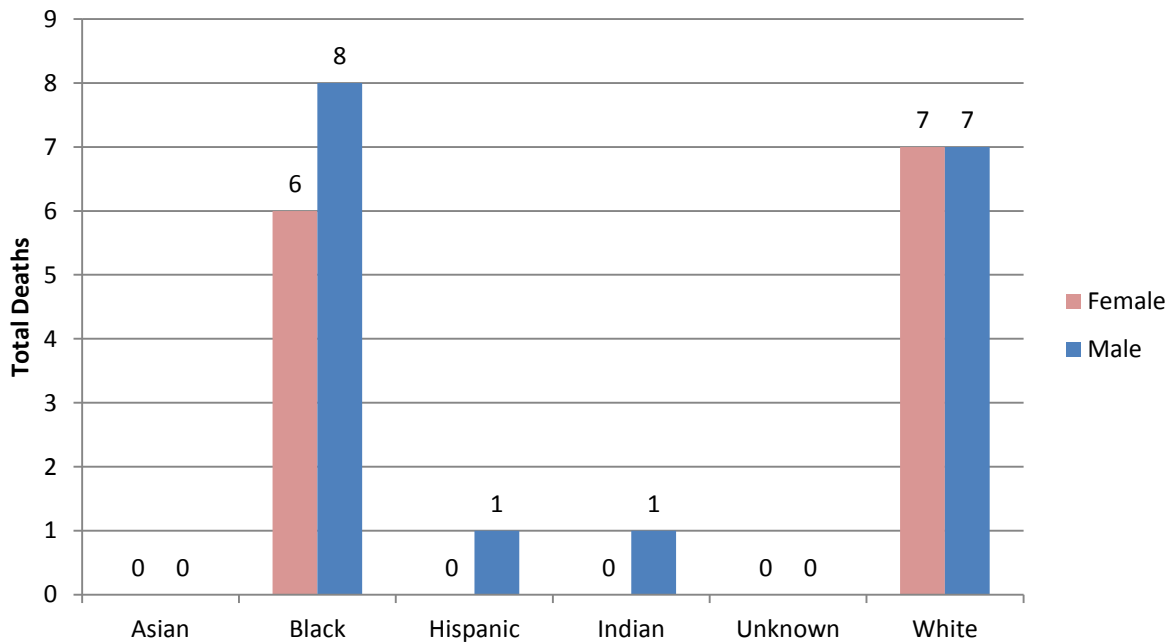
Total Number of Undetermined Deaths by Gender and Age Group, 2015

Figure 3.27: N=30, represents all undetermined deaths by gender and age group.



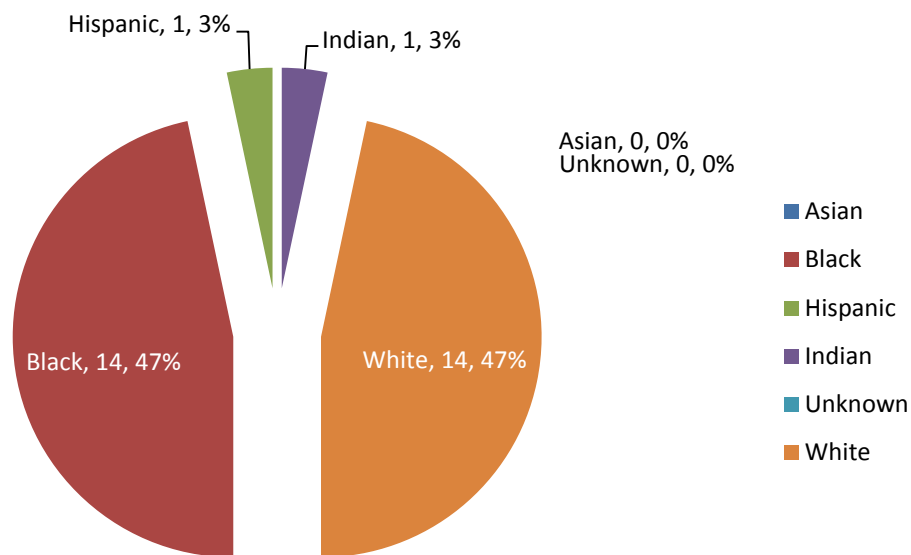
Total Number of Undetermined Deaths by Gender and Race, 2015

Figure 3.28: N=30, represents all undetermined deaths by gender and race.



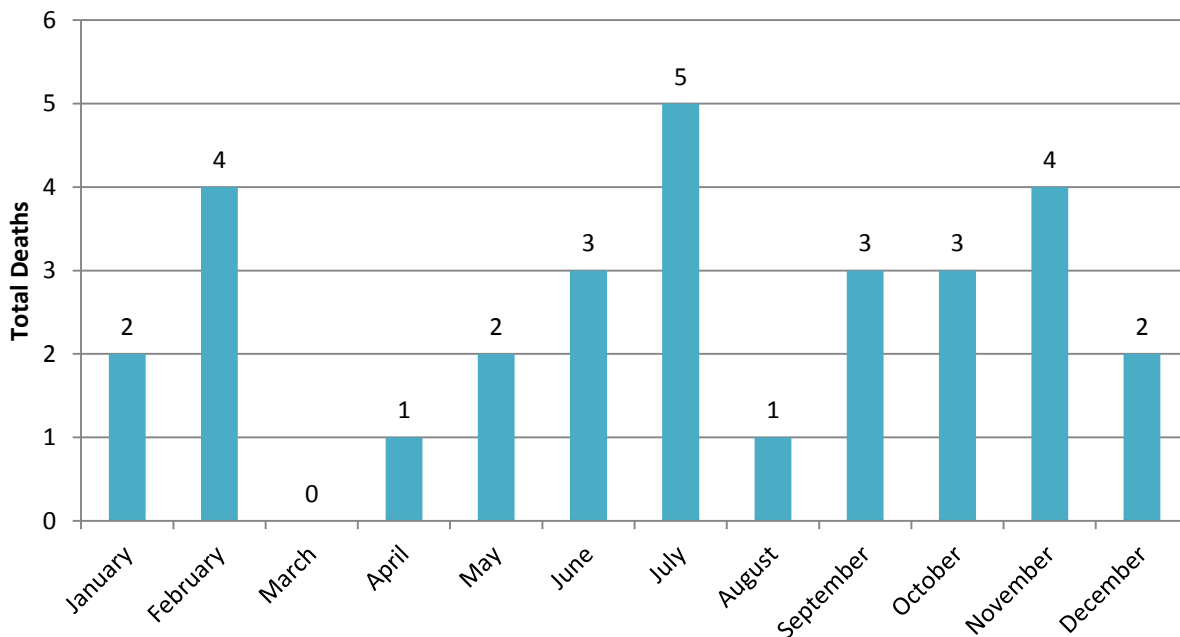
Percentage of Undetermined Deaths by Race, 2015

Figure 3.29: N=30, represents all undetermined deaths by race.



Total Number of Undetermined Deaths by Month of Death, 2015

Figure 3.30: N=30, represents all undetermined deaths by month of death.



Total Number of Undetermined Deaths by Means of Death, 2015

Table 3.5: N=30, represents all undetermined deaths by means of death.

Means of Death	Total
Carbon Monoxide:	
Motor vehicle	1
Co-sleeping:	
Bed	7
Drug:	
Illicit	1
Fall:	
Balcony	1
Pedestrian:	
Motor vehicle	1
Undetermined:	
Couch	1
Decomposing remains	6
Skeletal remains	1
Undetermined	11
Total	30

Section 4: Infant/Juvenile Deaths

Infant/Juvenile deaths accounted for 5.0% of the deaths investigated by the JCCMEO in 2015. There was a 43.75% increase in the total number of infant/juvenile deaths, from 32 deaths in 2014 to 46 deaths in 2015. Infant deaths decreased 10.0%, from 20 deaths in 2014 to 18 deaths in 2015, while juvenile deaths increased 133%, from 12 deaths in 2014 to 28 deaths in 2015.

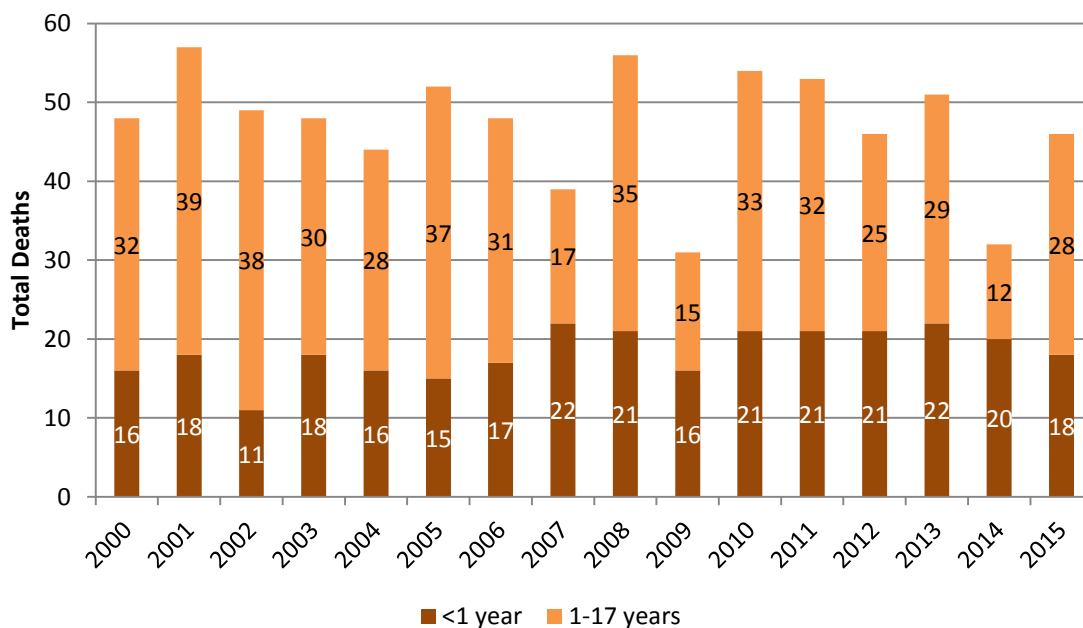
Infants (<1 year of age): Deaths due to co-sleeping was the most common means of infant death in 2015, accounting for 14 of the 18 or 77.7% of the infant deaths. Accidental death was the most common manner of infant death, accounting for 50.0% of the deaths. The most common race was black representing 72.2% of the infant deaths, with white accounting for 27.7% of the infant deaths. Infants 2 and 3 months of age had the highest mortality rate accounting for 22.2% of the deaths.

Juveniles (1–17 years of age): Deaths due to firearms was the most common means of juvenile death in 2015, accounting for 32.1% of the deaths, followed by motor vehicle deaths accounting for 28.5% of the deaths. Homicide was the most common manner of death, accounting for 46.4% of the juvenile deaths. The most common race was black representing 67.8% of the juvenile deaths, with white accounting for 32.1% of the juvenile deaths. Juveniles 16 and 17 years of age had the highest mortality rate accounting for 14.2% of the deaths.

Historical Summary

Total Number of Infant and Juvenile Deaths by Year of Death 2000-2015

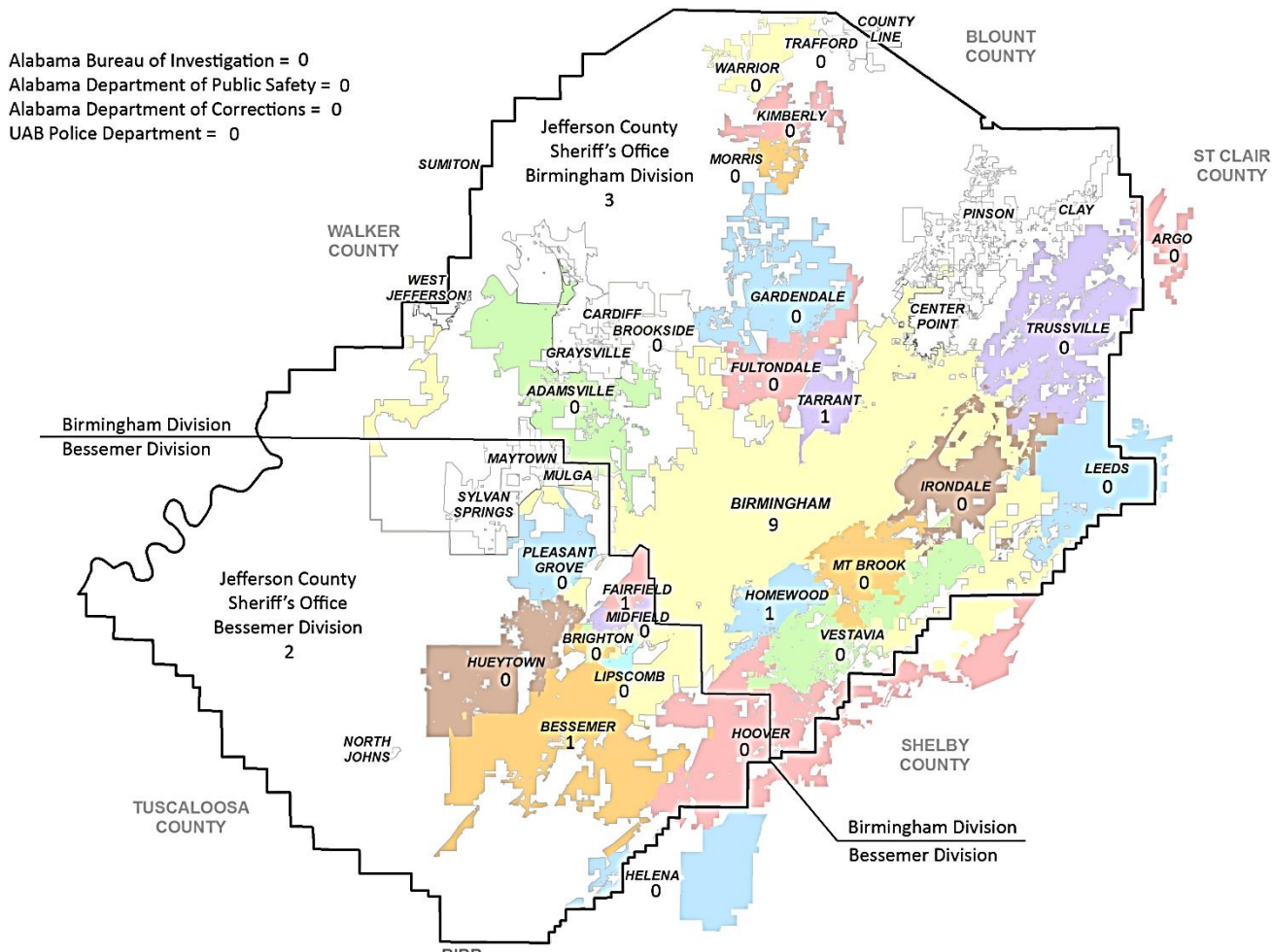
Figure 4.1: represents all infant deaths (<1 year of age) and juvenile deaths (1-17 years of age) investigated by the JCCMEO.



Infant Deaths

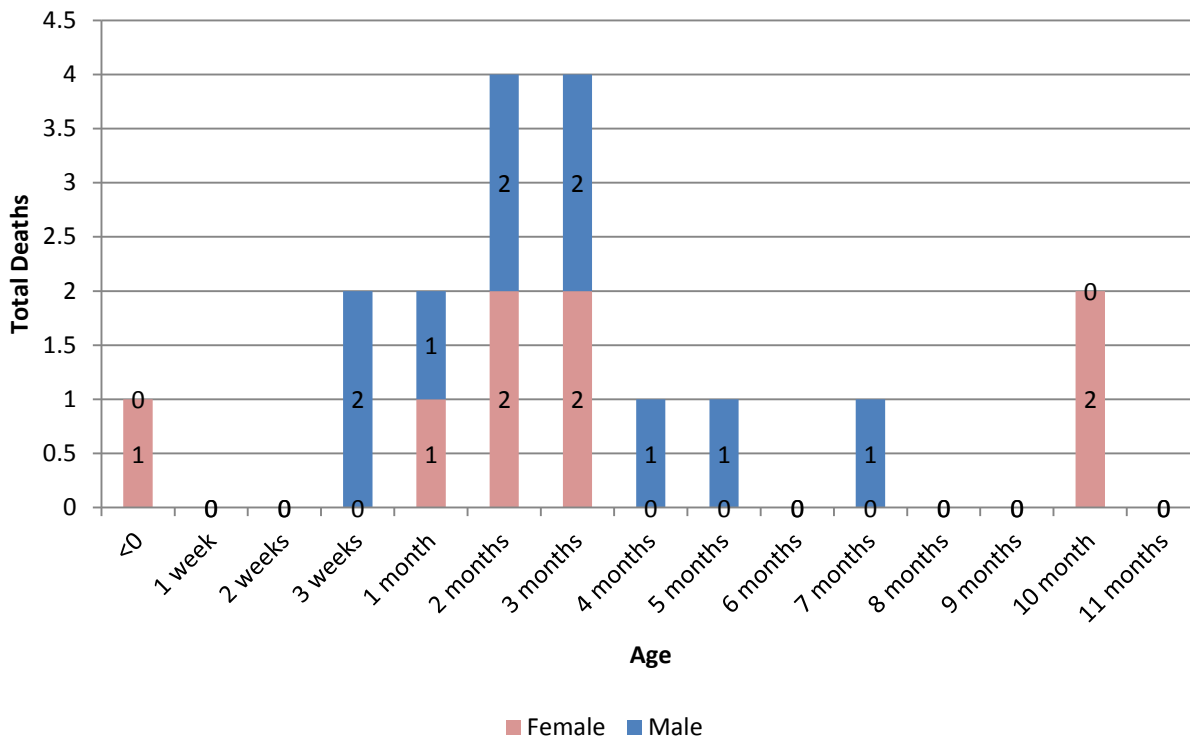
Total Number of Infant Deaths by Law Enforcement Agency, 2015

Figure 4.2: N=18, represents all infant deaths (<1 year of age) by law enforcement agency.



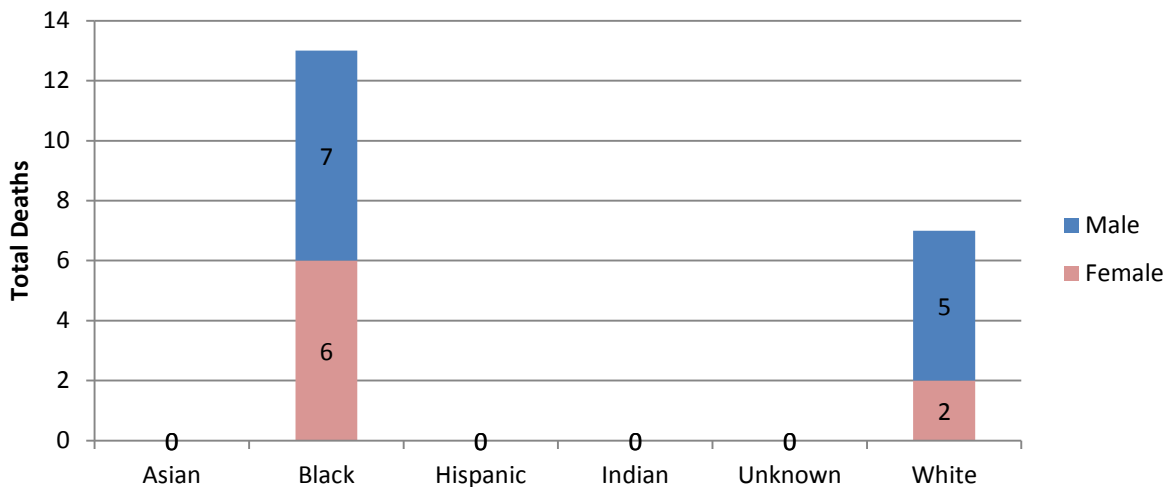
Total Number of Infant Deaths by Gender and Age, 2015

Figure 4.3: N=18, represents all infant deaths (<1 year of age) by gender and age.



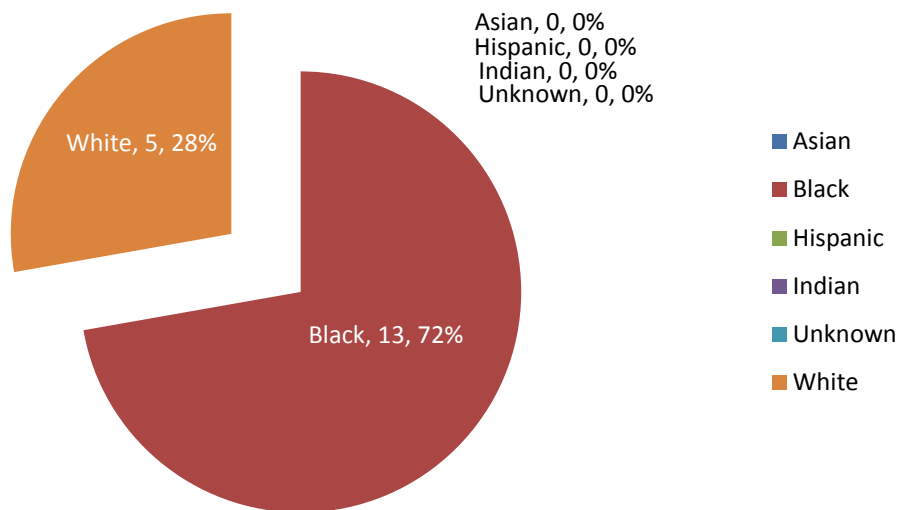
Total Number of Infant Deaths by Gender and Race, 2015

Figure 4.4: N=18, represents all infant deaths (<1 year of age) by gender and race.



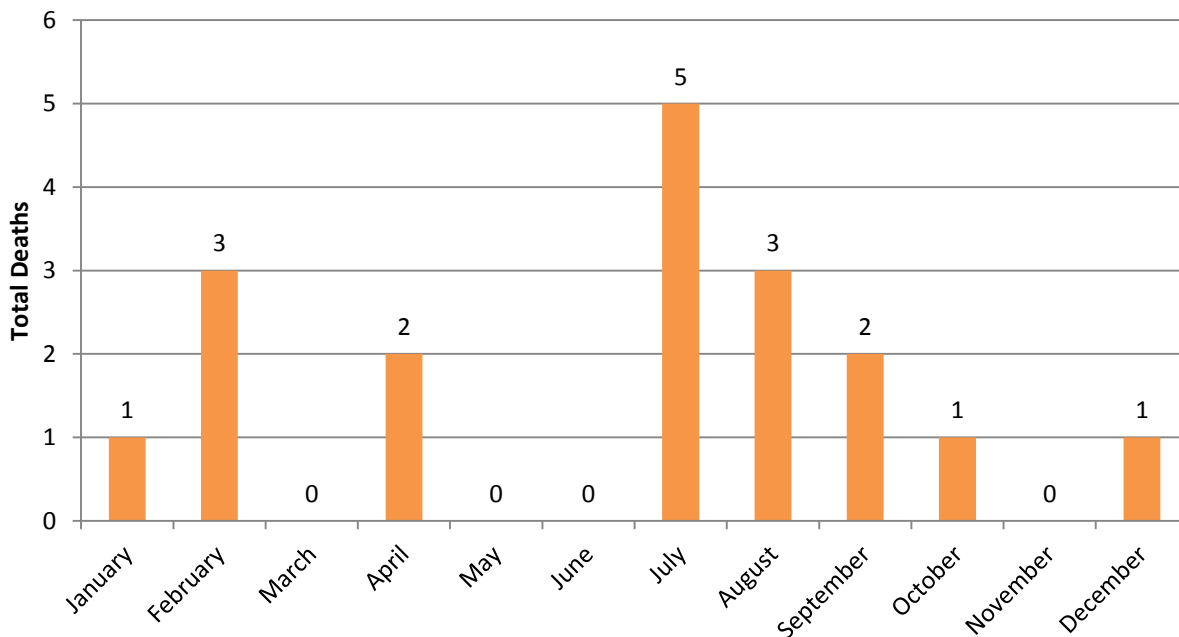
Percentage of Infant Deaths by Race, 2015

Figure 4.5: N=18, represents all infant deaths (<1 year of age) by race.



Total Number of Infant Deaths by Month of Death, 2015

Figure 4.6: N=18, represents all infant deaths (<1 year of age) by month of death.



Total Number of Infant Deaths by Means of Death, 2015

Table 4.1: N=18, represents all infant deaths (<1 year of age) by means of death.

Means of Death	Total
Asphyxia:	
Pillow	1
Co-sleeping:	
Bed	12
Couch	2
Natural:	
Kidney disease	1
Undetermined:	
Couch	1
Fetus	1
Total	18

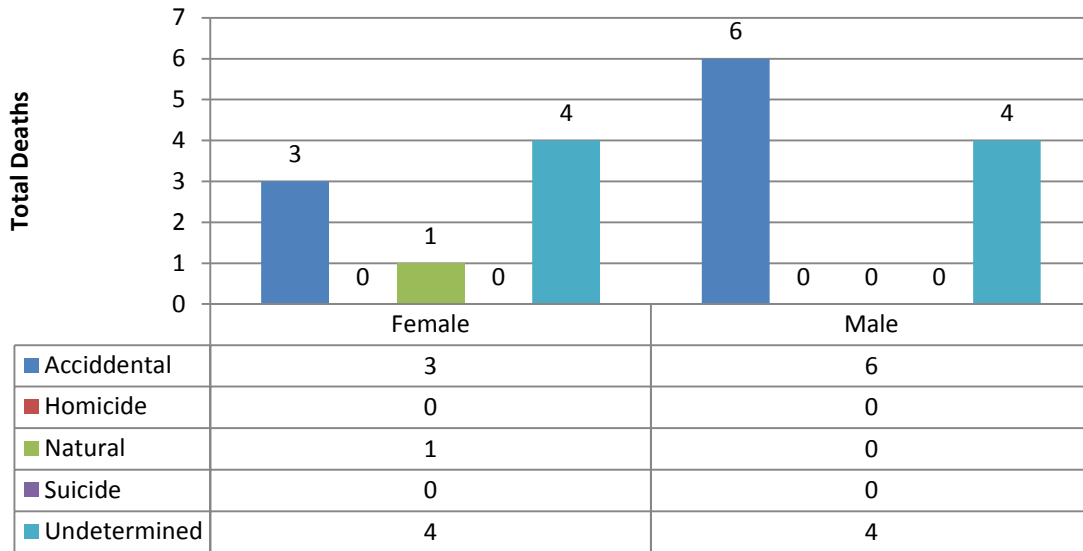
Total Number of Infant Deaths by Manner of Death and Race, 2015

Table 4.2: N=18, represents all infant deaths (<1 year of age) by manner of death and race.

Race	Accident	Homicide	Natural	Suicide	Undetermined	Total
Asian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black	7	0	1	0	5	13
Hispanic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	2	0	0	0	3	5
Total	9	0	1	0	8	18

Total Number of Infant Deaths by Manner of Death and Gender, 2015

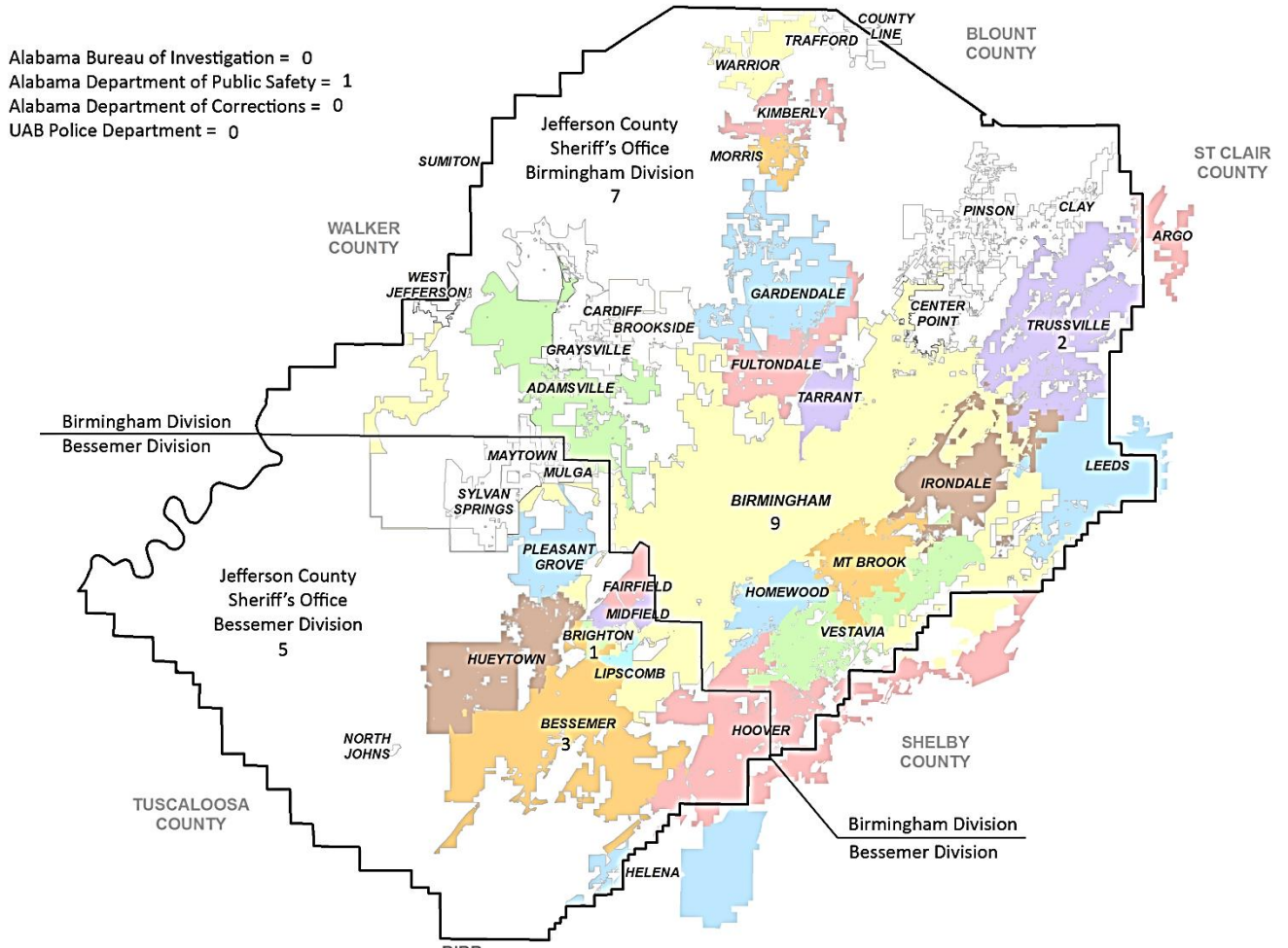
Figure 4.7: N=18, represents all infant deaths (<1 year of age) by manner of death and gender.



Juvenile Deaths

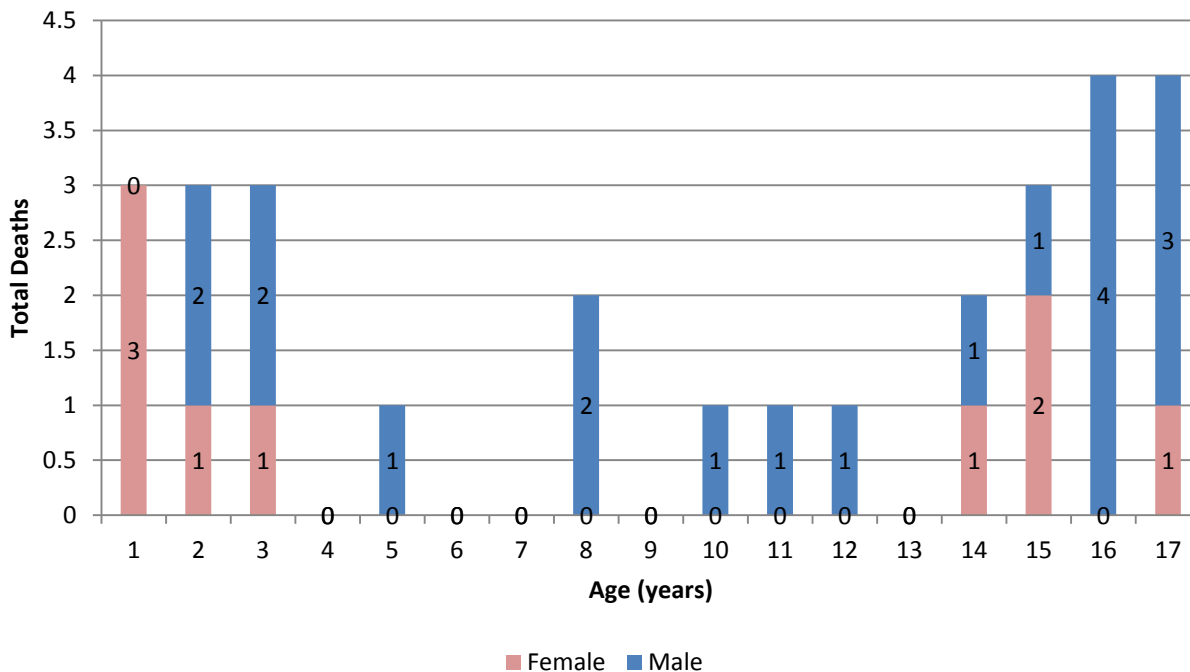
Total Number of Juvenile Deaths by Law Enforcement Agency, 2015

Figure 4.8: N=28, represents all juvenile deaths (1-17 years of age) by law enforcement agency.



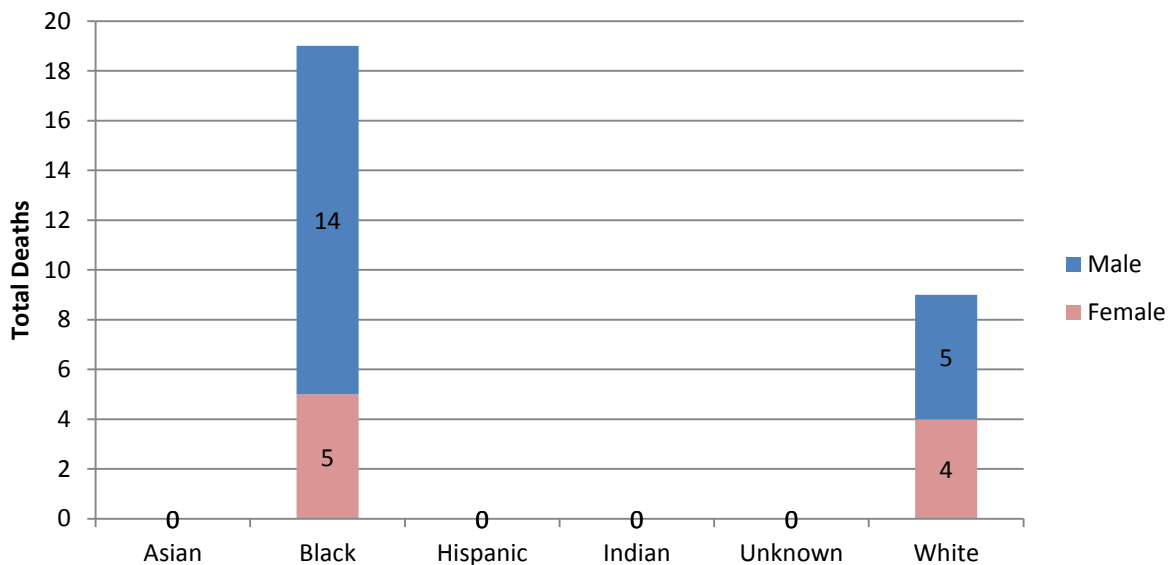
Total Number of Juvenile Deaths by Gender and Age, 2015

Figure 4.9: N=28, represents all juvenile deaths (1-17 years of age) by gender and age.



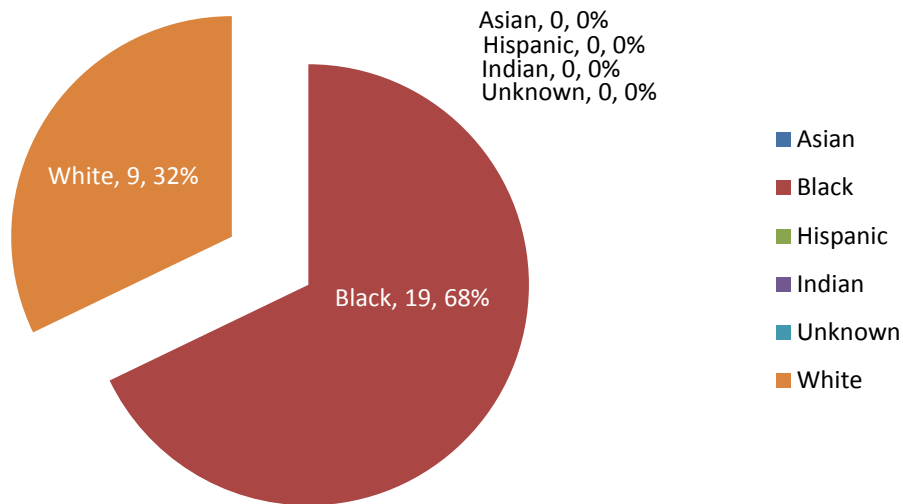
Total Number of Juvenile Deaths by Gender and Race, 2015

Figure 4.10: N=28, represents all juvenile deaths (1-17 years of age) by gender and race.



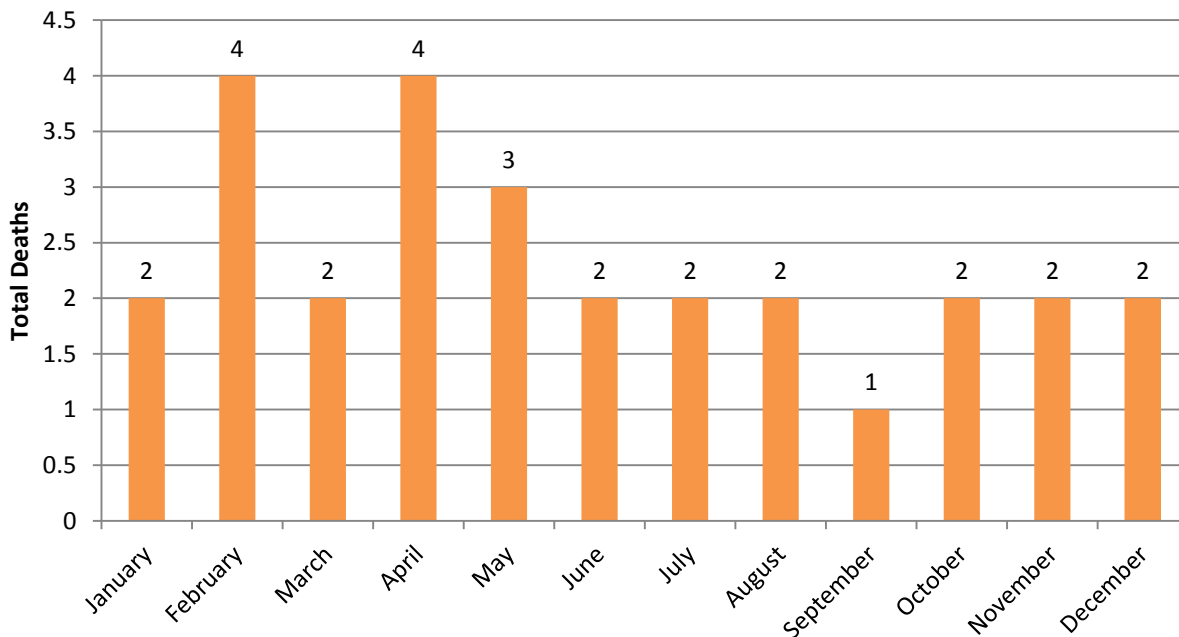
Percentage of Juvenile Deaths by Race, 2015

Figure 4.11: N=28, represents all juvenile deaths (1-17 years of age) by race.



Total Number of Juvenile Deaths by Month of Death, 2015

Figure 4.12: N=28, represents all juvenile deaths (1-17 years of age) by month of death.



Total Number of Juvenile Deaths by Means of Death, 2015

Table 4.3: N=28, represents all juvenile deaths (1-17 years of age) by means of death.

Means of Death	Total
Blunt:	
Bottle	1
Hands	2
Unknown	2
Co-sleeping:	
Bed	1
Drug:	
Prescription opioid	1
Firearm:	
Handgun	5
Unknown	4
Hanging:	
Belt	1
Motor vehicle:	
Single vehicle	2
Multiple vehicles	4
Pedestrian:	
Motor vehicle	2
Natural:	
Heart disease	2
Other	1
Total	28

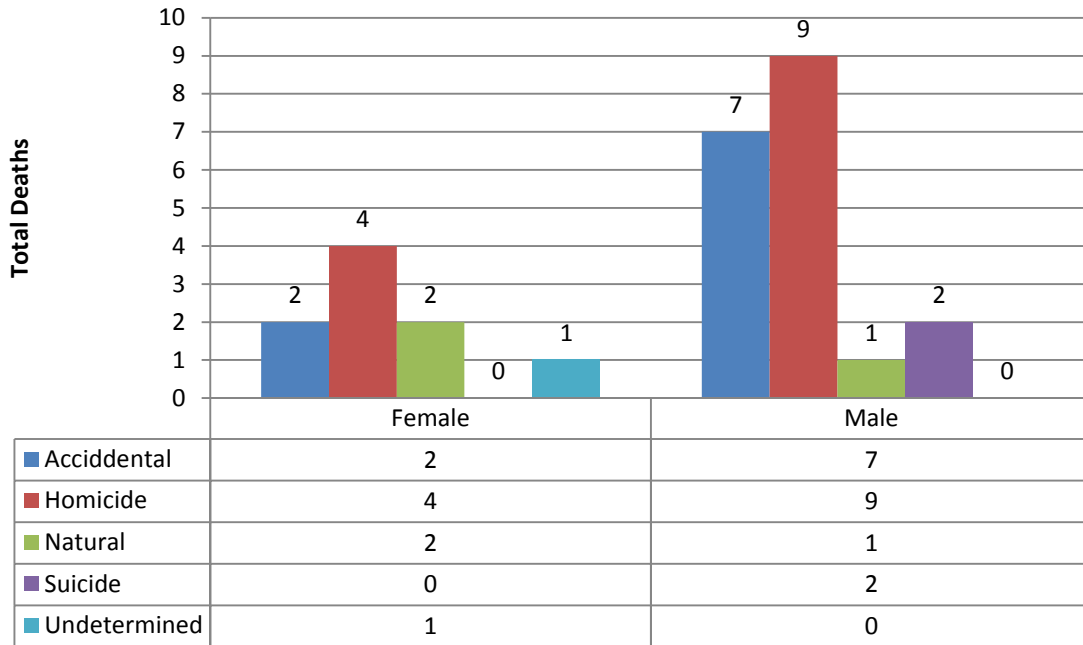
Total Number of Juvenile Deaths by Manner of Death and Race, 2015

Table 4.4: N=28, represents all juvenile deaths (1-17 years of age) by manner of death and race.

Race	Accident	Homicide	Natural	Suicide	Undetermined	Total
Asian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black	5	10	2	1	1	19
Hispanic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	4	3	1	1	0	9
Total	9	13	3	2	1	28

Total Number of Juvenile Deaths by Manner of Death and Gender, 2015

Figure 4.13: N=28, represents all juvenile deaths (1-17 years of age) by manner of death and gender.



Section 5: Motor Vehicle Deaths

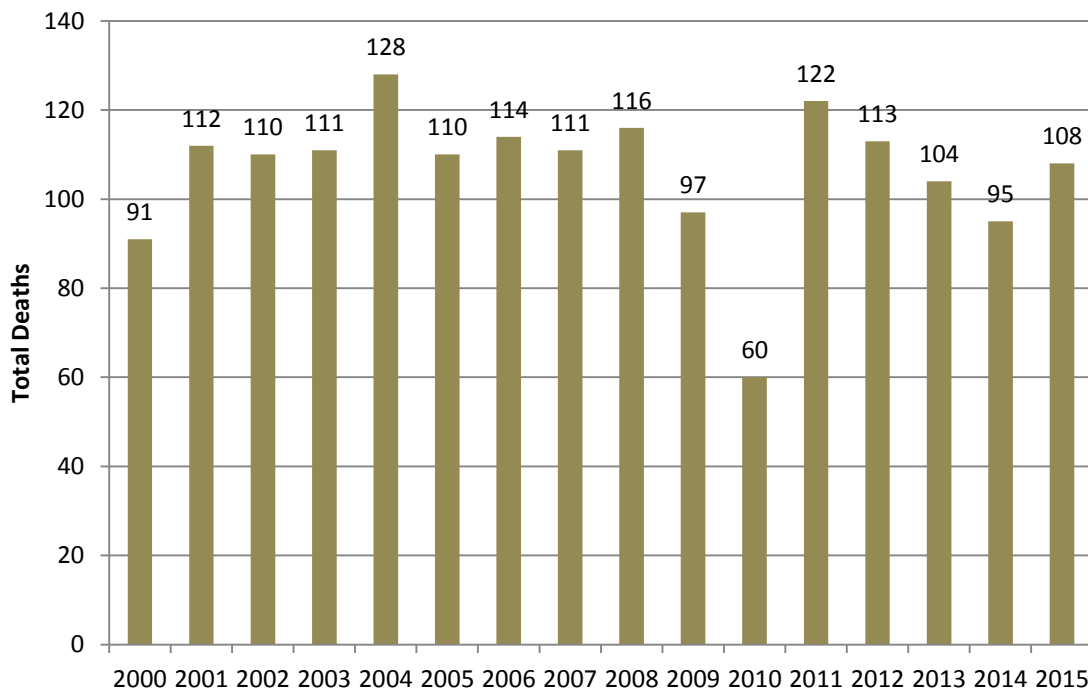
Motor vehicle deaths accounted for 11.92% of the deaths investigated by the JCCMEO in 2015. For the purpose of this report motor vehicle deaths include airplane, automobile, train, and pedestrian deaths.

There was a 13.68% increase in the total number of motor vehicle deaths, from 95 deaths in 2014 to 108 deaths in 2015; ending a three year decline since 2012.

Multi-vehicle collisions were the most common means of motor vehicle death, accounting for 39.81% of the deaths, followed by single vehicle collisions accounting for 35.18% of the deaths and motor vehicle-pedestrian collisions accounting for 20.37% of the deaths.

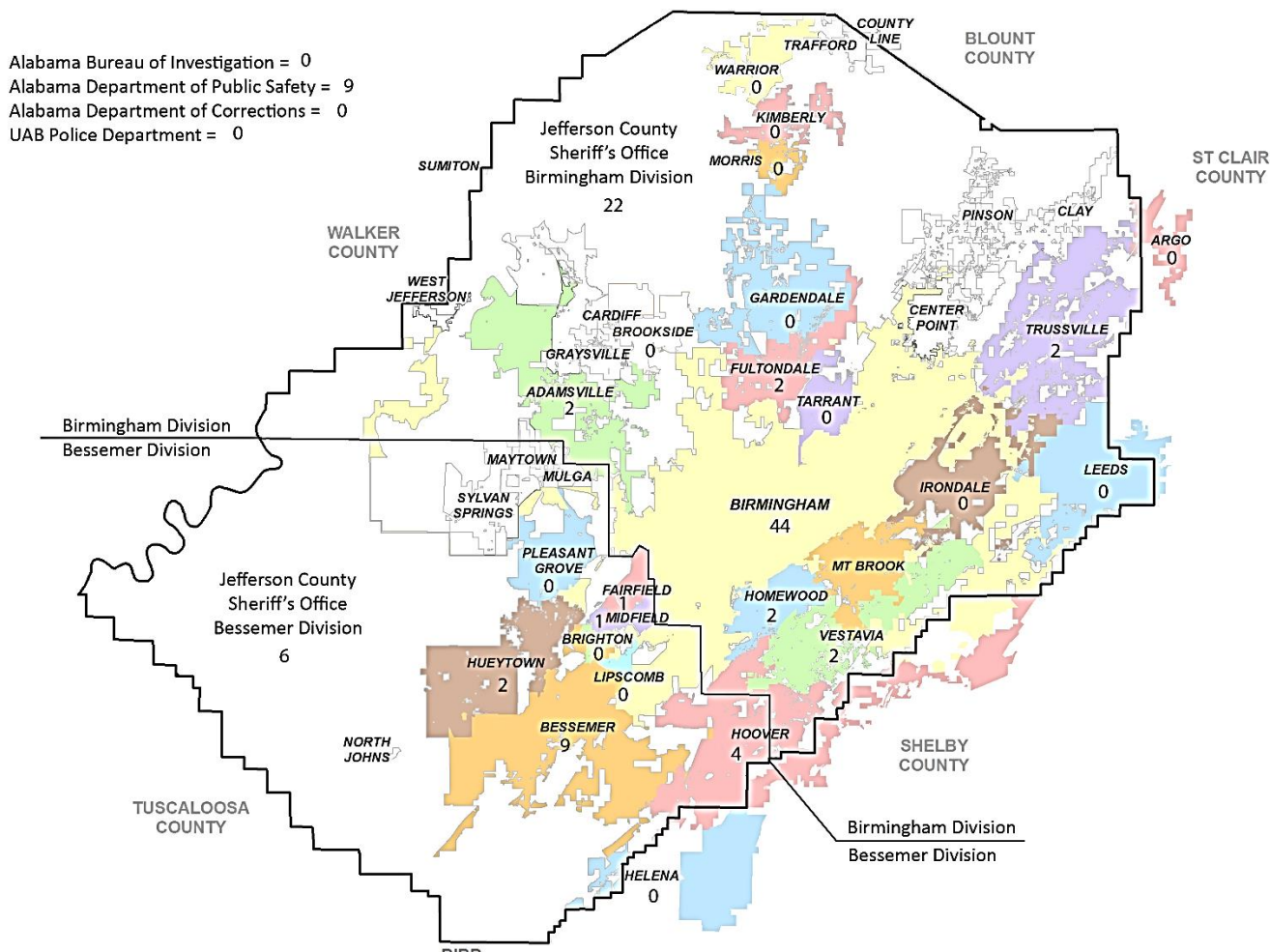
Total Number of Motor Vehicle Deaths by Year of Death 2000-2015

Figure 5.1: represents all motor vehicle deaths investigated by the JCCMEO.



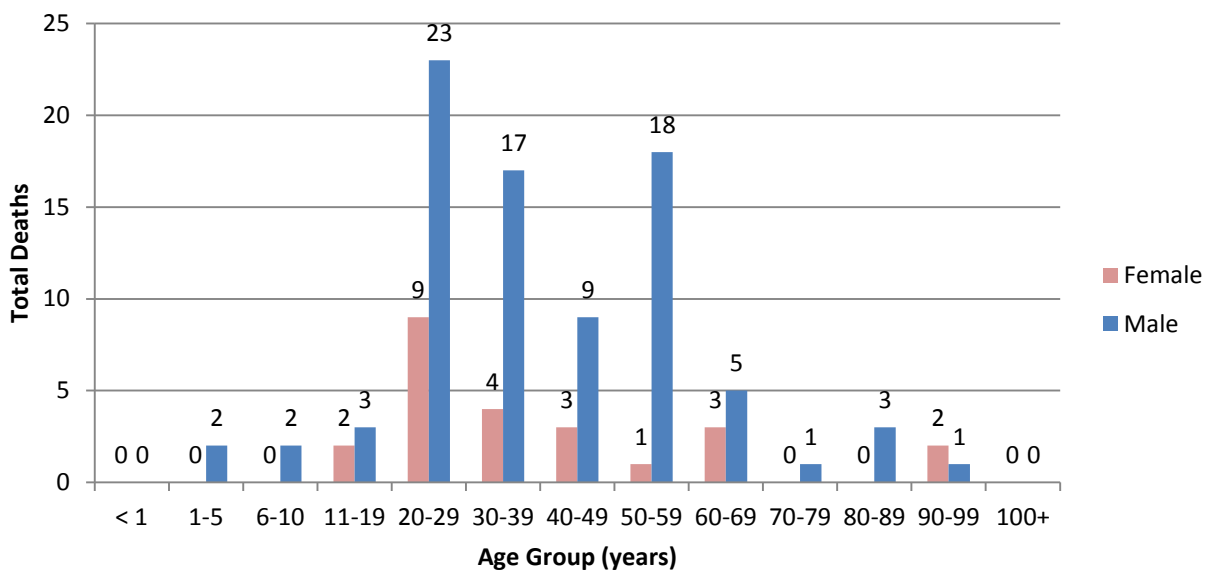
Total Number of Motor Vehicle Deaths by Law Enforcement Agency, 2015

Figure 5.2: N=108, represents all motor vehicle deaths by law enforcement agency.



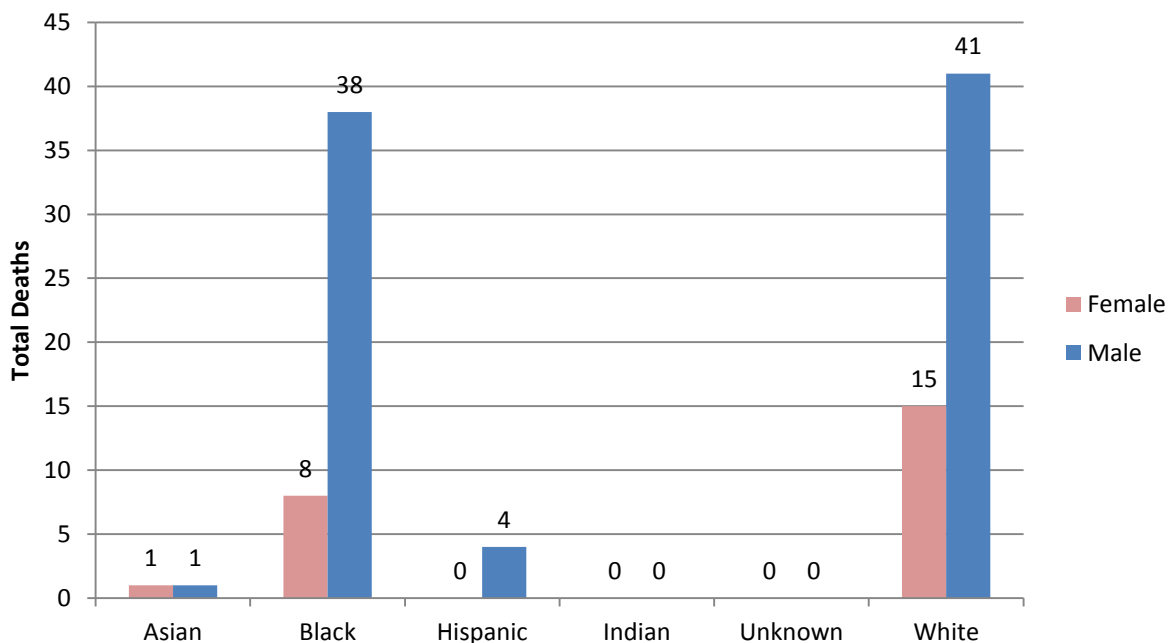
Total Number of Motor Vehicle Deaths by Gender and Age Group, 2015

Figure 5.3: N=108, represents all motor vehicle deaths by gender and age group.



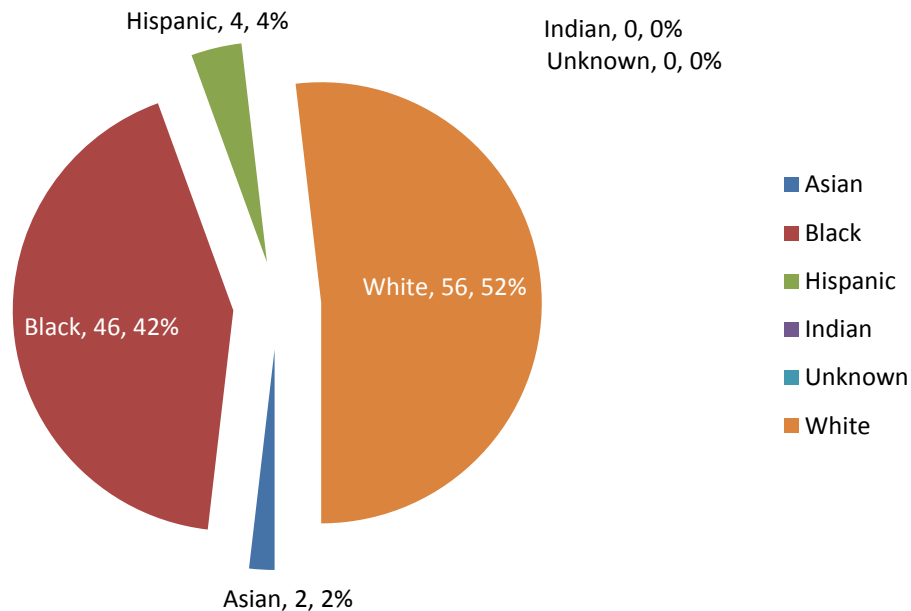
Total Number of Motor Vehicle Deaths by Gender and Race, 2015

Figure 5.4: N=108, represents all motor vehicle deaths by gender and race.



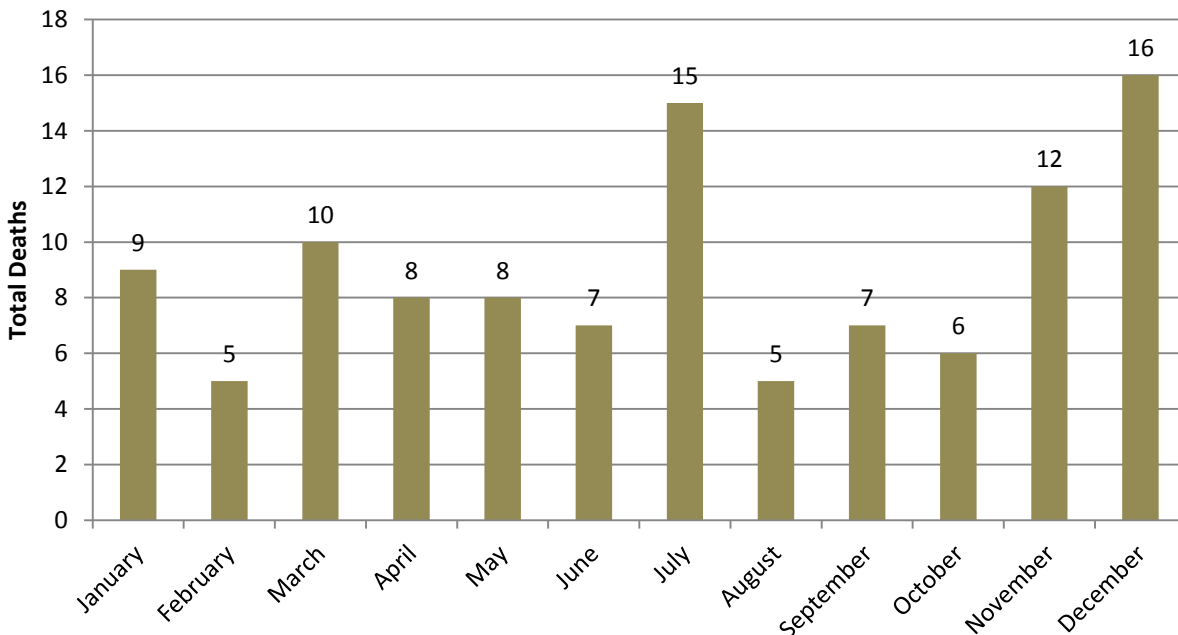
Percentage of Motor Vehicle Deaths by Race, 2015

Figure 5.5: N=108, represents all motor vehicle deaths by race.



Total Number of Motor Vehicle Deaths by Month of Death, 2015

Figure 5.6: N=108, represents all motor vehicle deaths by month of death.



Total Number of Motor Vehicle Deaths by Means of Death, 2015

Table 5.7: N=108, represents all motor vehicle deaths by means of death.

Means of Death	Total
Motor-vehicle:	
Bicycle	0
Single vehicle	38
Multiple vehicles	43
Train	3
Pedestrian:	
Motor vehicle	22
Train	2
Total	108

Section 6: Overdose Deaths

Overview

The data in this section represent all overdose deaths investigated by the Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner's Office in the 2015 calendar year where the direct cause of death was due to an overdose/toxic level of illicit drug(s), prescription medication(s), prescription opioid(s), ethanol (alcohol), or other poison(s).

This section does not reflect data on other types of deaths where drugs or ethanol contributed to the death, but was not the direct cause of death. An example of a death that would not be included in this section would be a motor vehicle fatality where the decedent/driver of the vehicle was intoxicated, but the immediate cause of death was trauma due to the collision.

For the purpose of this report overdoses have been categorized into the following four Means of Death:

- Drug - refers to all overdoses where the direct cause of death was due to illicit drug(s) or, the direct cause of death was due to prescription medication(s) and/or prescription opioid(s) in combination with illicit drug(s). For the purpose of this report "illicit drugs" refers to illegal street type drugs (i.e. cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, etc.).
- Prescription Medication - refers to all overdoses where the direct cause of death was due to only prescription medication(s).
- Prescription Opioid – refers to all overdoses where the direct cause of death was due to only prescription opioid(s).
- Ethanol (alcohol) – refers to all overdoses where the direct cause of death was due to ethanol (alcohol). This includes both acute alcohol intoxication (5 deaths) and chronic alcoholism (22 deaths).

Often drug overdoses are found to be a combination of illicit drugs, prescription medications, ethanol (alcohol), and/or other poisons; therefore a single death might be represented multiple times in this section. Because of this it is important to recognize that in the following graphs and tables the totals for each of the drugs represents the number of occurrences that particular drug was found to be either the single cause of death or a component in conjunction with another drug(s) that combined was the cause of death.

General Statistics and Notable Trends

There was a 14% decrease in the total drug deaths this past year, from 257 drug deaths in 2014 to 221 drug deaths in 2015.

There was a 15% decrease in accidental deaths, from 252 deaths in 2014 to 213 deaths in 2015. There was a 133% increase in suicidal deaths, from 3 deaths in 2014 to 7 deaths in 2015, but these numbers are small.

There was a decrease in two of the four Means of Death categories:

- Drug - 30% decrease, from 191 deaths in 2014 to 133 deaths in 2015.
- Prescription Medication – 58% decrease, from 34 deaths in 2014 to 14 deaths in 2015. There was a decrease across all drugs in the prescription medication category with the exception fluoxetine (Prozac).
- Prescription Opioid – 131% increase, from 32 deaths in 2014 to 74 deaths in 2015, largely due to a significant increase in fentanyl deaths. There was a decrease across all prescription opioid drugs, with the exception of fentanyl.
- Ethanol (alcohol) - 50% increase in deaths due to ethanol (alcohol), from 18 deaths in 2014 to 27 deaths in 2015.

There was a 96% increase in deaths due to fentanyl, from 25 deaths in 2014 to 49 deaths in 2015. Note that in some cases fentanyl and heroin were present together. This may be because the decedent was using both fentanyl and heroin, or it may be that fentanyl is replacing heroin in part or in whole in a dose purchased illicitly.

There was a 29% decrease in deaths due to heroin, from 138 deaths in 2014 to 97 deaths in 2015.

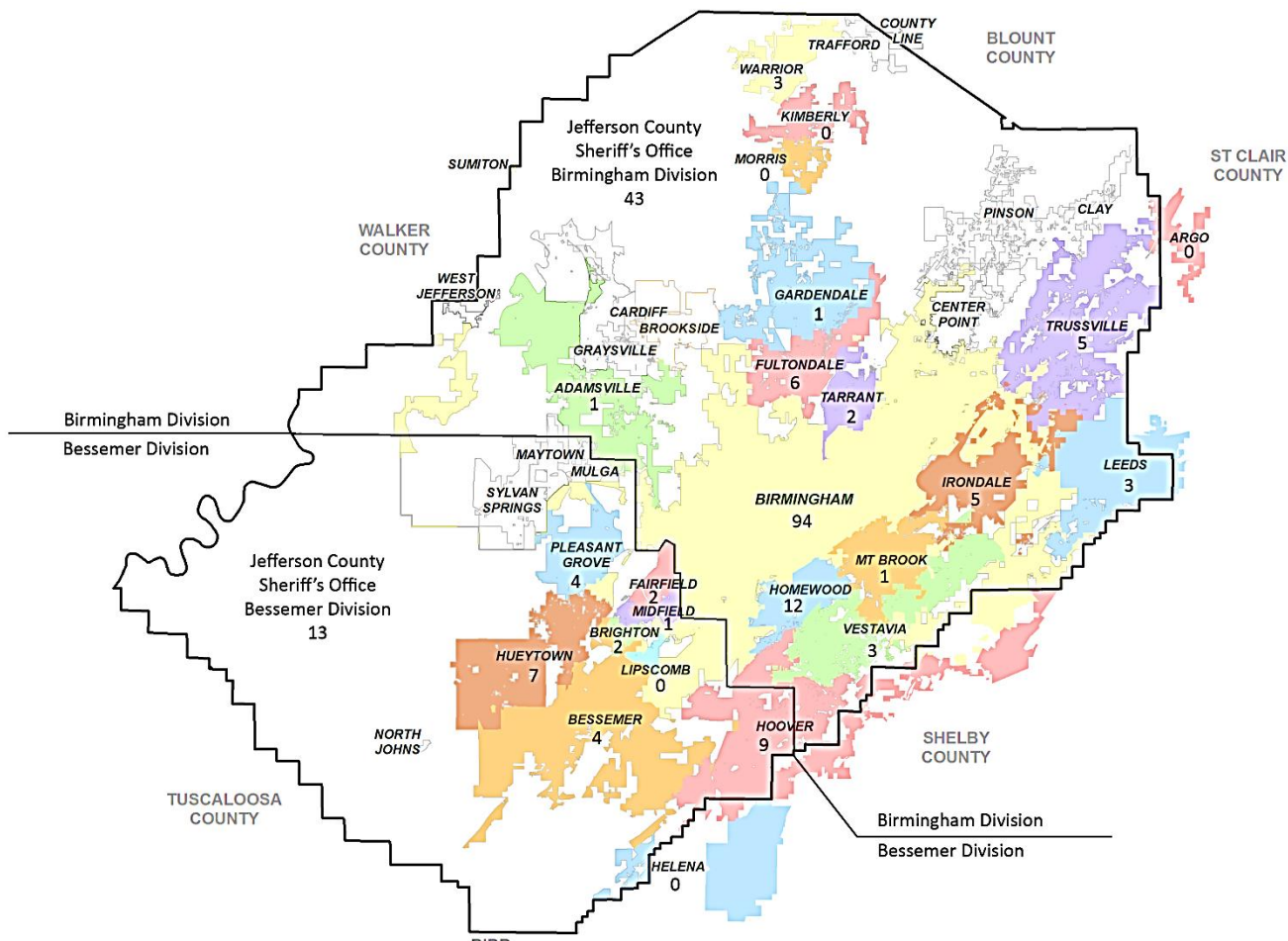
There was a 2% increase in deaths due to cocaine, from 37 deaths in 2014 to 38 deaths in 2015.

There was a 70% decrease in deaths due to methamphetamine, from 17 deaths in 2014 to 5 deaths in 2015.

White males in their 30's were found to have the highest mortality rate across all drug categories with the exception of prescription medication and ethanol (alcohol). White males in their 50's were found to have the highest mortality rate in both prescription medication and ethanol (alcohol) categories.

Map: Drug Deaths by Law Enforcement Jurisdiction and Place of Death, 2015

Figure 6.1: N=221, represents all overdose by law enforcement jurisdiction and place of death.

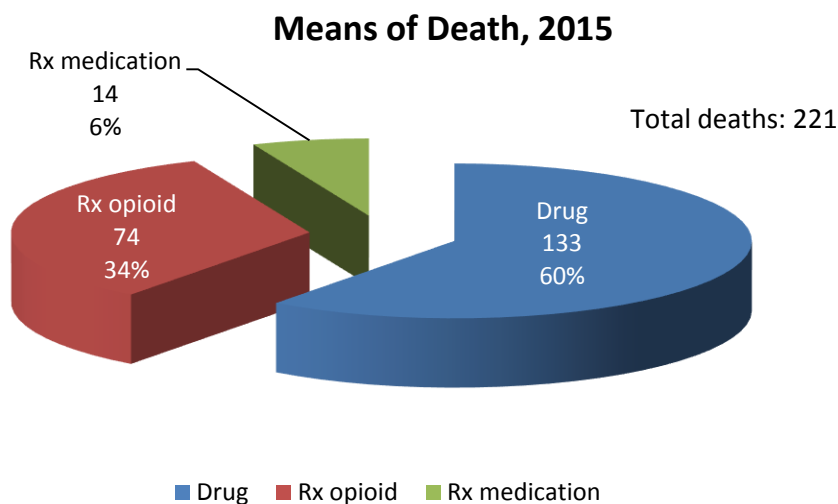


Means of Death, 2015

Table 6.1: N=221, represents all overdoses, Means of Death: drug, Rx opioid, and Rx medication; number of deaths in right-hand column.

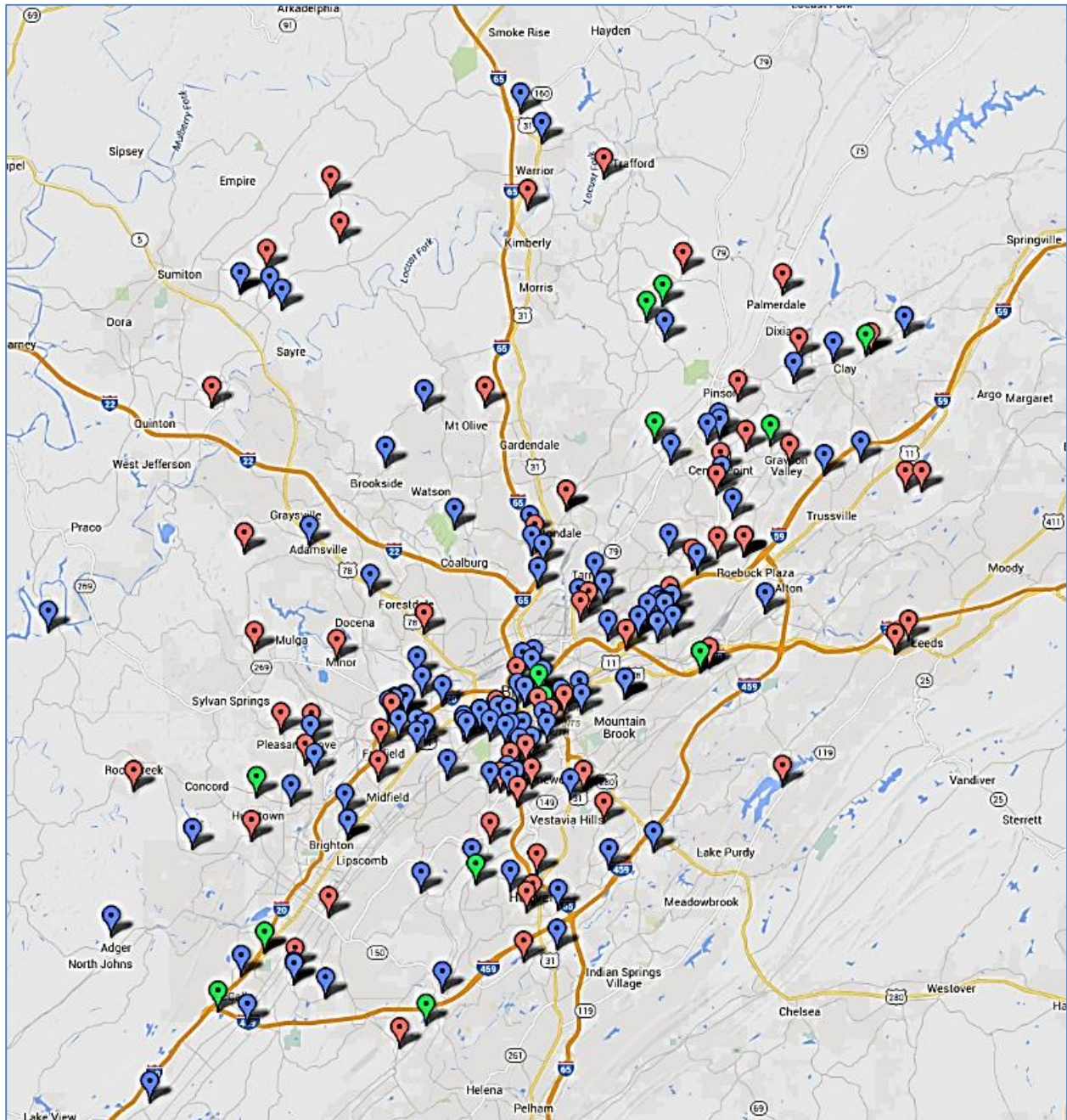
Month		Age		Race		Gender		Law Enforcement		Division	
January	31	0-19	2	W	165	M	154	Adamsville	1	Birmingham	185
February	18	20-29	42	B	55	F	67	Bessemer	4	Bessemer	36
March	27	30-39	72	H	1			Birmingham	94		
April	26	40-49	51	A	0			Brighton	2		
May	12	50-59	38	I	0			Fairfield	2		
June	16	60-69	16					Fultondale	6		
July	21	70+	0					Gardendale	1		
August	11							Homewood	12		
September	23							Hoover	9		
October	12							Hueytown	7		
November	9							Irondale	5		
December	15							Jefferson County	56		
								Leeds	3		
								Midfield	1		
								Mountain Brook	1		
								Pleasant Grove	4		
								Tarrant	2		
								Trussville	5		
								Vestavia Hills	3		
								Warrior	3		




Figure 6.2: N=221, represents all drug, Rx opioid, and Rx medication overdoses.



Map: Means of Death by Place of Death, 2015

Figure 6.3: N=221, represents all drug, Rx opioid, and Rx medication overdoses by place of death.



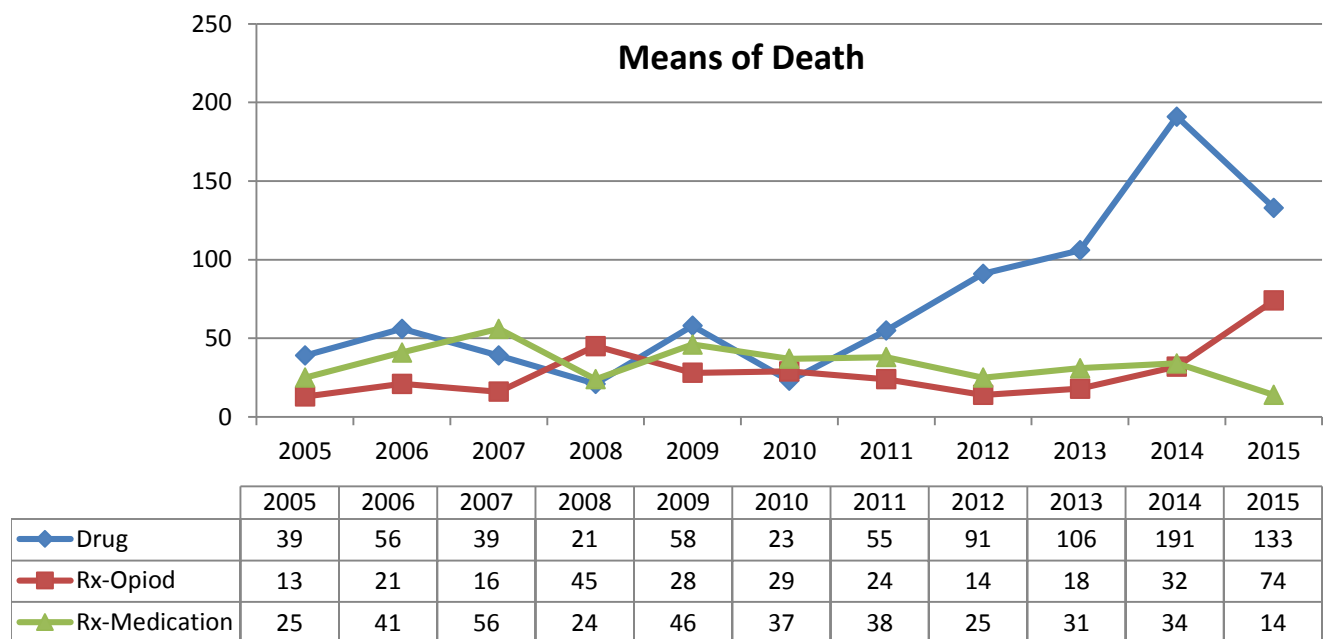
-  = Drug, 133 deaths, 60%
-  = Prescription opioid, 74 deaths, 34%
-  = Prescription medication, 14 deaths, 6%

Historical Summary: Means of Death, 2005-2015

Table 6.2: Overdoses by Means of Death.

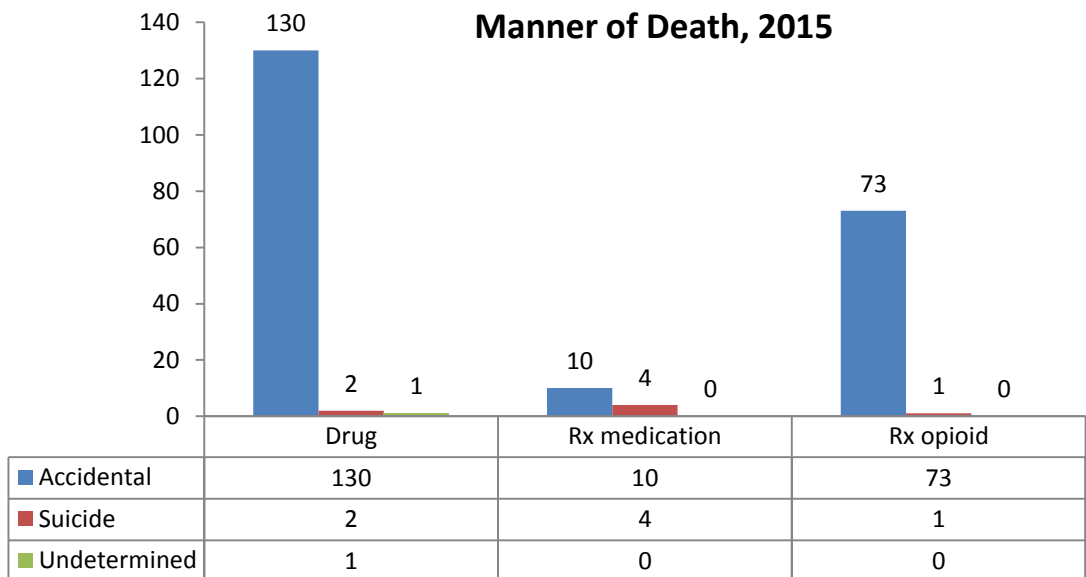
Year	Drug	Prescription Medication	Prescription Opioid	=	Total Drug Deaths
2005	39	25	13	=	77
2006	56	41	21	=	118
2007	39	56	16	=	111
2008	21	24	45	=	90
2009	58	46	28	=	132
2010	23	37	29	=	89
2011	55	38	24	=	117
2012	91	25	14	=	130
2013	106	31	18	=	155
2014	191	34	32	=	257
2015	133	14	74	=	221

Figure 6.4: Overdoses by Means of Death.



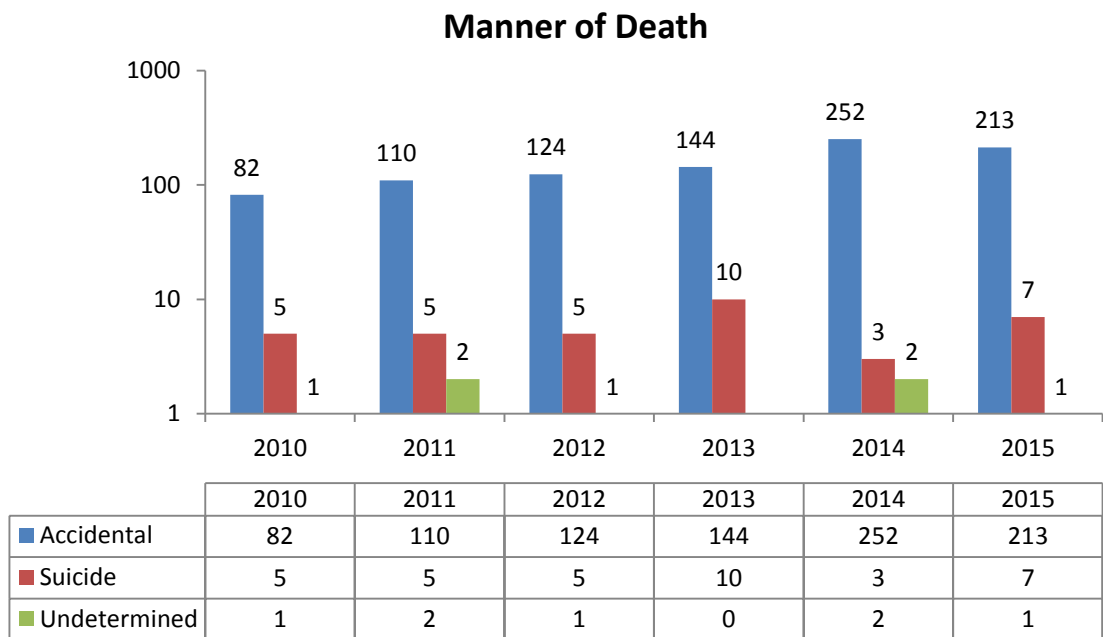
Manner of Death, 2015

Figure 6.5: N=221, represents all drug, Rx opioid, and Rx medication overdoses.



Historical Summary: Manner of Death, 2010-2015

Figure 6.6: represents all drugs, Rx opioid, and Rx medication overdoses.



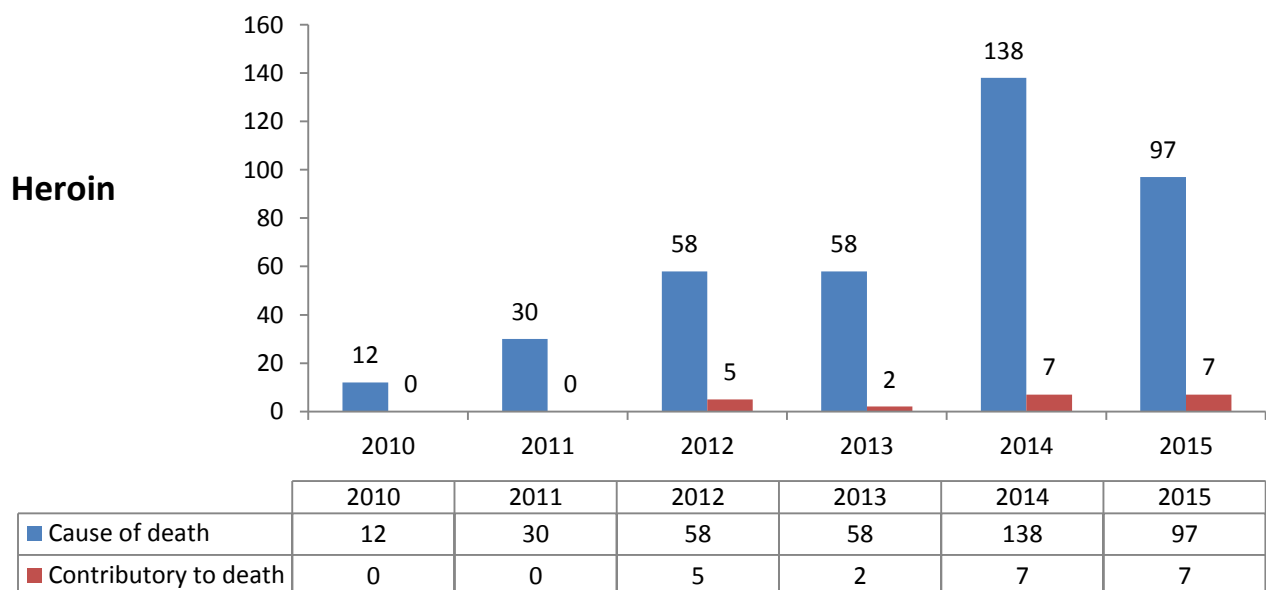
Heroin

Table 6.3: N=97, represents all 2015 cases where heroin as a single component or combined with other drugs was the cause of death; number of deaths in right-hand column.

Month		Age		Race		Gender		Law Enforcement		Division	
January	6	0-19	1	W	78	M	75	Bessemer	1	Birmingham	84
February	8	20-29	27	B	19	F	22	Birmingham	50	Bessemer	13
March	14	30-39	31	H	0			Brighton	1		
April	17	40-49	21	A	0			Fultondale	4		
May	4	50-59	14	I	0			Homewood	6		
June	6	60-69	3					Hoover	4		
July	5	70+	0					Hueytown	2		
August	3							Irondale	1		
September	11							Jefferson County	20		
October	11							Midfield	1		
November	6							Pleasant Grove	1		
December	6							Tarrant	2		
								Trussville	1		
								Vestavia Hills	1		
								Warrior	2		

Historical Summary: Heroin, 2010-2015

Figure 6.7: includes all cases where heroin as a single component or combined with other drugs was the direct cause or contributing factor in the death.



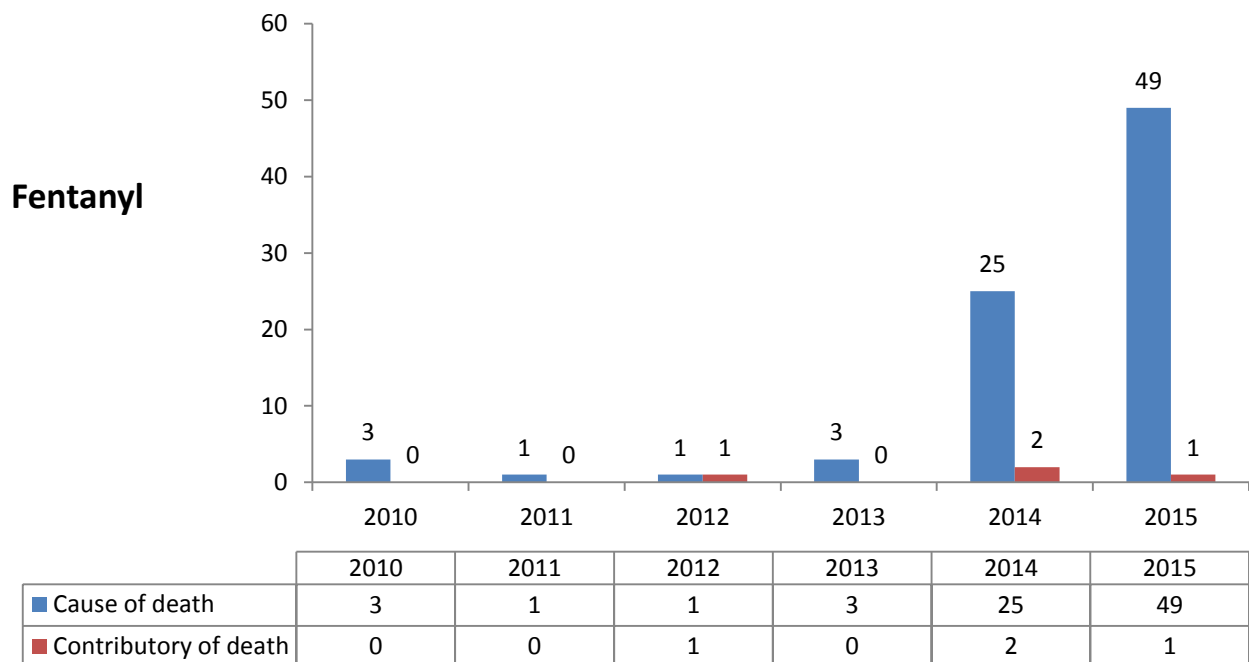
Fentanyl

Table 6.4: N=49, represents all 2015 cases where fentanyl as a single component or combined with other drugs was the direct cause of the death; number of deaths in right-hand column.

Month		Age		Race		Gender		Law Enforcement		Division	
January	15	0-19	1	W	40	M	33	Birmingham	17	Birmingham	44
February	8	20-29	8	B	9	F	16	Fairfield	1	Bessemer	5
March	4	30-39	26	H	0			Fultondale	3		
April	5	40-49	9	A	0			Homewood	3		
May	1	50-59	5	I	0			Hueytown	1		
June	3	60+	0					Irondale	3		
July	5							Jefferson County	13		
August	2							Leeds	1		
September	5							Pleasant Grove	1		
October	0							Trussville	2		
November	0							Vestavia Hills	3		
December	1							Warrior	1		

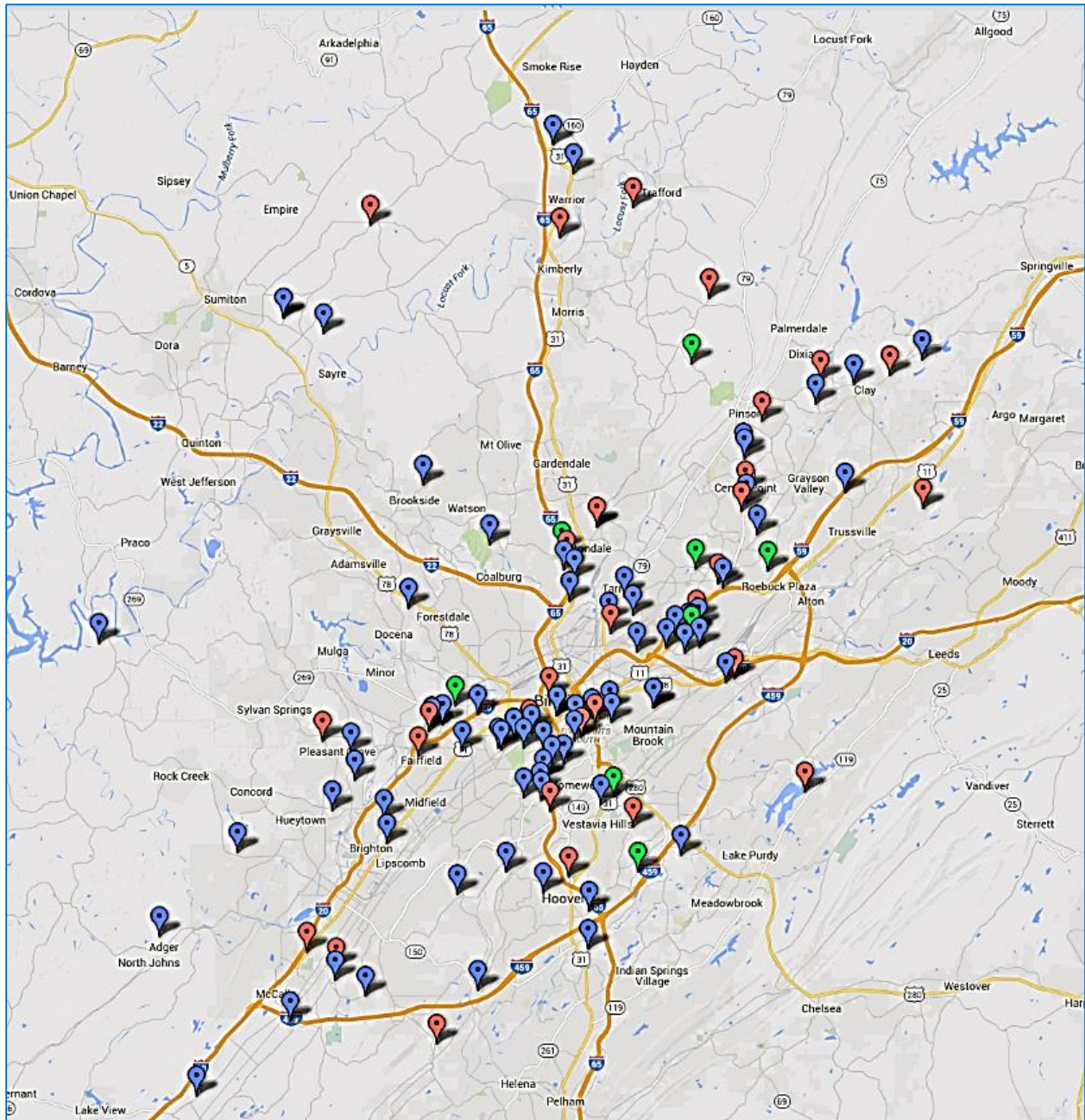
Historical Summary: Fentanyl, 2010-2015

Figure 6.8: includes all cases where fentanyl as a single component or combined with other drugs was the direct cause or contributing factor in the death.



Map: 2015 Heroin and Fentanyl by Place of Death

Figure 6.9: N=146, represents all heroin, fentanyl, and heroin/fentanyl deaths by place of death.



= Heroin, 97 deaths

= Fentanyl, 49 deaths

= Heroin/Fentanyl combination, 8 deaths. In the above listed heroin and fentanyl deaths, eight (8) of those deaths the direct cause of death was found to be due to a heroin and fentanyl combination.

Prescription Medication and Prescription Opioid

Prescription Medication Deaths: 2015

Table 6.5: N=14, refers to all overdoses where the direct cause of death was due to only prescription medication(s); number of deaths in right-hand column.

Month		Age		Race		Gender		Law Enforcement		Division	
January	3	0-19	0	W	13	M	9	Birmingham	3	Birmingham	10
February	0	20-29	1	B	1	F	5	Hoover	2	Bessemer	4
March	1	30-39	3	H	0			Hueytown	2		
April	1	40-49	4	A	0			Irondale	1		
May	0	50-59	6	I	0			Jefferson County	6		
June	0	60+	0								
July	3										
August	1										
September	3										
October	0										
November	0										
December	2										

Prescription Opioid Deaths: 2015

Table 6.6: N=74, represents all overdoses where the direct cause of death was due to only prescription opioid(s); number of deaths in right-hand column.

Month		Age		Race		Gender		Law Enforcement		Division	
January	20	0-19	1	W	60	M	44	Bessemer	2	Birmingham	61
February	7	20-29	11	B	14	F	30	Birmingham	18	Bessemer	13
March	7	30-39	28	H	0			Fairfield	2		
April	5	40-49	16	A	0			Fultondale	2		
May	7	50-59	13	I	0			Gardendale	1		
June	7	60-69	5					Homewood	4		
July	7	70+	0					Hoover	3		
August	4							Hueytown	2		
September	6							Irondale	3		
October	1							Jefferson County	24		
November	1							Leeds	3		
December	2							Mountain Brook	1		
								Pleasant Grove	3		
								Trussville	3		
								Vestavia Hills	2		
								Warrior	1		

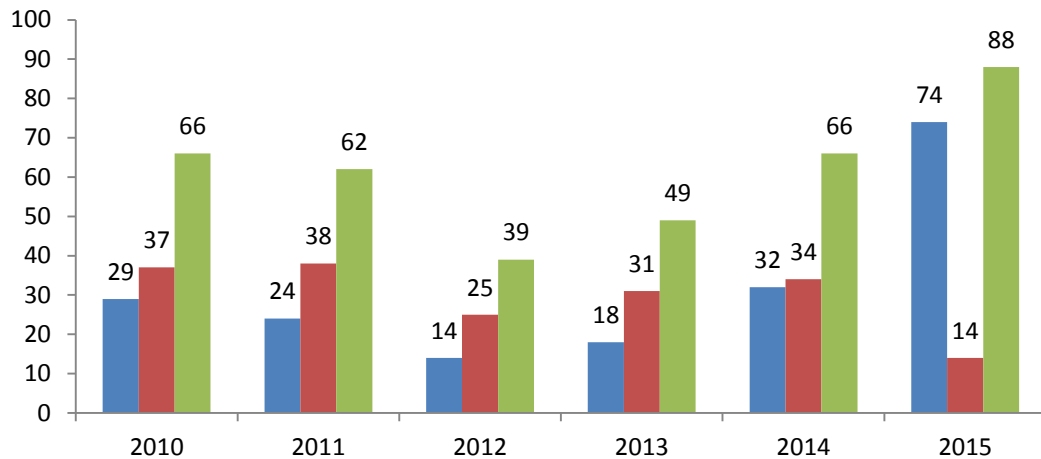
Most Common Prescription Medications Causing Death: 2010-2015

Table 6.7: Rx medications and Rx opioids. A single death might contain multiple drugs therefore; a single death might be represented multiple times in this table. The total for each drug represents the number of occurrences for that calendar year where that particular drug was found to be either the single cause of death or a component in conjunction with another drug(s) that combined was the cause of death. Also, the deaths represented in this table might be a result of a combination of prescription drug(s) and illicit drug(s). Often drug overdoses are found to be a combination of both prescription and illicit drugs.

Prescription Medications	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Opioids:						
Hydrocodone	8	7	8	12	28	11
Hydromorphone (Dilaudid)	0	0	0	2	0	1
Fentanyl	3	1	1	3	25	49
Methadone	22	13	11	21	21	17
Morphine	10	17	12	5	7	3
Oxycodone	4	8	4	13	21	11
Tramadol	2	0	1	6	5	3
Benzodiazepines:						
Alprazolam (Xanax)	5	3	7	12	32	8
Clonazepam ((Klonopin)	0	0	0	1	0	0
Diazepam (Valium)	3	1	2	7	11	5
Barbiturates:						
Butalbital	0	0	0	1	1	0
Phenobarbital	0	0	0	0	1	0
Antidepressants:						
Citalopram (Celexa)	4	2	1	1	2	0
Nortriptyline (Palmelor)	2	1	0	1	0	0
Velafaxine (Effexor)	0	0	0	2	0	0
Other:						
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	2	1	2	1	1	0
Amphetamine	3	0	1	0	2	1
Carisoprodol (Soma)	1	3	0	2	4	0
Fluoxetine (Prozac)	3	2	1	1	1	4
Gabapentin	0	0	0	0	1	0
Promethazine (Phenergan)	0	0	1	3	4	1
Quetiapine (Seroquel)	1	0	0	2	2	1
Sertraline (Zoloft)	0	0	0	0	3	0
Trazodone (Oleptro)	0	0	0	1	1	0
Gamma-Hydroxybutyrate (GHB)	1	0	1	0	1	0

Historical Summary: Prescription Opioids and Prescription Medications, 2010-2015

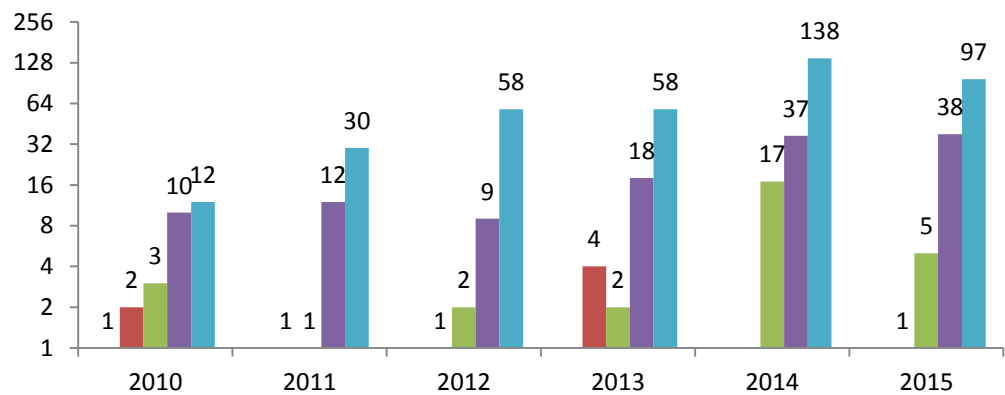
Figure 6.10: Rx opioid and Rx medication.



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Rx-opioids	29	24	14	18	32	74
Rx-medications	37	38	25	31	34	14
Total	66	62	39	49	66	88

Illicit Drugs/Poisons, 2010-2015

Figure 6.11: illicit drugs and poisons.



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Ethylene Glycol (antifreeze)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Difluoroethane (refrigerant)	2	1	1	4	0	1
Methamphetamine	3	1	2	2	17	5
Cocaine	10	12	9	18	37	38
Heroin	12	30	58	58	138	97

Ethanol (alcohol), 2015

Table 6.8: N=27, represents all deaths where the Means of death was ethanol (alcohol) and includes both chronic alcoholism and acute alcohol intoxication. Five (5) of the deaths represented here were due to acute ethanol (alcohol) intoxication; number of deaths in right-hand column.

Month		Age		Race		Gender		Jurisdiction		Division	
January	2	0-19	0	W	18	M	18	Bessemer	2	Birmingham	25
February	2	20-29	1	B	9	F	9	Birmingham	14	Bessemer	2
March	3	30-39	1	H	0			Fultondale	1		
April	3	40-49	8	A	0			Jefferson County	6		
May	4	50-59	11	I	0			Leeds	1		
June	1	60-69	5					Vestavia Hills	4		
July	5	70-79	1								
August	1	80+	0								
September	2										
October	2										
November	1										
December	2										

Historical Summary: Ethanol (alcohol), 2010-2015

Figure 6.12: represents all deaths where the means of death was ethanol (alcohol) and, includes both chronic alcoholism and acute alcohol intoxication.

