

# 2023

## LAW ENFORCEMENT-RELATED DEATHS IN TENNESSEE

- *DEADLY USE OF FORCE*
- *ARREST RELATED NON-FORCIBLE DEATHS (ARNFD)*
- *DEATHS IN CUSTODY (DCRA)*



A PUBLICATION OF THE TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTER | CJIS SUPPORT UNIT



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**DAVID B. RAUSCH**  
Director

March 28, 2024

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation would like to present the 2023 Law Enforcement-Related Deaths report. This publication which satisfies the requirements set forth in Tennessee Code Annotated, § 38-10-102, has been produced by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation's CJIS Support Center, and provides information on qualifying incidents as submitted by the state's law enforcement agencies to the TBI through the CrimeInsight Portal.

I am very proud of the efforts of all participating law enforcement agencies in the state to provide the data necessary to produce this report. Our combined efforts have resulted in a successful reporting program and the relationships necessary to produce a report of this nature.

Sincerely,

David B. Rausch  
Director



## **INTRODUCTION**

Annually, the TBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division collects crime data through the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS). However, Law Enforcement-Related Deaths fall outside the scope of TIBRS and, therefore, are collected in the CrimeInsight portal using the appropriate web entry utility.

According to T.C.A. § 38-10-102, Law Enforcement related Death is defined as “the death of an individual in custody, whether in prison, in a jail, or otherwise in the custody of law enforcement pursuant to an arrest or a transfer between institutions of any kind; or the death of an individual potentially resulting from an interaction with law enforcement, while the law enforcement officer is on duty, or while the law enforcement officer is off duty but performing activities that are within the scope of the officer's law enforcement duties without regard to whether the individual was in custody or whether a weapon was involved.”

An Arrest Related Non-Forcible Death (ARNFD) is any death that is attributed to suicide, alcohol, drug intoxication, or medical conditions (e.g. cardiac arrest) that occurs during the process of arrest by, or in the custody of, state or local law enforcement personnel. Though ARNFDs are not common, they do fall within the scope of the “Law Enforcement Related Deaths” definition. However, these particular incidents are not reported in CrimeInsight, but are instead reported using a form found on the TBI website.

## **SCOPE OF STUDY**

For the purpose of this study, the TBI's CJIS Division divided Law Enforcement Related Death data into three sections: Deadly Use of Force, Arrest-Related Non-Forcible Deaths, and Deaths in Custody – all of which meet the T.C.A. §38-10-102 definition.

Data presented in this study represents numbers for calendar year 2023 and only contains information pertaining to deaths which occurred in the presence of law enforcement or deaths that occurred while in custody, such as in a local jail or prison.

Data in this study does not include occurrences where an officer fired his/her weapon in a situation not resulting in a death or when a subject sustained a serious bodily injury directly related to use of force by a law enforcement officer. Additionally, this study does not include deaths occurring in non-residential community-based programs run by jails, such as house arrest, work programs, community service, day reporting, or electronic monitoring.

The data in this publication is based solely on the raw data provided to the TBI by law enforcement agencies. Any statistical analysis does not account for representational Tennessee demographics, and as such rates of occurrence may be different when those factors are considered.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Each employing agency is responsible for submitting a report for its own officers connected to incidents meeting the criteria of the data collection. Jails and prisons are responsible for submitting a CJ-9 form to the TBI for deaths which occurred in their facility. The data in the publication is sent to us by their respective agencies, TBI does not edit or alter this data in any way. All data is presented as it was received.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT-RELATED DEATHS BY AGENCY TYPE**

In 2023, 72 agencies reported a Law Enforcement-Related Death. Some agencies reported multiple events during the reporting period, while no deaths were reported by college/university law enforcement agencies.

### Reporting Agencies by Type:

36 Jails/Prisons

20 Police Departments

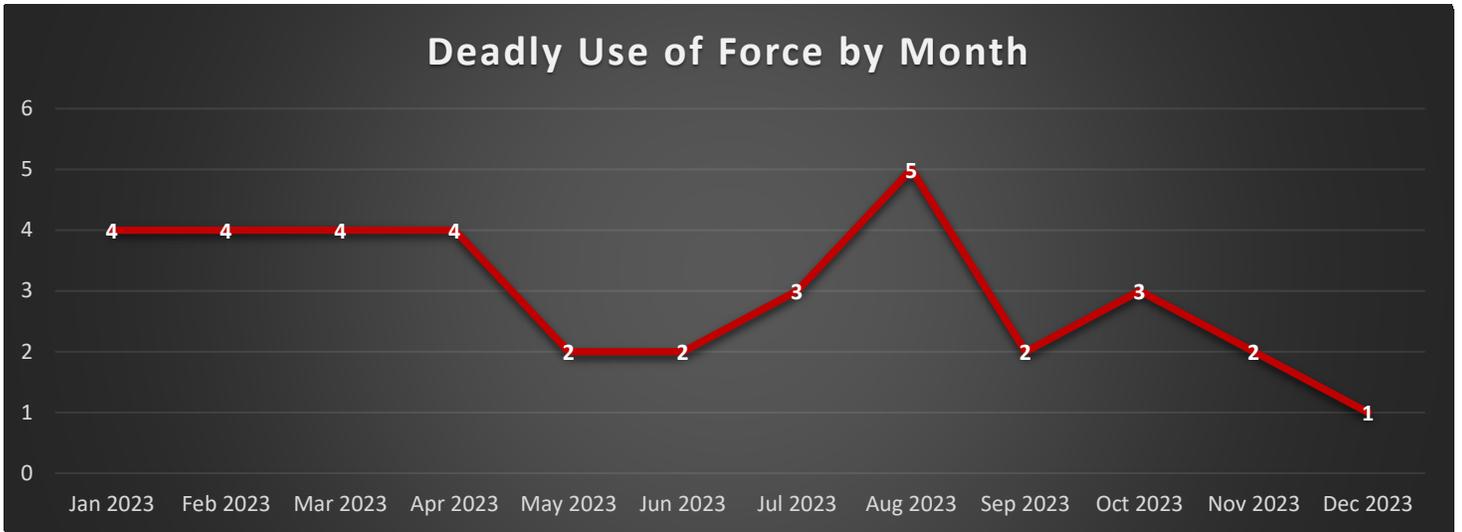
13 Sheriff's Offices

1 State Agency

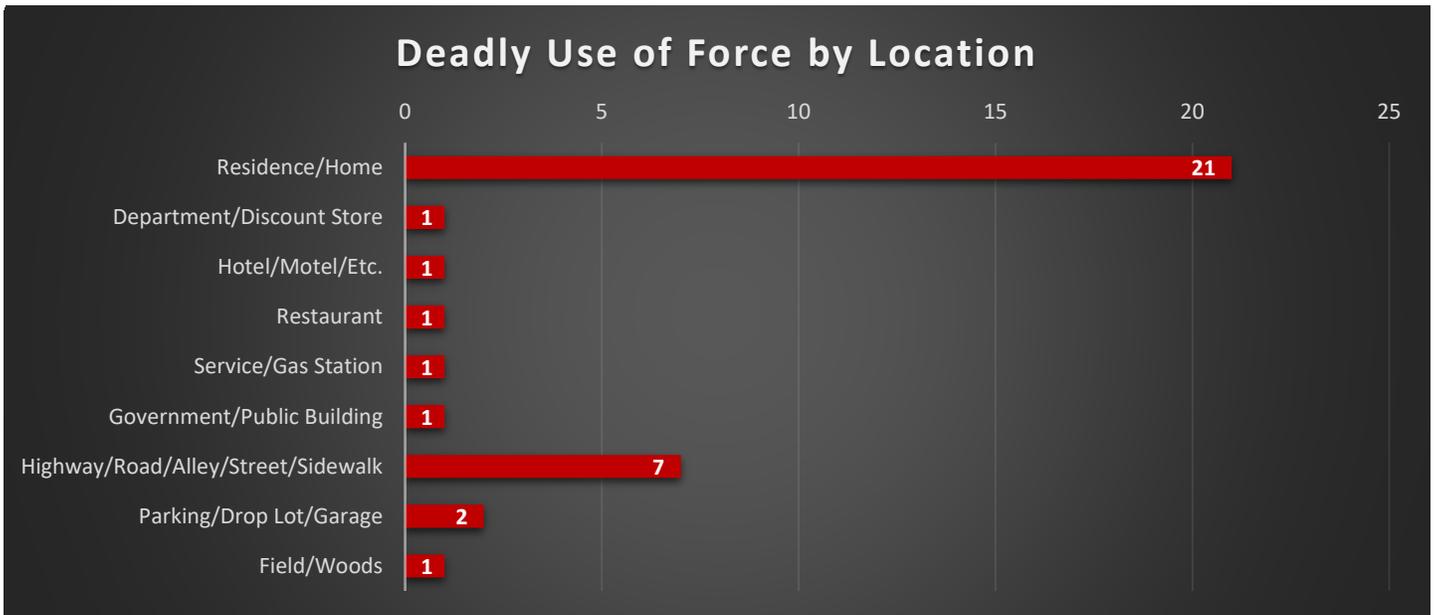
2 Drug Task Forces

All data used in this publication was retrieved on 2/21/2024. As agencies continue to update their records, there is the possibility that numbers may change. Throughout the report several data points are categorized as “Pending Further Investigation.” At the time this data was retrieved these points were still under review by the relevant agency, and as those investigations are completed, those agencies are able to amend their reports with more accurate information. Although the data may change, the report will not be updated.

## SECTION 1: DEADLY USE OF FORCE

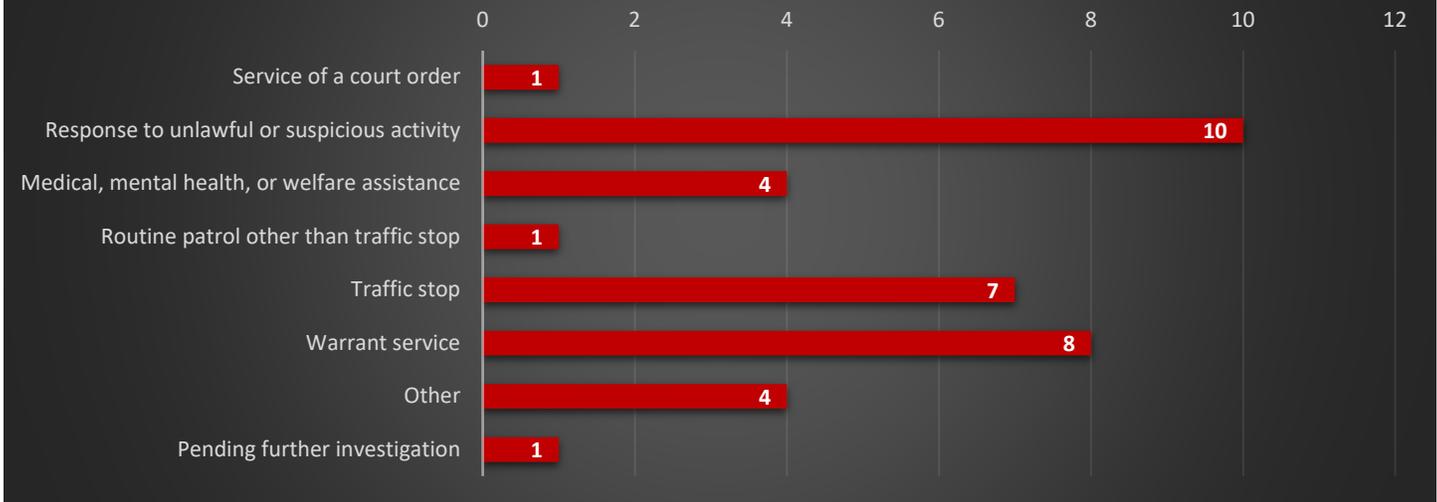


In 2023, there were 36 incidents involving a deadly use of force. Deadly Use of Force incidents occurred at a relatively consistent rate throughout the year, typically with 2 to 4 incidents per month. The outliers to this were in August, with 5 incidents, or 13.89% of total incidents, and December with 1 incident, 2.78% of the total.



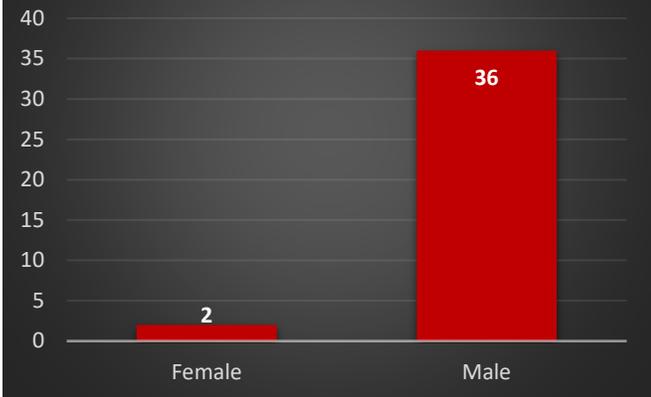
When examining deadly use of force incidents in 2023, two locations appearing the most frequently are Residence/Home, 58.33% of the total reported locations, and Highway/Road/Alley/Street/Sidewalk, 19.44% of the total. The other 7 locations reported only appear 1 to 2 times.

## Deadly Use of Force by Initial Contact

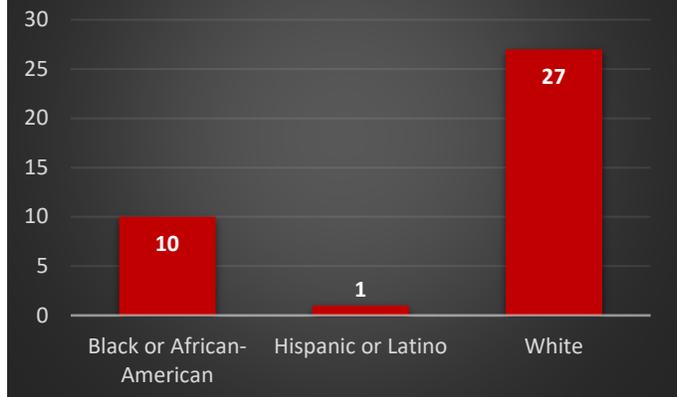


Another facet of data collected about deadly use of force incidents are the circumstances in which contact was made with the decedent. In 2023, the most commonly reported initial contact type was Response to unlawful or suspicious activity, comprising 27.78% of reported initial contact types. The second most common type was Warrant service comprising 22.22%, followed by Traffic stop, which comprised 19.44% of reported incidents.

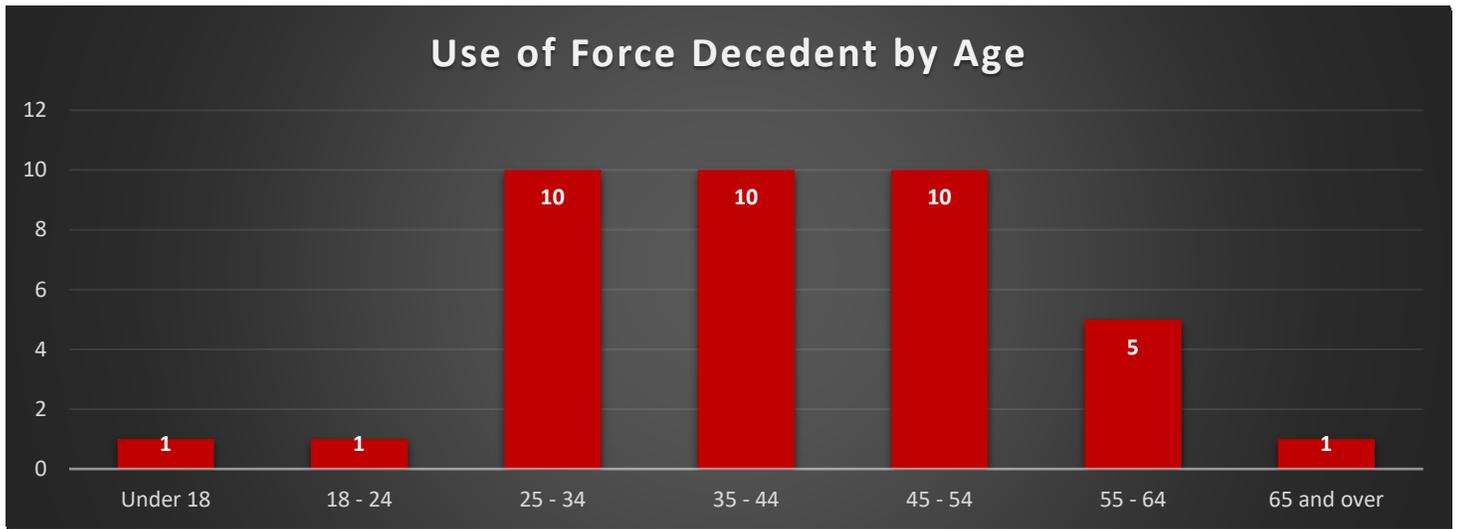
## Use of Force Decedent by Sex



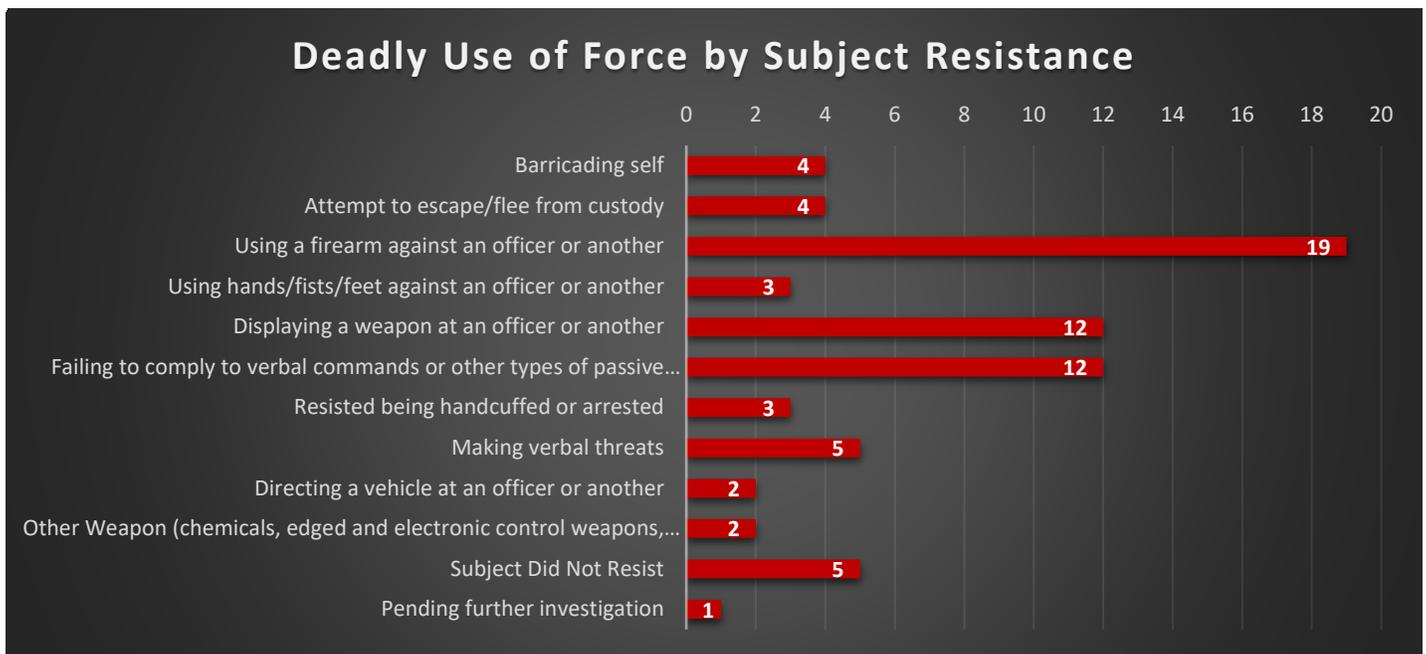
## Use of Force Decedent by Race and Ethnicity



Of the 36 reported deadly use of force incidents in 2023, 38 decedents were reported due to two incidents involving more than one subject. When looking at the decedents of deadly use of force incidents in 2023, nearly all of them were reported as being male, or 94.74% of decedents. When examining the race and ethnicity of deadly use of force decedents, those categorized as White make up the majority of those reported, at 71.05%. Those categorized as Black or African-American comprised the other large portion of reported decedents, or 26.32% of those reported.



Examining 2023 use of force decedents by age reveals those aged between 25-54 were affected at the same rate, with each ten year cluster of ages representing 26.32% of total decedents. Following these ages, 55-64 is the next most common, comprising 13.16% of decedents.



When reporting a deadly use of force incident, law enforcement agencies are able to input what type of resistance, if any, the subject showed during the event. In 2023, the most commonly reported type of resistance was Using a Firearm Against an Officer or Another, followed by Displaying a Weapon at an Officer or Another and Failing to Comply with Verbal Commands or Other Types of Passive Resistance, comprising 26.39%, 16.67%, and 16.67% of reported resistance types respectively. Please note, multiple resistance types may be flagged for any given incident, resulting in a higher total than deadly use of force incidents.

## Deadly Use of Force Subject Armed



Relating to subject resistance, law enforcement agencies also report on whether or not the subject in a deadly use of force incident was armed at the time. In 2023, nearly all deadly use of force decedents were reported as being armed with 86.84% decedents being reported as such. Of the remainder, only three, or 7.89% of decedents, were definitively reported as being unarmed.

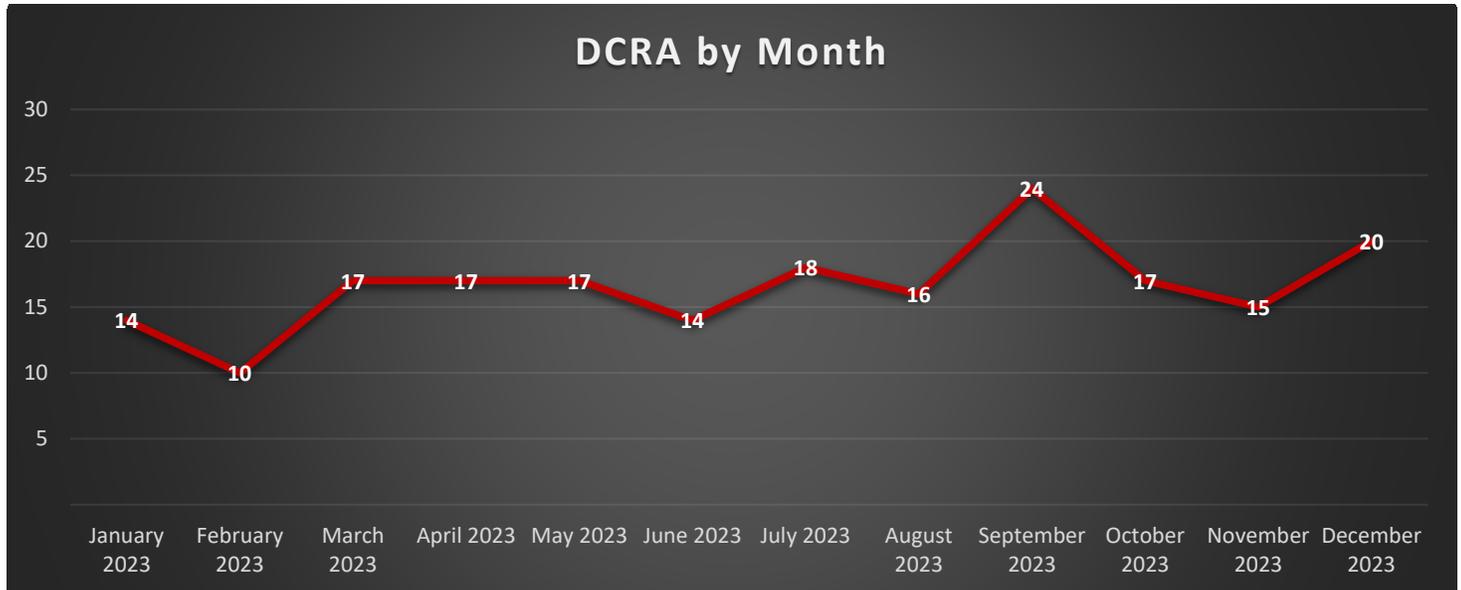
## SECTION 2: ARREST RELATED NON-FORCIBLE DEATHS (ARNFD)

This section analyzes deaths which occurred in the presence of police but were not directly related to the use of force by a law enforcement official. As mentioned in the introduction, an Arrest Related Non-Forcible Death (ARNFD) is any death attributed to suicide, alcohol, drug intoxication, or medical conditions (e.g., cardiac arrest, etc.) occurring during the process of an arrest by, or in the custody of, state or local law enforcement personnel.

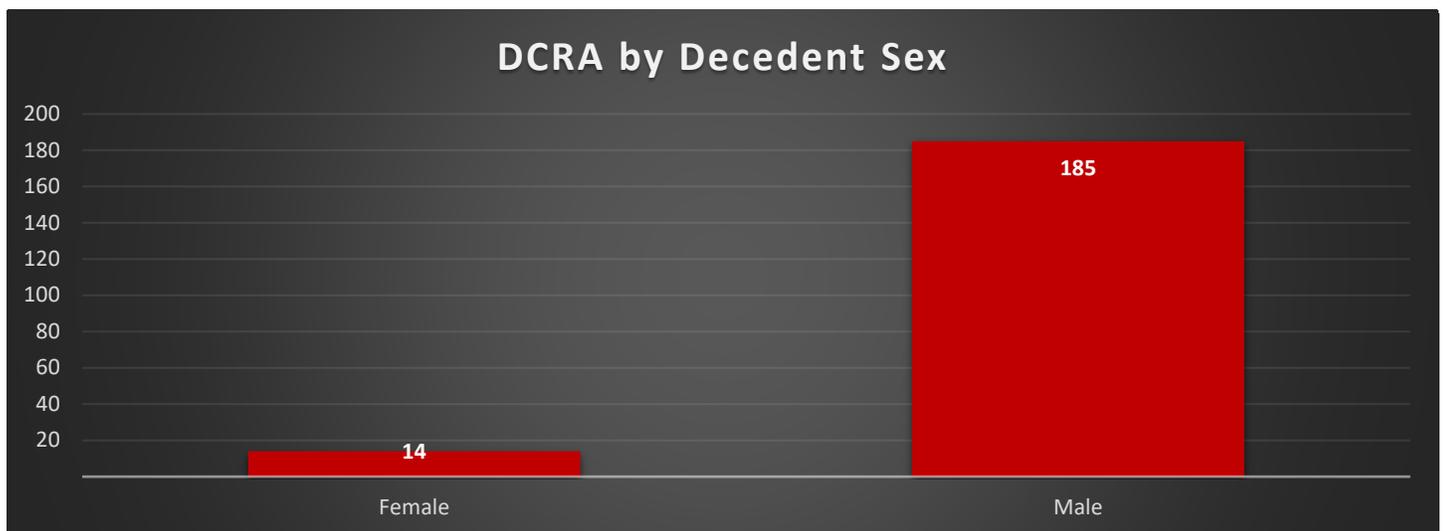
Of the Law Enforcement-Related Deaths reported in 2023, one death met the Arrest Related Non-Forcible Death (ARNFD) reporting criteria. The agency's initial contact with the subject was reported as a "Response to Unlawful or Suspicious Behavior." The subject was reported as a 60 year-old White Female. The cause of death was reported as suffering a fatality from an illness or other condition while in police custody. The subject was reported as being unarmed and showing no resistance to arrest/detainment.

## SECTION 3: DEATHS IN CUSTODY REPORTING ACT (DCRA)

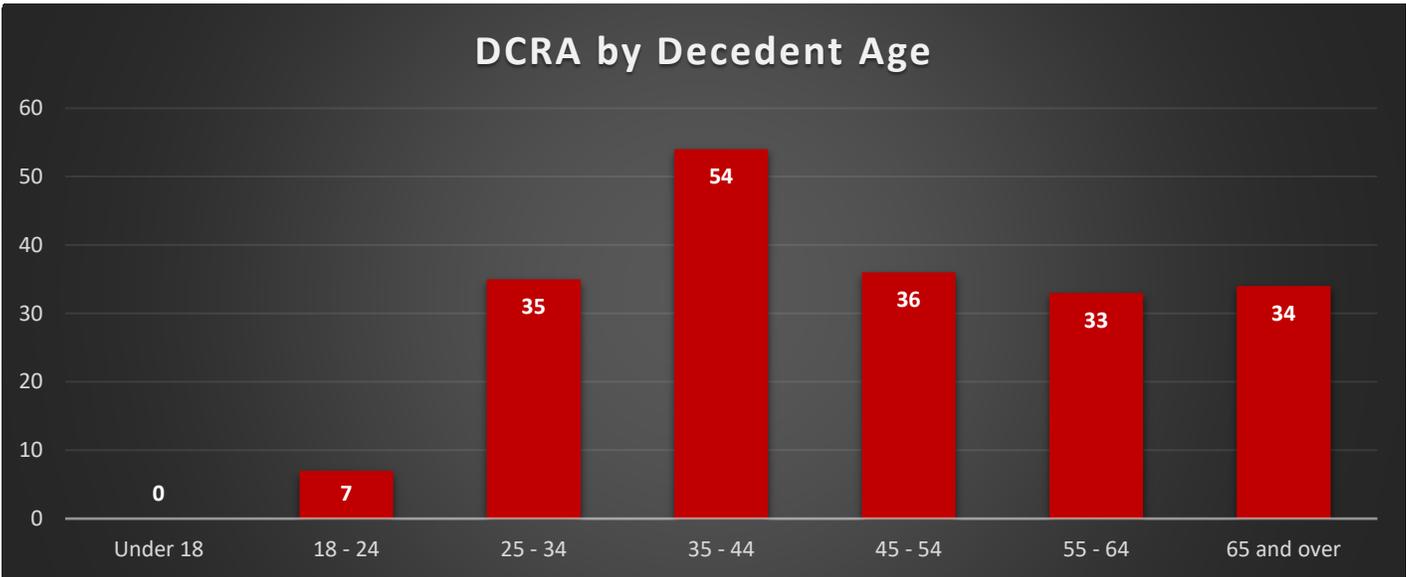
The Deaths in Custody Reporting Act collects data on deaths occurring in jails or state prisons. Please note, private prison companies are under no obligation to submit data, and as such, their data may not be reflected.



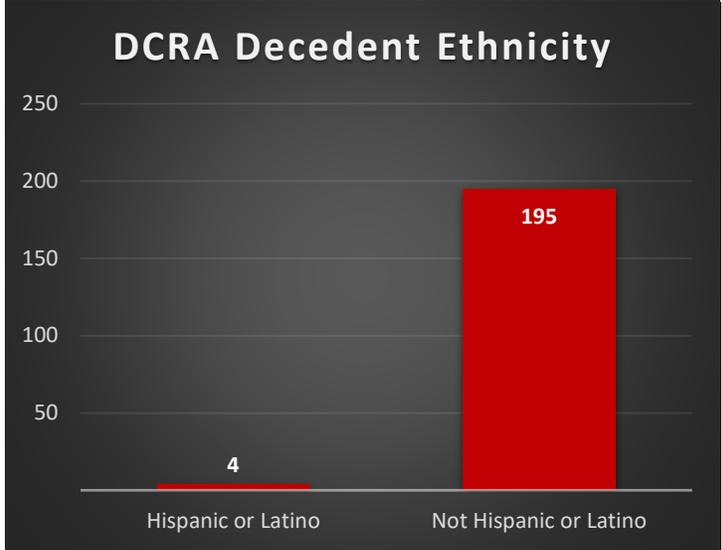
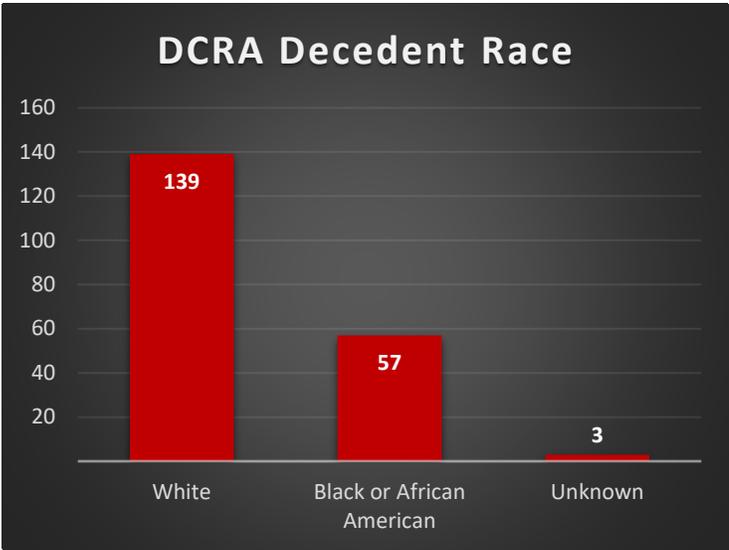
In 2023, 199 deaths were reported across 36 correctional facilities. The highest number of deaths in custody occurred in September at 24 deaths, or 12.06%, followed by December at 20 or 10.05%. The month with the fewest number of reported deaths in custody was February, with 10, or 5.03%.



Of the 199 report DCRA decedents, Males accounted for the majority at 92.96 decedents compared to Females at 7.04%. This means that in 2023, over 13 times as many Males were reported as having died in custody than Females.

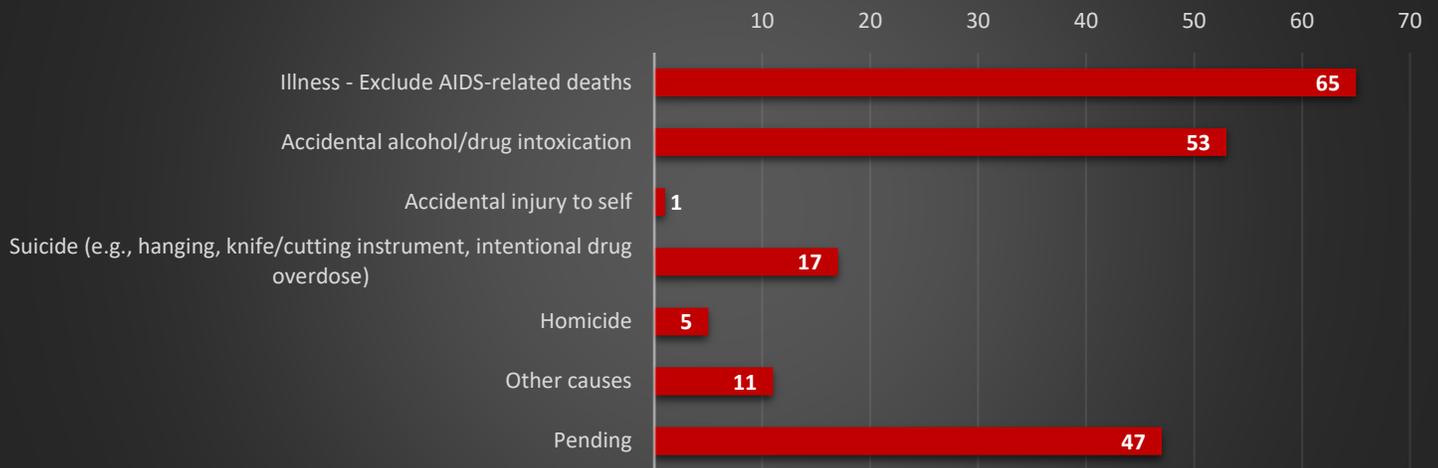


The data displayed above illustrates mortality rates are most predominate between the ages of 35-44, comprising 27.14% of the total. Following this are the age groups of 45-54 and 25-34, accounting for 18.09% and 17.59% of incidents respectively.



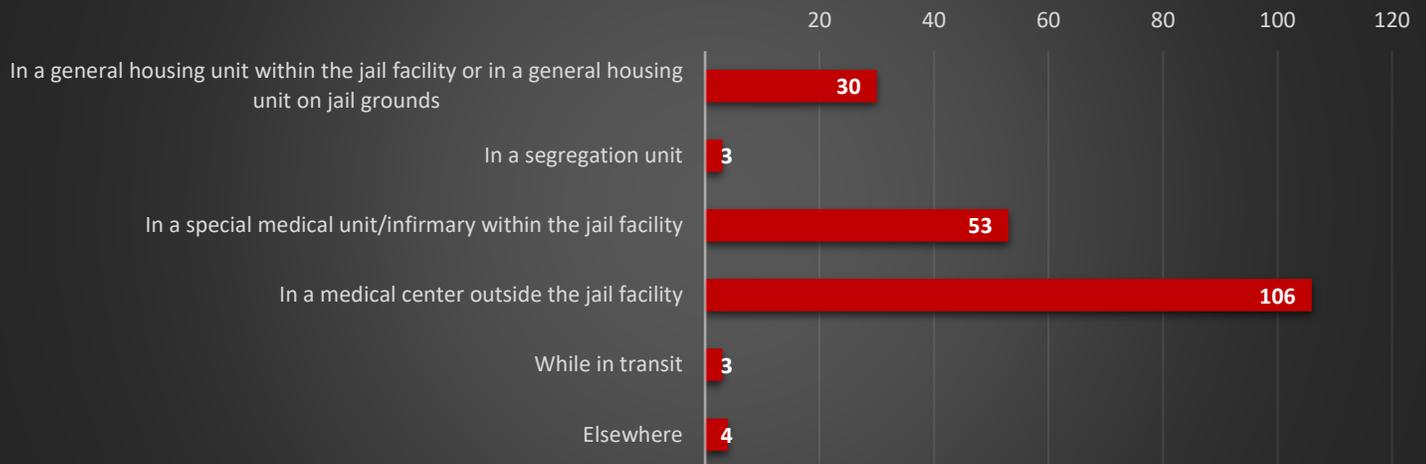
The most commonly reported race of DCRA decedents is White, accounting for 69.85% of reported decedents. Those categorized as Black or African American comprised 28.64% of DCRA decedents, with the remaining 1.51% of decedents being categorized as Unknown. Examining the Ethnicity of DCRA decedents shows that nearly all of those reported, or 97.99%, were categorized as Not Hispanic or Latino.

## DCRA by Cause of Death

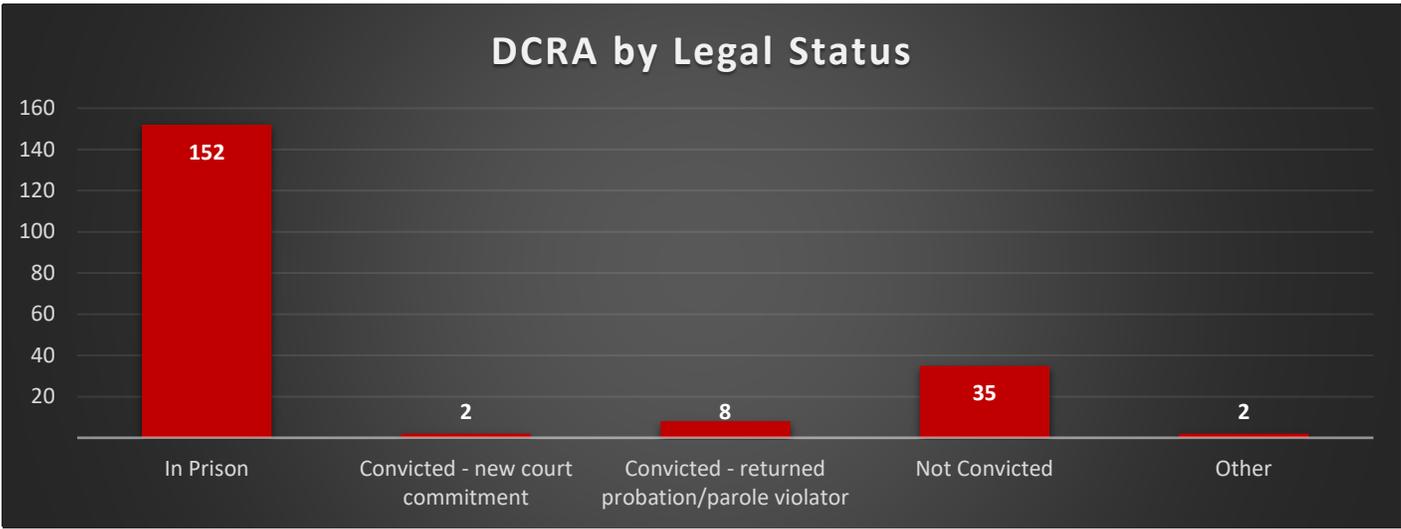


When looking at DCRA incidents by Cause of Death, the most commonly reported cause in 2023 was Illness- Exclude AIDS-Related Deaths, accounting for 32.66% of deaths. The next most commonly reported cause was Accidental Alcohol/Drug Intoxication, at 26.63% of the total.

## DCRA by Location of Death



Relating to the fact that the most commonly reported cause of death under DCRA in 2023 was Illness- Exclude AIDS-Related Deaths, the two most commonly reported locations of death were in a medical center outside the jail facility and in a special medical unit/infirmary within the jail facility, accounting for 53.27% and 26.63% of locations of death respectively. The other statistically significant location of death was in a general housing unit within the jail facility or in a general housing unit on jail grounds, comprising 15.08% of reported death locations.



The last data element of DCRA reviewed was the Legal Status of the decedent at the time of death. The majority of those who died in custody had the status of In Prison, making up 76.38% of decedents. The other large group reported were those with a status of Not Convicted, mostly meaning those in custody who are still awaiting, or in the midst of a trial, at 17.59%.



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