

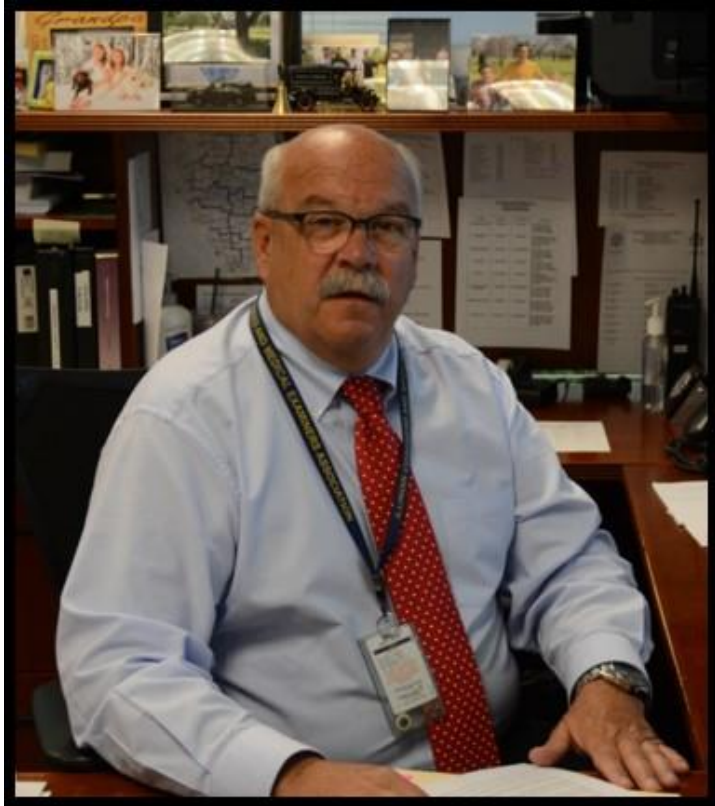
Kankakee County Coroner's Office



2021 Annual Report

December 1, 2020 – November 30, 2021

A Letter From the Desk of the Coroner



Citizens of Kankakee County,

It is my honor to present the 2021 Kankakee County Coroner's Office annual report. As you will see by reviewing the information, 2021 was again a record year for the number of deaths recorded in Kankakee County. The coroner's office team did an amazing job of providing the highest degree of compassion, dignity, guidance, and professionalism as our mission statement calls for. Despite the challenging conditions, I am again extremely proud of the work of the Kankakee County Coroner's Office over the past year.

It is my hope that you enjoy the annual report and that in 2022 we see a return to normal. If you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact my office at (815) 802-7190.

Robert J. Gessner
Kankakee County Coroner



Mission Statement

To conduct honest and independent death investigations with the goal of enhancing public health and safety for the citizens of Kankakee County. The Office shall strive to provide timely and accurate determinations of cause and manner of death by maintaining the highest standards of death investigation practices. The Office shall strive to provide guidance, dignity, and compassion to all that it serves.



Vision Statement

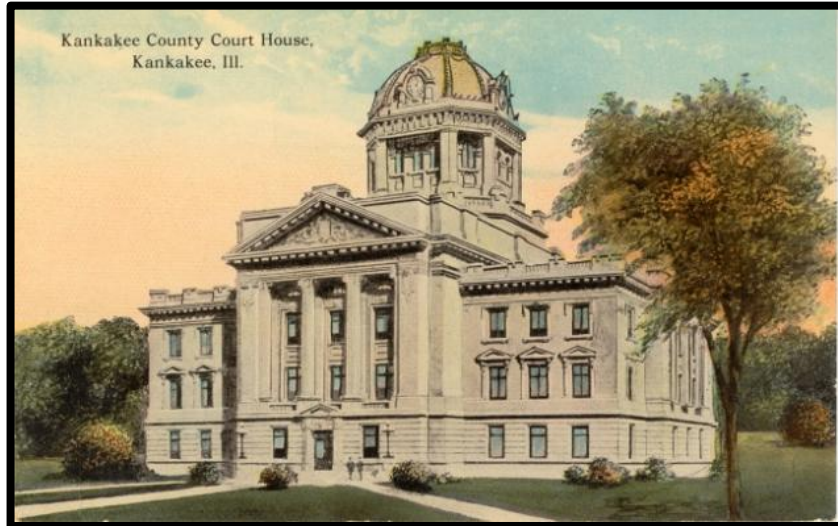
To provide dignity for the deceased, compassion for the living, service for our partnering public safety agencies, and integrity of the Coroner's Office to the citizens of Kankakee County.



History of the Coroner

In 12th century England, the power of the Sheriff was a growing entity within the King's land. To monitor the Sheriff for evidence of dishonesty, the King created the role of coroner. For each county, four men were selected by the court for the role of "coroner," named so because they were meant to serve the "crown." These men brought important concerns to the attention of the King and investigated any failure to inform the King of these important matters. The coroners were deemed the only persons within the county with the power to arrest the Sheriff himself.

By the 16th century, the coroner had become an elected official. While he still maintained the power to ensure the honesty of public officials, the most prominent role of the coroner had become what it is in the United States today: investigating violent and suspicious deaths.



Kankakee County Coroner's

George Cooper (1853 - 1854)
Hiram B. Titcomb (1854 - 1856)
Charles B. Hosmer (1856 - 1860)
George R. Letourneau (1860 - 1863)
William H. Matthewson (1863 - 1869)
Otis Durfee (1869 - 1870)
Charles G. Willis (1870 - 1874)
Henry Licht (1874 - 1880)
Salome Wunderlich (1880 - 1882)
August Schmidt (1882 - 1892)
Jacob E. Willman (1892 - 1898)
Louis E. Fenouille (1898 - 1902)
Thomas J. Clark (1902 - 1904)
Louis E. Fenouille (1904 - 1919)
George W. Watts (1919 - 1921)
Sefroy J. Brosseau (1921 - 1923)
Octave J. Cartier (1925-1931)
Adolph E. Kerger (1933 - 1941)
Ed P. Madison (1941 - 1949)
David W. Wood (1949 - 1956)
J. William Spillane (1958 - 1961)
Claire B. Sledge (1961 - 1962)
Robert McKenna (1962 - 1964)
James H. Ryan (1964 - 1978)
Wesley L. Wiseman (1978 - 1980)
James A. Orrison (1980 - 2000)
James Kelly (2000 - 2003)
Robert J. Gessner (2003 - Present)

Role of the Coroner

The Coroner's Creed establishes questions that must be answered to fulfill the requirements of these investigations, as well as provide care and justice for the deceased and for the family and friends of the deceased. These questions are: who, how, where, when, and why?

WHO IS THE DECEASED?

This can be answered by looking at identification found on the deceased or through verification by family members or friends. When identification of an individual is unable to be determined, DNA can be tested to determine identity. Dental records can also be compared to the deceased when possible.

HOW DID THE DECEASED DIE?

This question can be answered by determining the circumstances of death. This is different than why a person died in that it does not provide the medical explanation for death. For example, an accident may be **how** a person died, but head trauma would explain the reason why death occurred.

WHERE WAS THE DECEASED FOUND?

This question can be answered by the person who found the deceased or by officers called to the scene. It is important to know the location and position of the body as well as the condition of the surrounding area.

WHERE DID THE DECEASED DIE?

While the answer to this question will typically be the same as the answer to the above question, a difference will exist in cases where the deceased has been moved. It is important to know the location of death in order to look for evidence of how, why, or when death occurred.

WHEN DID DEATH OCCUR?

This can be answered by determining when the deceased was last seen and how much time has passed since that time. This provides a frame within which death must have occurred. Determining the actual time of death, however, is very difficult to do. As a result, while an approximate time of death can be determined by asking the previous questions, the time of death as recorded by the Coroner's Office is the time at which death is confirmed upon responding to a call.

WHY DID THE DECEASED DIE?

This question asks why a person died in a given situation. As explained in the question of how above, the answer to why a person died will be the particular medical reason for death. In an accident, for example, head trauma would explain the reason why death occurred. In other words, the question of why can be answered by determining the particular cause of death. Determining the medical history of the deceased can also provide insight into why a person died. It is also important to know what medications were in the possession of the deceased at the time of death. Why a person died can ultimately be determined through autopsy and toxicology tests. It is possible, however, that why a person died cannot be determined by autopsy or toxicology results.

WHAT IS THE MANNER OF DEATH?

While the Coroner's Office does not investigate legal matters concerning death, the manner of death may be apparent through determining why a person has died. Based on autopsy or toxicology findings, it may be determined that a person died by homicide, suicide, accidental death, natural death, or an undetermined manner of death.

Coroner Robert J. Gessner



Robert J. Gessner was born in Kankakee, Illinois and lived in the Kankakee area for most of his childhood until his family briefly moved to Michigan. Upon graduating from high school in Michigan, Gessner moved back to his hometown where he worked in his father's factory. In 1969, Gessner began his career with the Kankakee Fire Department. He served the citizens of the City of Kankakee proudly for 30 years until his retirement in 1999. During his tenure with the Kankakee Fire Department, Gessner delivered over a dozen newborn babies, taught hundreds of paramedic students, mentored new fireman and provided a warm loving home for his family.

While employed by the City of Kankakee, Gessner also started working part-time for the Kankakee County Coroner's Office in 1984. Gessner held the title of Deputy Coroner until 1999 when he was appointed Chief Deputy Coroner under former Coroner Dr. James Kelly. When Coroner Dr. Kelly retired in 2003, Gessner was appointed by the Kankakee County Board to serve as Kankakee County Coroner. He was first elected to the position in 2004 and has been successfully re-elected in 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020.

Coroner Gessner is a member of the Cook County Disaster Team, the Illinois Coroner's and Medical Examiner's Association where he has served as the Secretary since 2003, the Illinois Department of Public Health Maternal Mortality Review Board, the Eastern Illinois Law Enforcement Administrator's Association, the Illinois Department of Homeland Security Board, the Kankakee Chapter of the NAACP, the Duane Dean Board of Directors, the Kankakee Country Club and the Kankakee YMCA Board of Directors. In 2018, Gessner was selected by The Daily Journal as the 2017 Citizen of the Year.



Chief Deputy Coroner Eric L. Cavender



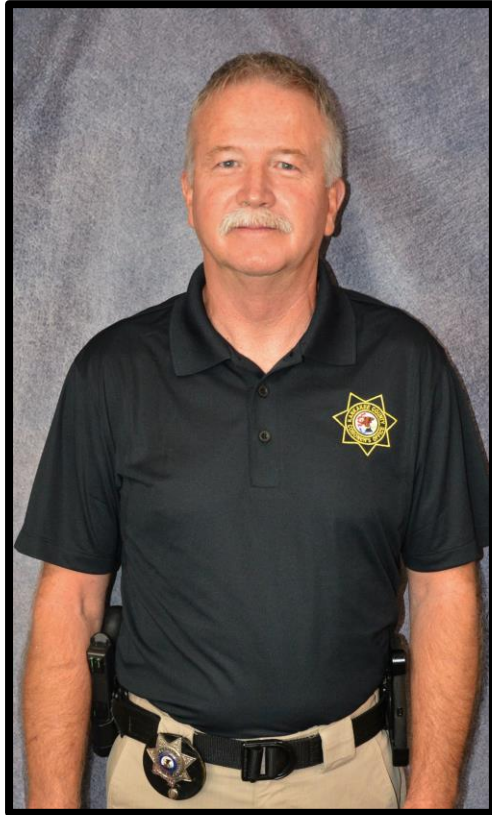
Eric Cavender joined the Kankakee County Coroner's Office in December of 2008. In June of 2014, Eric was appointed as the Chief Deputy Coroner. Eric is a 2008 graduate of Momence High School. In addition, Eric has earned a Master of Science degree in Management and Leadership from Western Governors University, a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Olivet Nazarene University, an Associate of Science degree in Mortuary Science and Funeral Service from Carl Sandburg College, and an Associate of Arts degree from Kankakee Community College.

Eric has completed the basic and master level Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course through the St. Louis University School of Medicine. He is a licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer in the State of Illinois. He has completed the National Board Exam of Funeral Service Arts and Science, 40-Hour Firearm Training Certification, Lead Homicide Investigator Certification, Practical Homicide Investigation Certification, Command and General Staff Training, FEMA Professional Development Series Certification, FEMA Incident Management System Levels 100 through 800 Certification, FEMA Special Events Contingency Planning for Public Safety Certification and FEMA EEO Supervisor Training Certification.

Eric is a member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), Cook County Disaster Response Team, the Illinois Coroners and Medical Examiners Association, the Hundred Club of Kankakee County, the Eastern Illinois Law Enforcement Administrators Association where he serves as the Secretary, St. George Catholic Church, the Kankakee County Republican Central Committee where he serves as the Treasurer and is on the Board of Directors for Good Shepherd Manor in Momence, Illinois. Eric is married and lives in Bourbonnais.



Deputy Coroner Mark A. Posing



Mark Posing began his career as a local firefighter in 1984. During his time as a firefighter, he was certified as a fire service and EMS instructor for the State of Illinois. He was also trained in hazardous materials operations and technical rescue. Mark worked full-time for the Naperville Fire Department for 23 years. In total, Mark has over 32 years of fire service experience.

In April of 2004, Mark joined the Coroner's Office as a part-time Deputy Coroner, bringing with him his extensive medical and fire knowledge. After retiring from the Naperville Fire Department in 2017, Mark was hired full-time with the Coroner's Office.

Mark has since completed the basic and master level Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Certification through the St. Louis University School of Medicine. He has also completed the 40-Hour Firearm Training Certification, Lead Homicide Investigator Certification, Practical Homicide Investigation Certification and FEMA Incident Management System Level 700 Certification.



Deputy Coroner William J. Perkins



William “Bill” Perkins began his career with the Coroner’s office in 2007. Deputy Perkins is also a full time Battalion Chief and Paramedic with the Manteno Fire District for over 30 years. Deputy Perkins has attended basic medical legal death investigation course, lead homicide investigation, and is a certified fire investigator. Deputy Perkins has achieved numerous certifications in both law enforcement and firefighting including basic firearms, crime scene investigation, Fire/Rescue, Emergency Medical Services, and Hazardous Materials. Deputy Perkins is a Certified Instructor in Fire/Rescue and Hazardous Material. Deputy Perkins has achieved Chief Fire Officer Certification along with National Fire Academy Command and General Staff, NIMS (National Incident Management System) 100, 200, 700, and 800 courses. Deputy Perkins is the Vice Chairperson for the MABAS 7 Fire Investigation Team, Legislative Representative for the IAAI (International Association of Arson Investigators) Illinois Chapter, Member of the IFCA (Illinois Fire Chiefs Association) Legislative Committee, Original Organizing Member of the MABAS 7 Haz-Mat Team, Member of the MABAS 7 Fire Chiefs Association, and President Emeritus of the Manteno Fire Fighters Association Local 4042.



Deputy Coroner Guy L. Maisonneuve



Guy Maisonneuve was hired part-time at the Kankakee County Coroner's Office in 2014 and in 2021 transitioned into a full-time position. Guy retired after 29 years of service from the Kankakee Fire Department. In addition, Guy is POC with the Manteno Community Fire Protection District and is an Auxiliary Police Officer for Manteno Police Department and Co-Chair and Team Leader for the Kankakee Valley MABAS 7 Fire Investigation Team.

Guy brings extensive knowledge of the fire service to the Coroner's Office. Guy is an Illinois State Certified Fire/Arson Investigator including Firearms Training. He is also certified in Rescue Specialist/Confined Space/Trench Awareness, Technical Recue Awareness, and Hazardous Materials 1st Responder Operations.

Guy has also attended the Medicolegal Death Investigation Seminar, New Regulations in Death Scene Investigation Protocol Seminar, Questionable Death: A Multiple Agency Investigation Seminar, Lead Homicide Investigator, NIMS IS-100, 200, 700, 800, and 907. Guy has held several positions with the Illinois Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators including Northern Zone Board Director for 9 years and President for 2019-2020 and continues to serve on several committees. Guy is married and is a resident of Bourbonnais.



Deputy Coroner Alfred L. Ponton



Alfred “Al” Ponton began his career with the Coroner’s office in 2019. Deputy Ponton is also the EMS Manager with Riverside Medical Center. He received a Master of Science in Nursing from Grand Canyon University and Associate of Applied Science degree in Nursing and Paramedic Supervisor from Kankakee Community College.

Al has over thirty years of serving the public with his start in Healthcare / EMS in 1988 while working as a Certified Nurses Aid at Prereview Lutheran Home, Danforth and the OTTO Township fire department. On January 2, 1989, he started working at Riverside Medical Center. He is a member of the National Association of EMS Educations (NAEMSE), Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) and Kankakee Community College EMS Program Advisory Board. Al holds FEMA Incident Management Systems Levels 100 through 800 certifications amongst multiple certifications in EMS and Nursing. Al has completed the 40-hour firearm certification and is currently enrolled in the Medicolegal Death Investigator Course through St. Louis University School of Medicine.



Deputy Coroner Joseph P. Carney



Joseph Carney was hired by the Coroner's Office in July of 2021. Joe is a Nurse Practitioner and has more than 20 years of healthcare experience. He earned his Master of Science in Nursing from the University of St. Francis in 2017 and also has a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from St. Xavier University.

He is a member of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners and is a certified medical examiner for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. In addition, he is certified in Basic Life Support, Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, Emergency Communications, and Trauma Nurse Core. Joe has completed the 40-hour firearm certification and is currently enrolled in the Medicolegal Death Investigation Course through St. Louis University School of Medicine.

Joe is married and has three children.



Deputy Coroner Nicholas M. Jette



Nicholas Jette started his career with the Coroner's Office in July of 2021. Nick has been a Registered Nurse in the Emergency Department at Riverside Medical Center since 2018. He started his nursing career in 2015 after graduating from Kankakee Community College with an Associate of Applied Science Degree. He recently completed his Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Capella University.

During his nursing career, Nick has been a preceptor for new nursing graduates. In addition, he was in charge of a 55 bed cardiac unit. He holds certifications in Basic Life Support, Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, Pediatric Emergency Nursing, Trauma Nurse Core, Emergency Communications, Trauma Nurse Specialist, and Bard Ultrasound Guided IV Insertion. He is a member of the Emergency Nurses Association. Nick has completed the 40-hour firearm certification and is currently enrolled in the Medicolegal Death Investigator Course through St. Louis University School of Medicine.

Nick is engaged and lives in Bradley.



Deputy Coroner Lindsay M. Jones



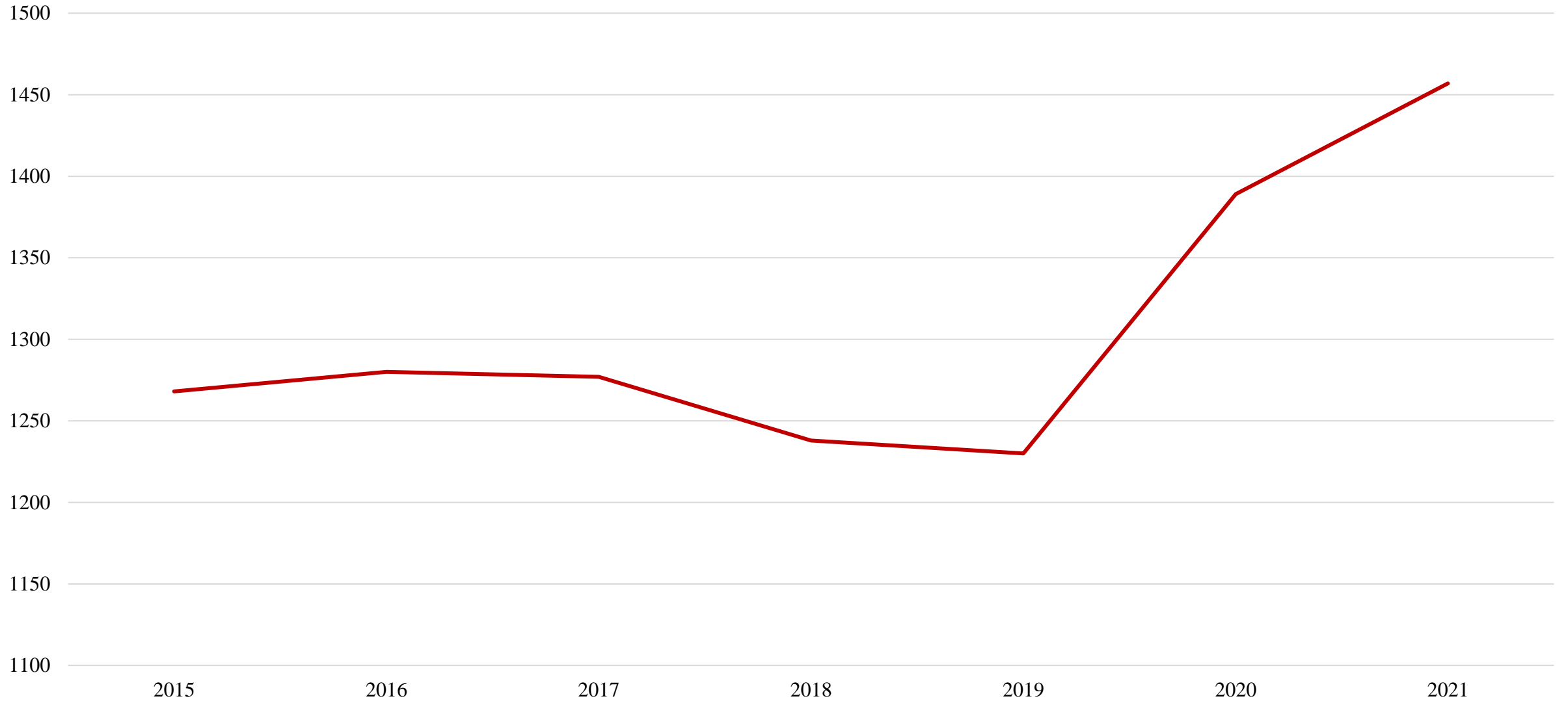
Lindsay Jones joined the Kankakee County Coroner's Office in 2018 as the Administrative Assistant/Deputy Coroner. Prior to coming to the office, she worked at the Kankakee County Clerk's Office as the Deputy Clerk. Lindsay was also employed at Riverside Medical Center for eight years as a patient access health care tech prior to her work at the Kankakee County Clerk's Office.

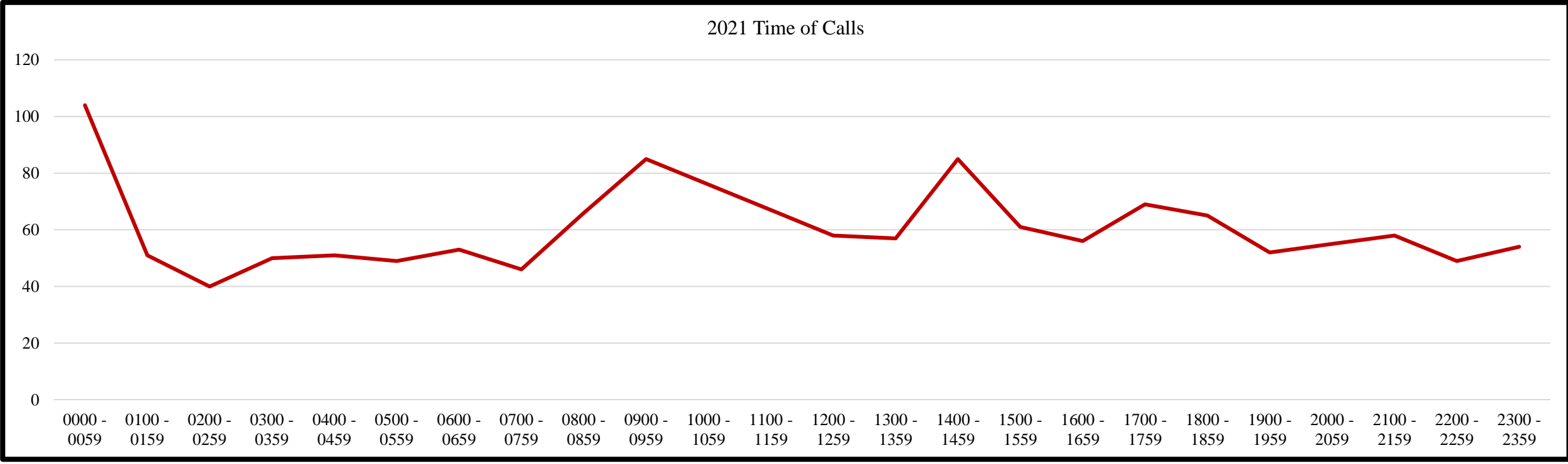
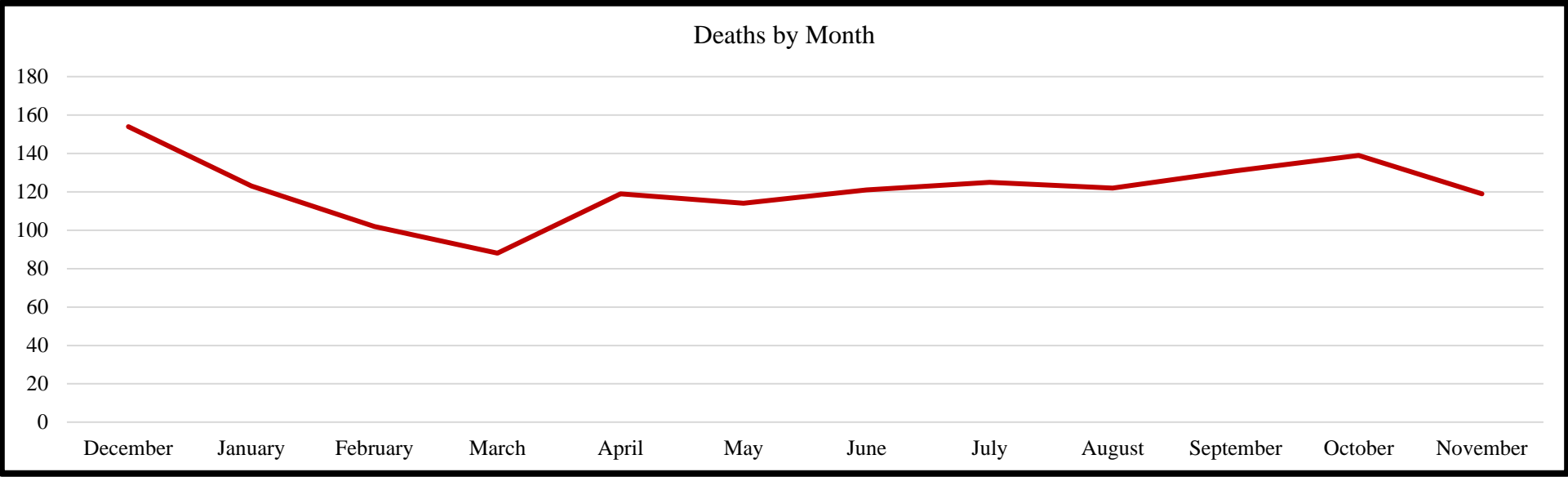
As the Administrative Assistant, Lindsay works closely with the families and funeral homes. She ensures proper data entry into the state vital record system, in order to produce a death certificate. Lindsay also organizes and maintains all death investigation files, oversees the issuance of cremation permits and the completes all Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.

Lindsay is happily married with three children.

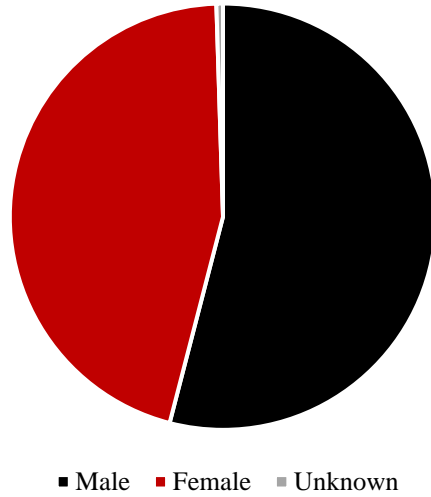


Calls for Service

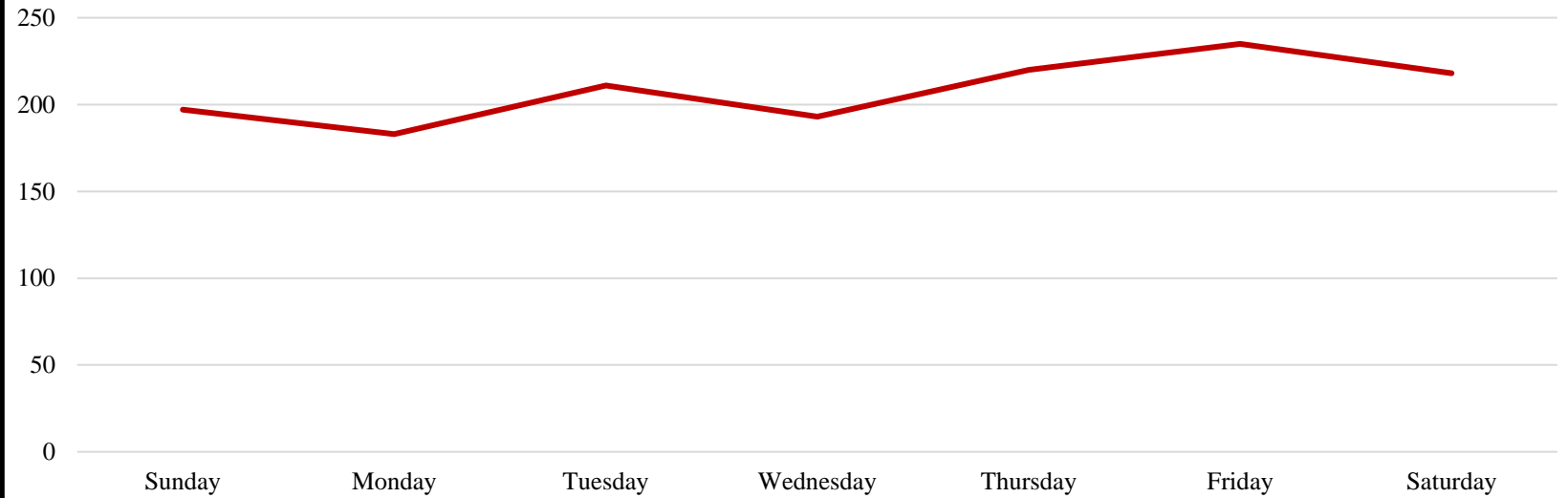




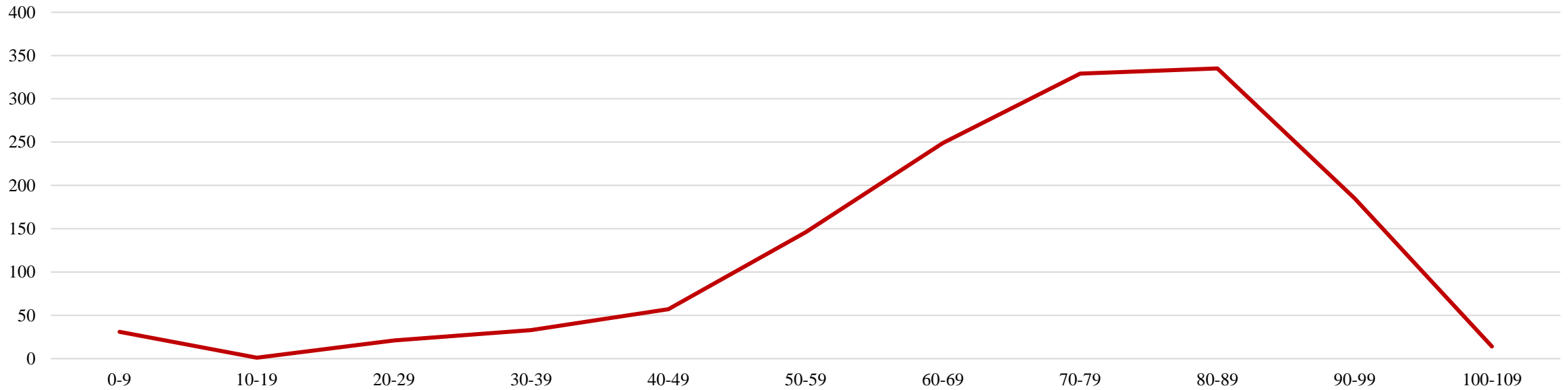
2021 Deaths by Gender

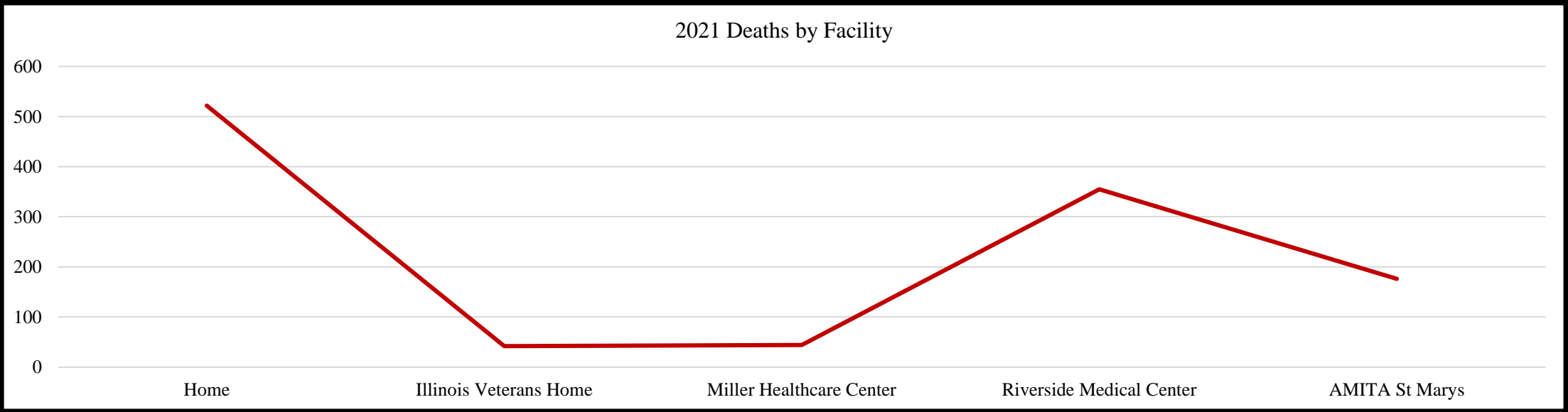
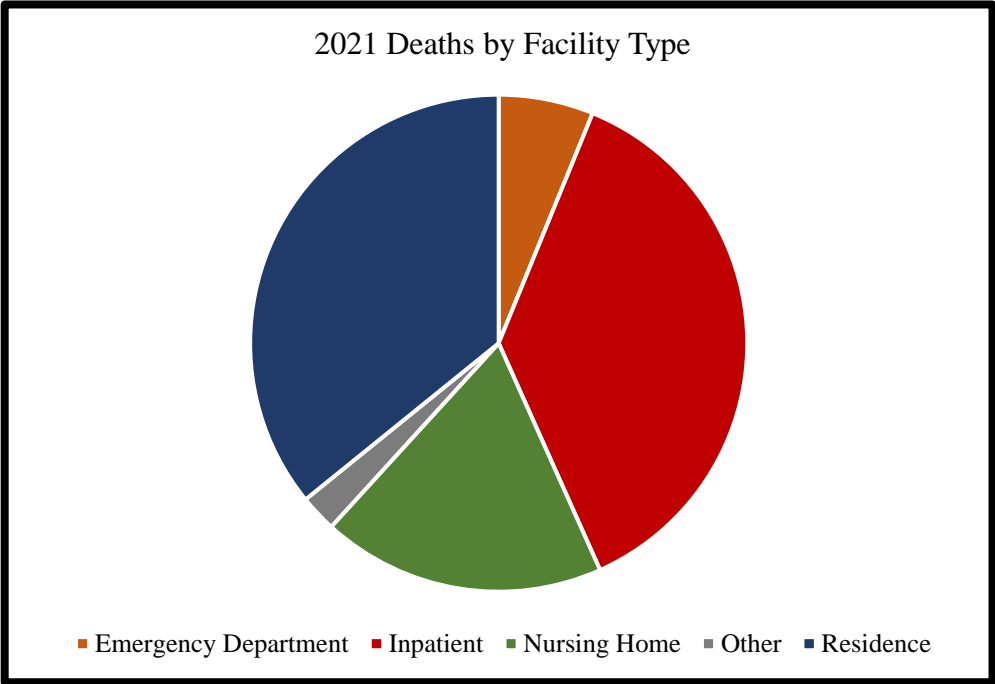


Calls by Day of Week



2021 Deaths by Age



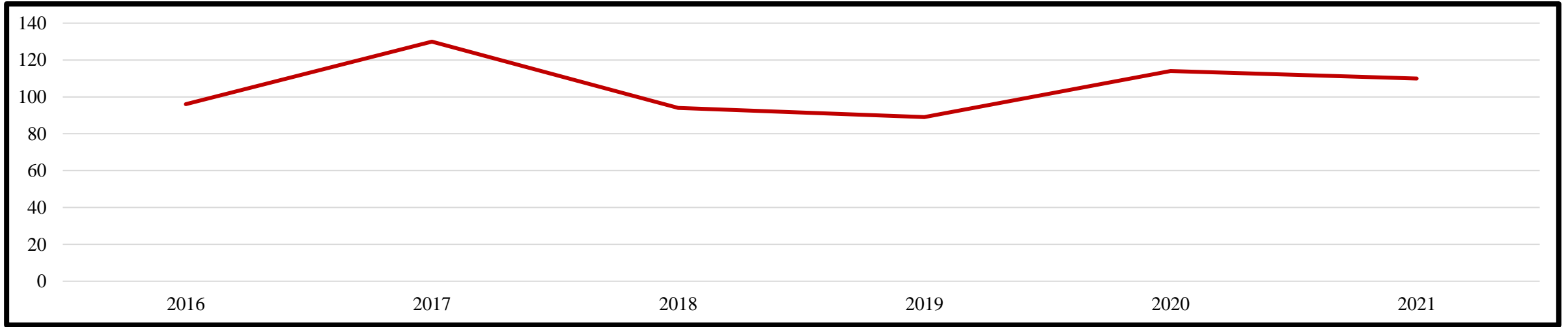


Autopsies

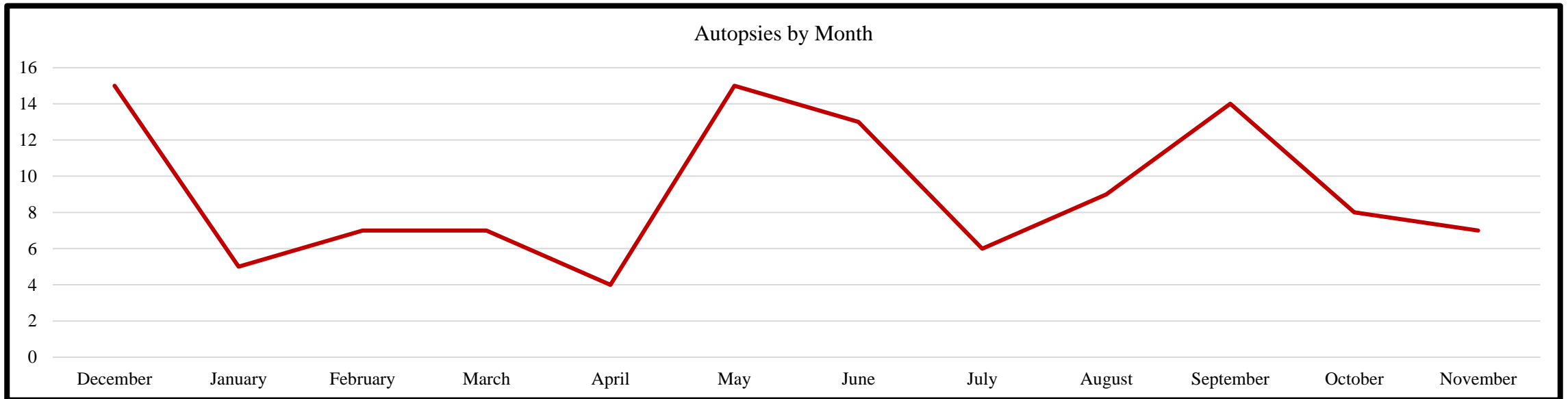
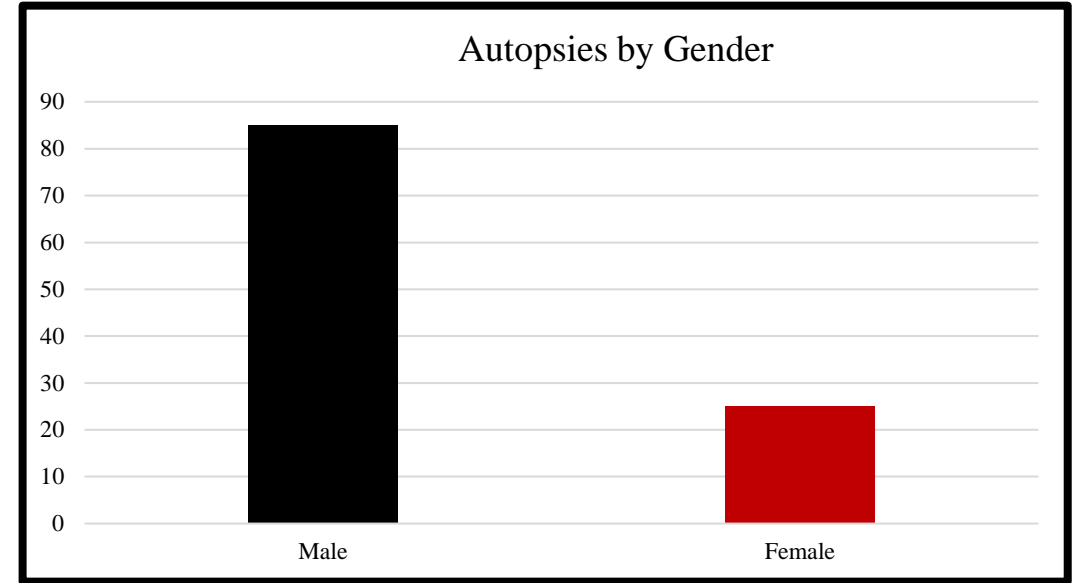
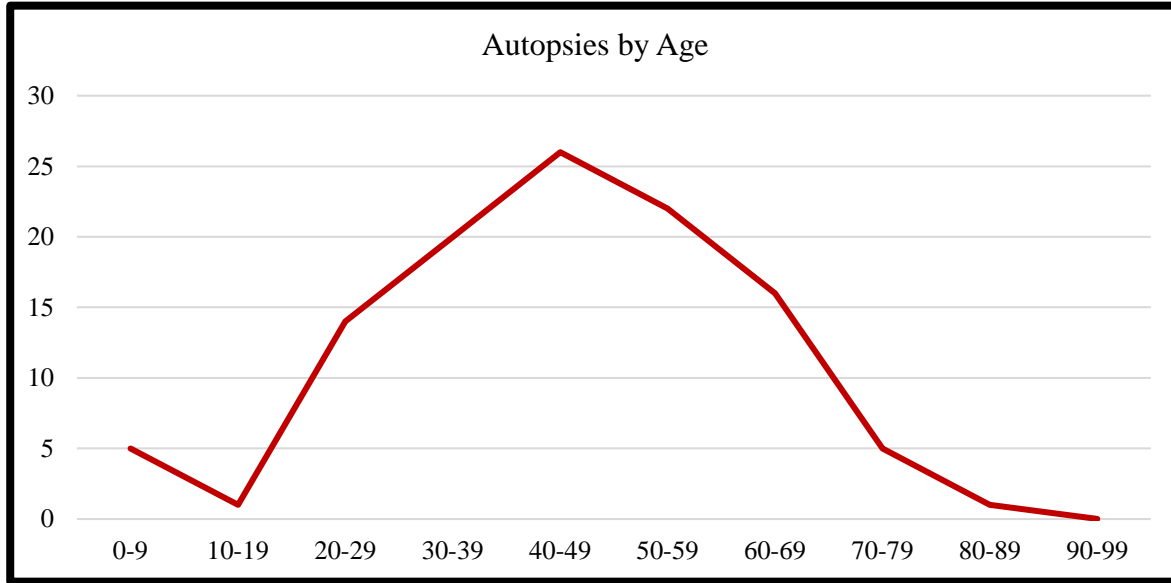


All autopsies are performed at the Bryan R. Mitchell M.D. Forensic Center. Autopsies are performed by Board Certified Forensic Pathologists. The Kankakee County Coroner's Office contracts autopsy services with four (4) forensic pathologists.

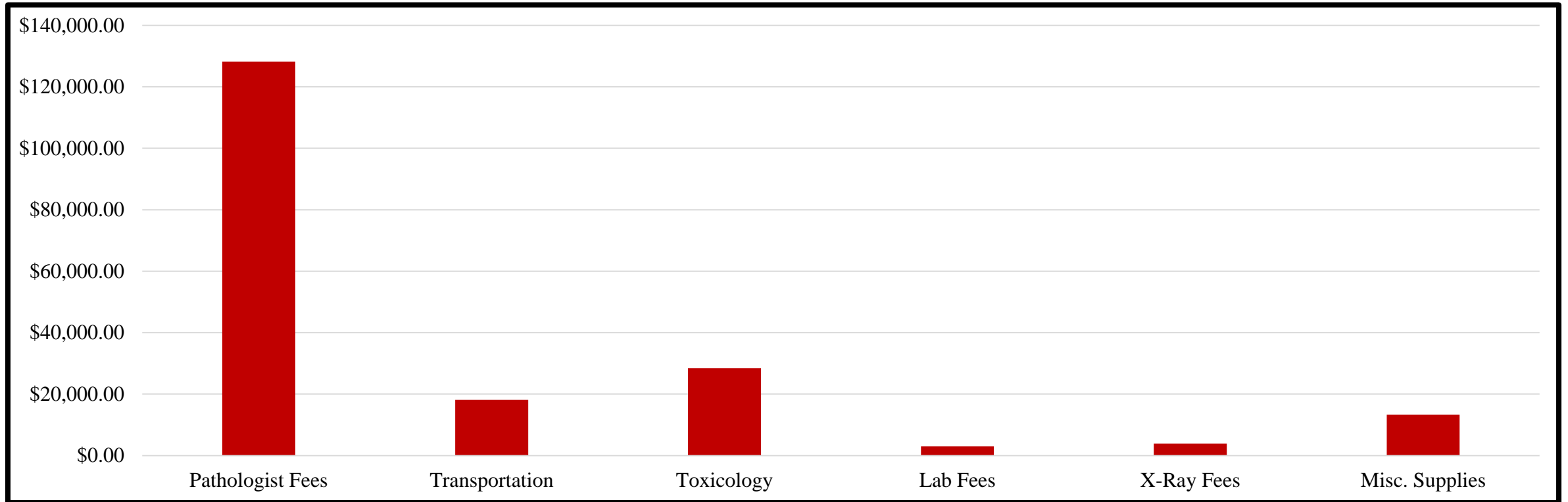
Autopsies by Year



2021 Autopsy Data



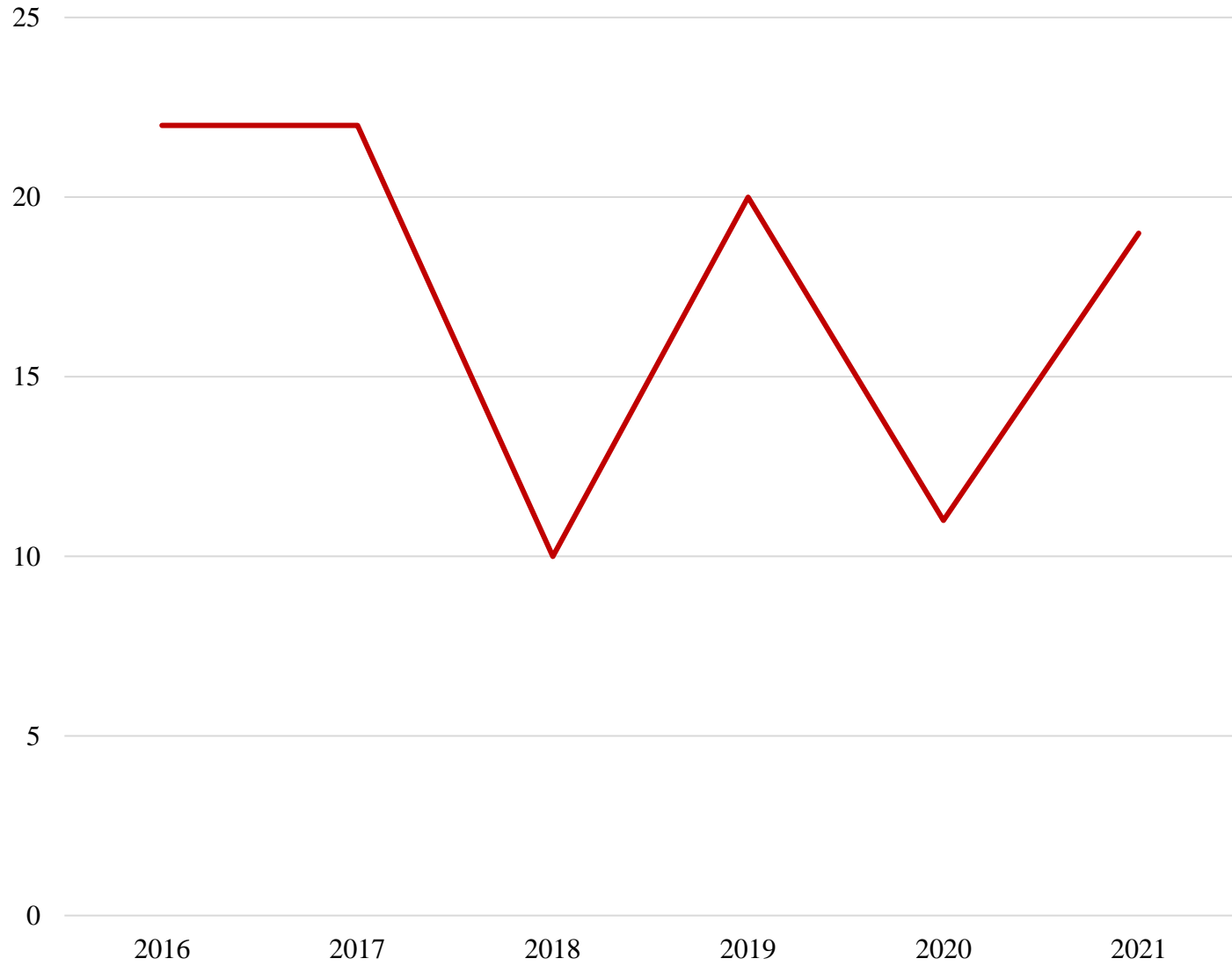
FY2021 Autopsy Expenditures



Autopsy Expenses (Not including salaries):

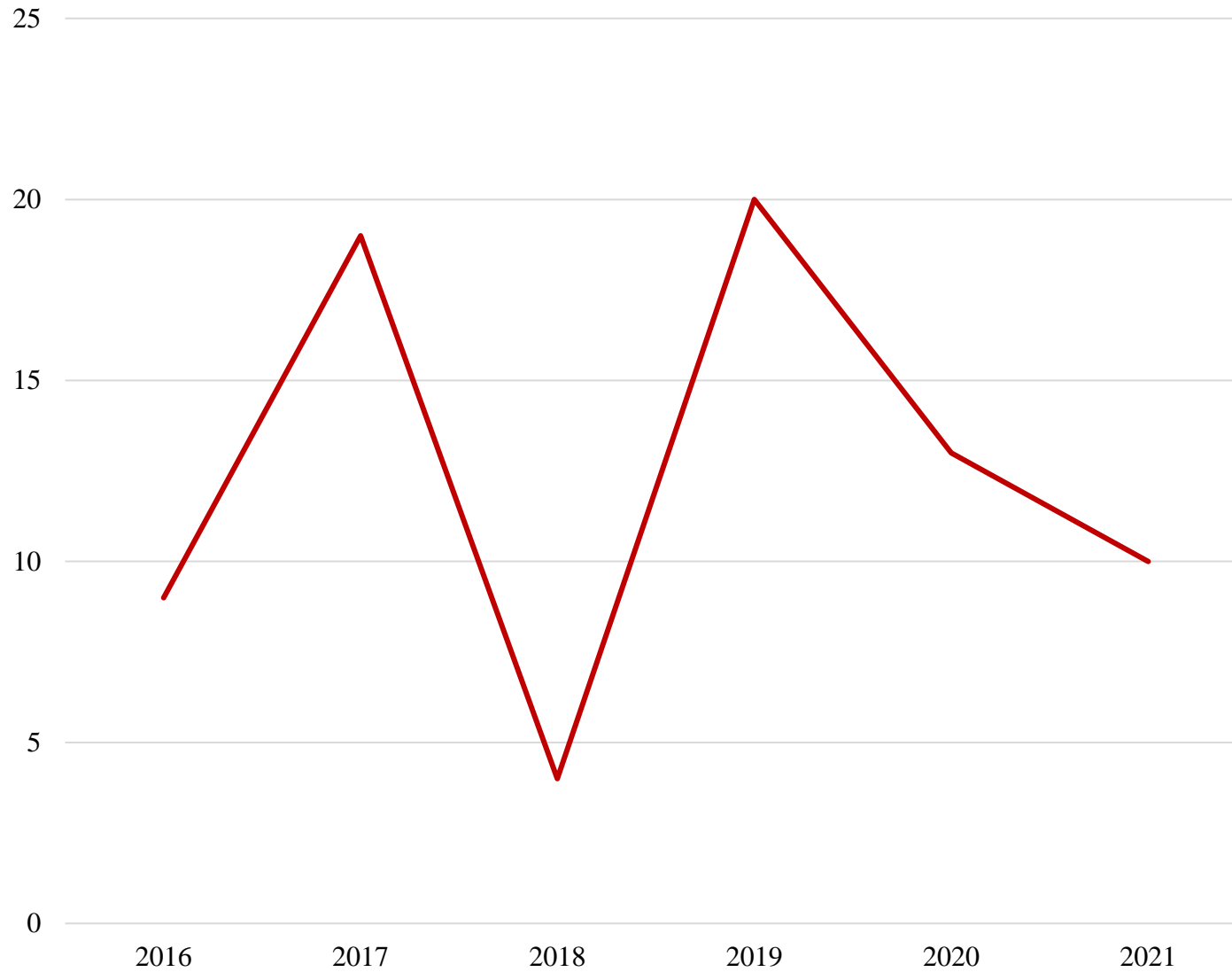
- Homicides - \$29,276.00
- Suicides - \$15,695.00
- Drug Overdoses - \$42,223.00
- Motor Vehicle Accidents - \$25,868.00

Motor Vehicle Fatalities



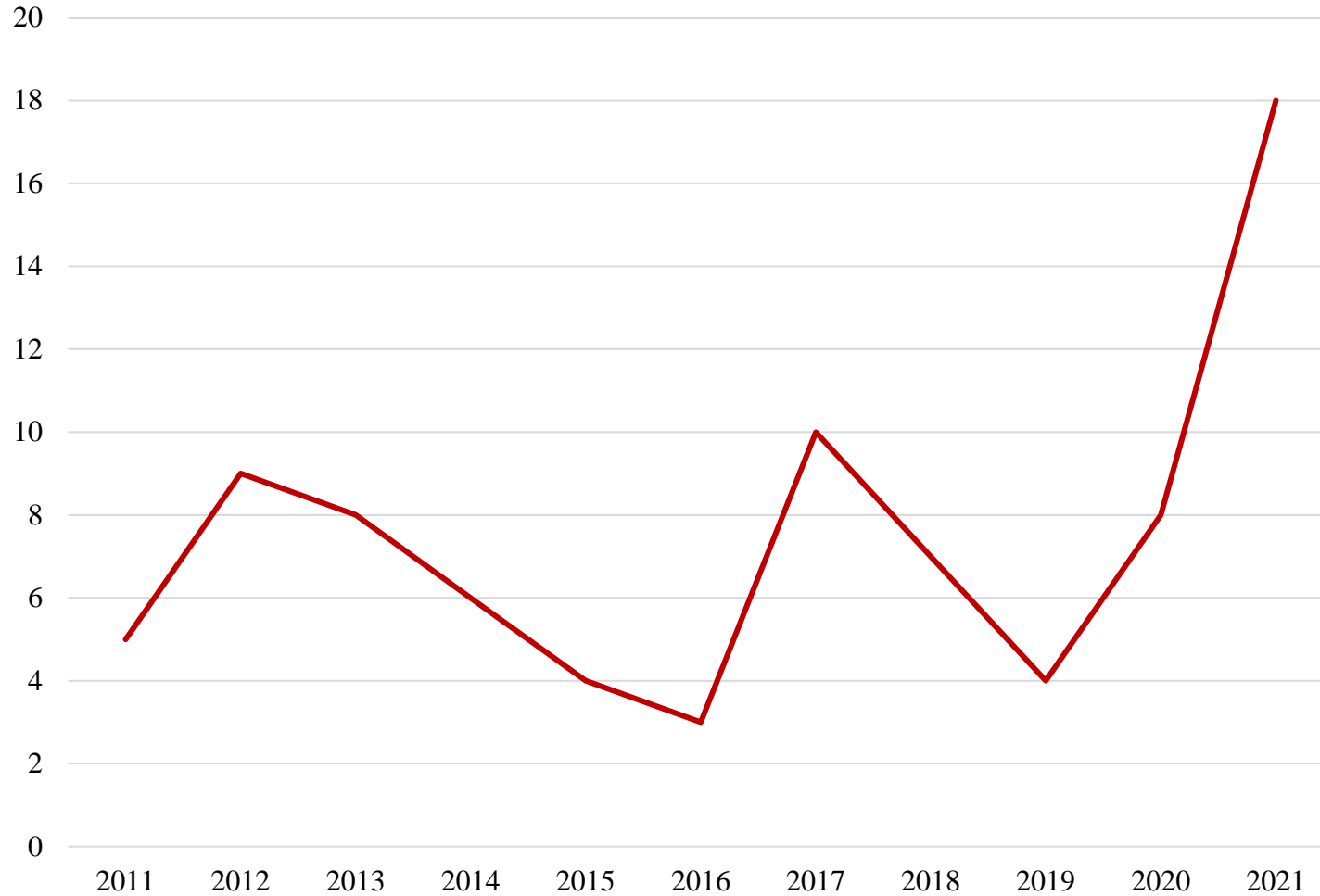
- Average Age – 53 years old
- Male – 13
- Female – 4

Suicides



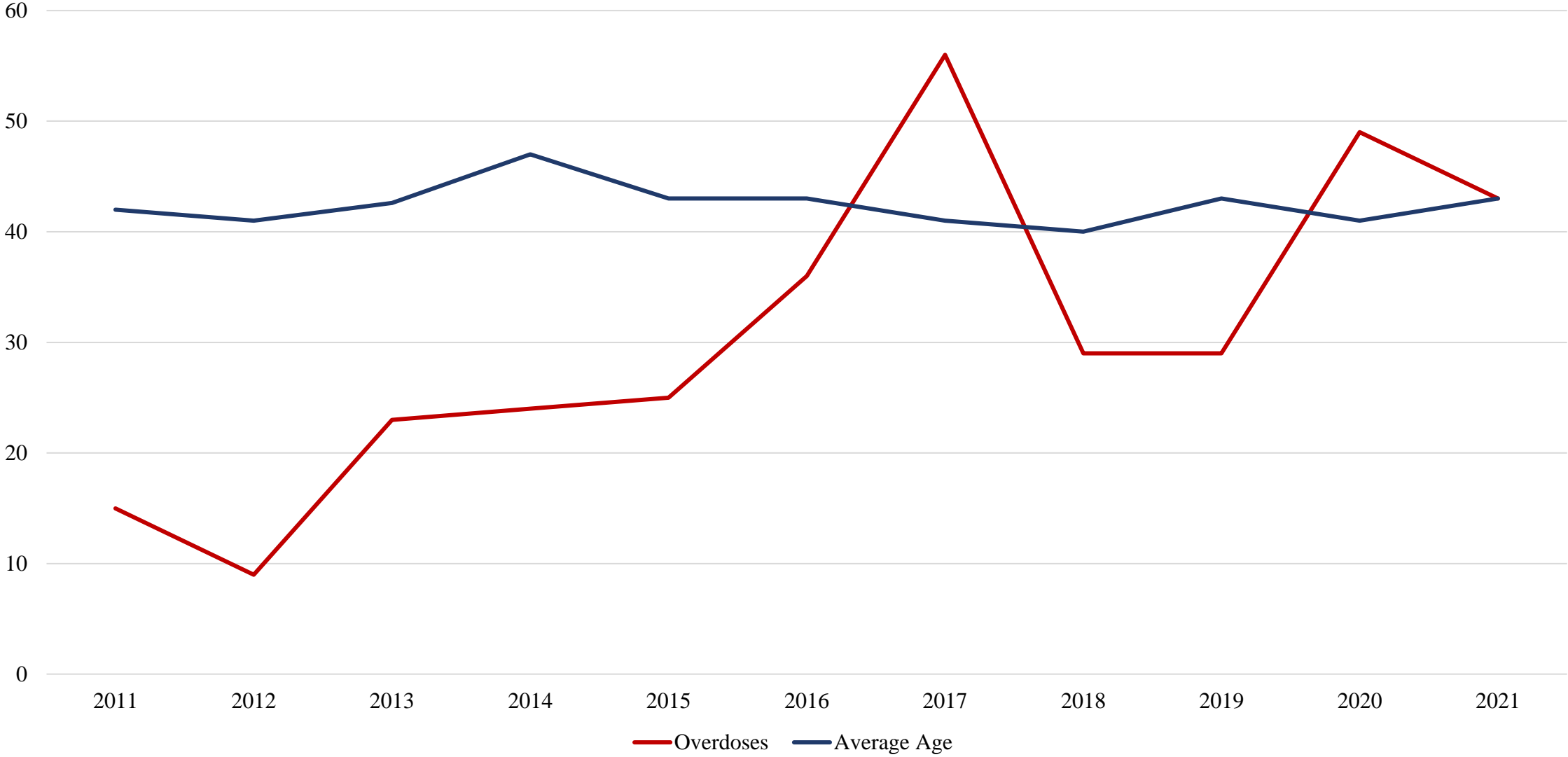
- Average Age – 53 years old
- Male – 10
- Female – 0
- Caucasian – 7
- African American – 1
- Hispanic - 2

Homicides

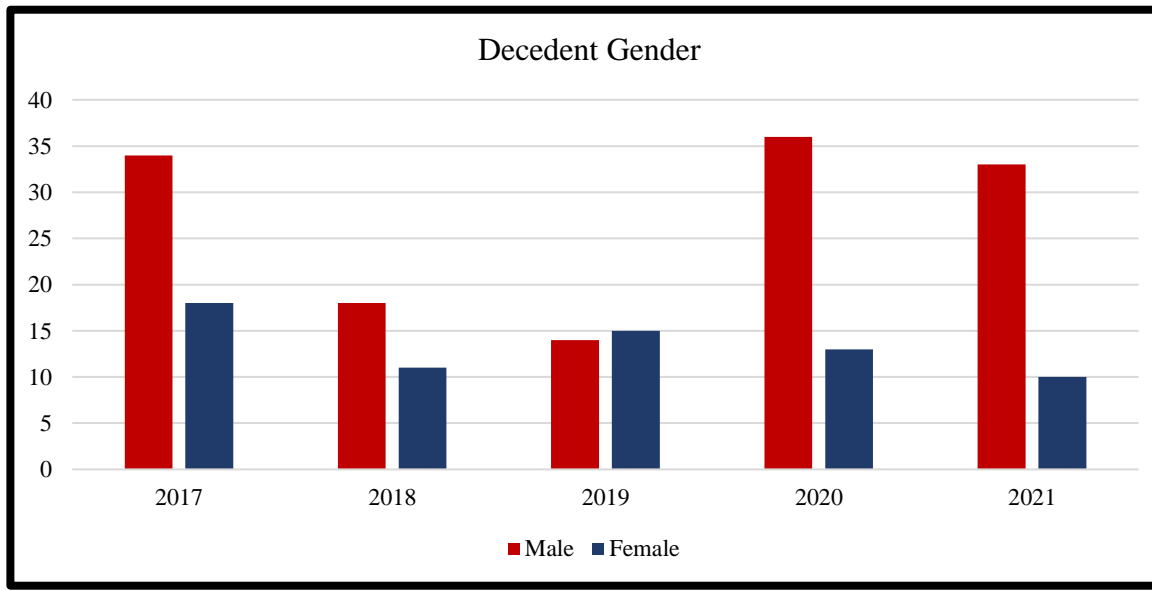
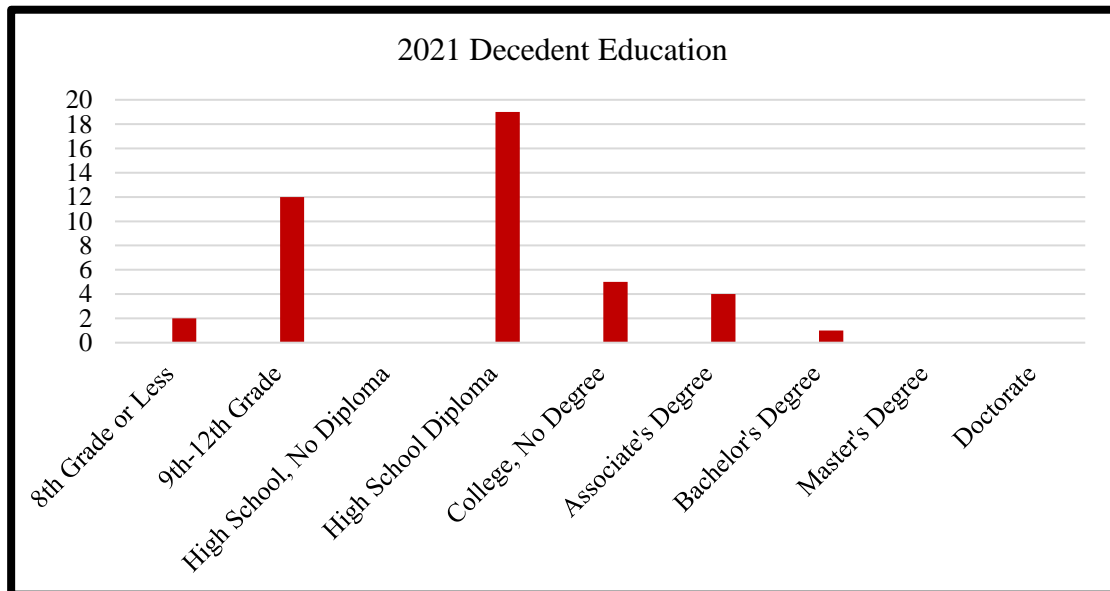
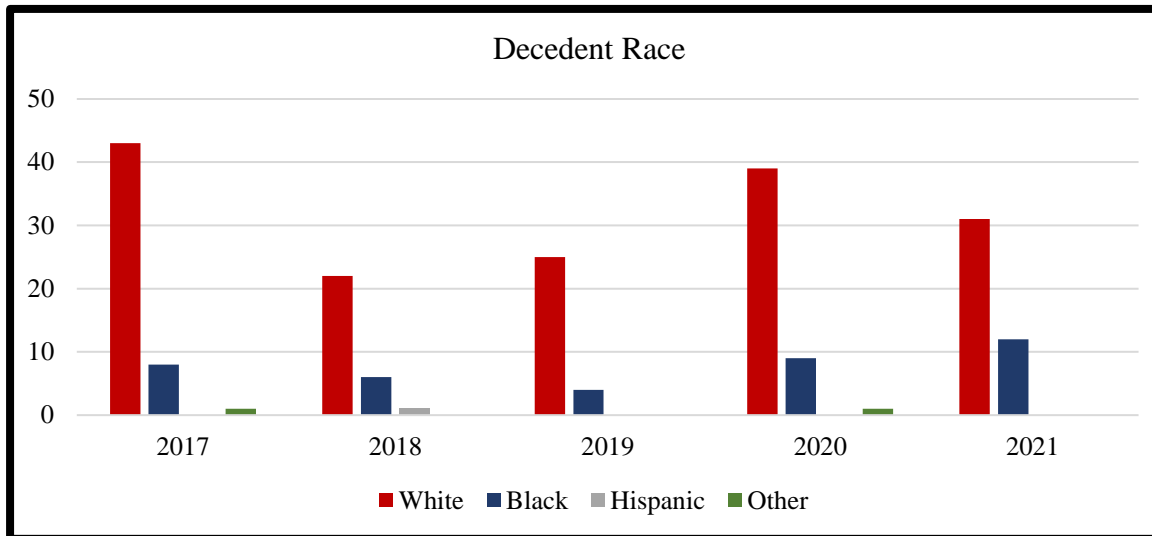
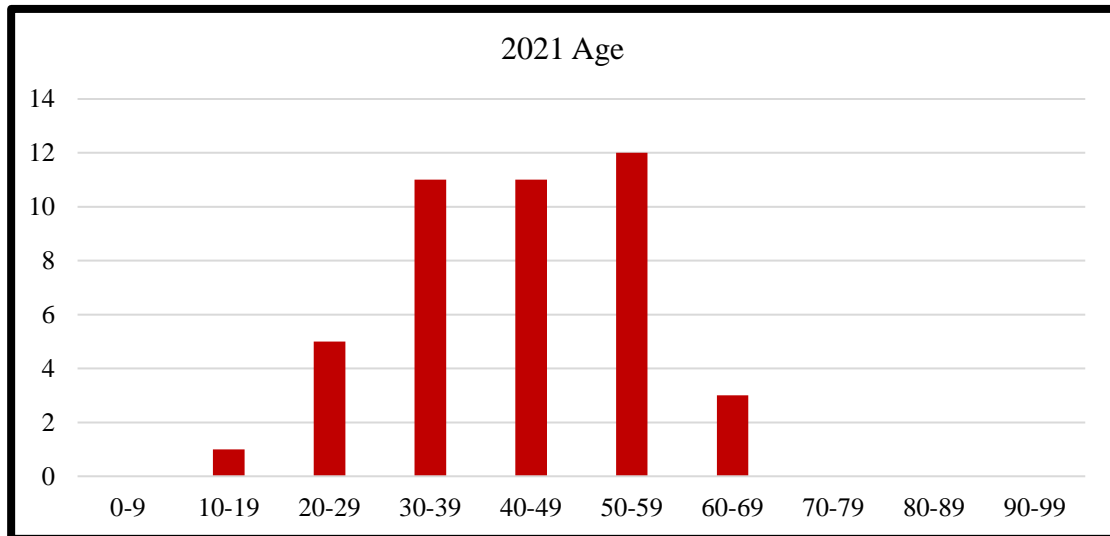


- Average Age – 36 years old
- Male – 15
- Female – 3

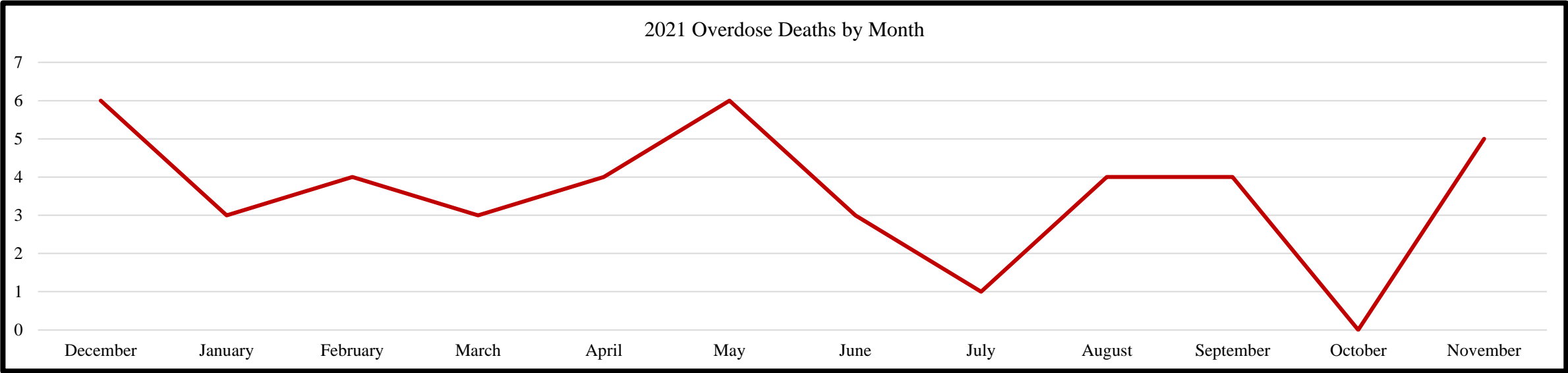
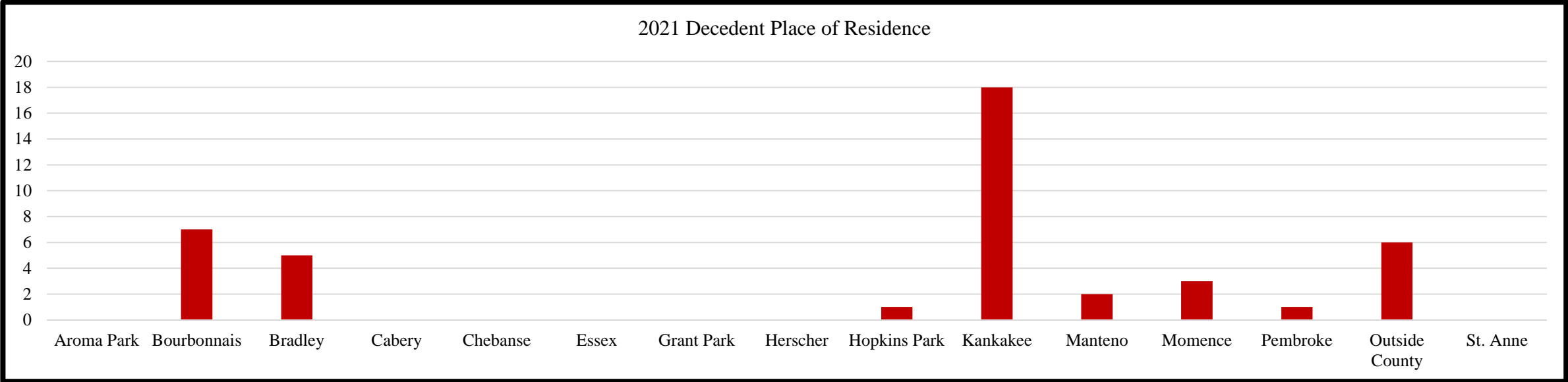
Overdose Data



Overdose Data



Overdose Data



Overdose Data

Causes of Death Listed on Death Certificate

Fentanyl Intoxication - 12

Fentanyl & Heroin Intoxication - 3

Fentanyl & Cocaine Intoxication - 6

Heroin, Fentanyl, & Cocaine Intoxication - 1

Fentanyl, Cocaine & Alcohol Intoxication - 4

Cocaine Intoxication - 1

Fentanyl & Alcohol Intoxication - 2

Cocaine, Hydrocodone, & Alprazolam Intoxication - 1

Multiple Injuries (Cocaine Intoxication) - 1

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (Cocaine Intoxication) - 1

Carbon Monoxide Intoxication (Fentanyl, Acetyl Fentanyl, Cocaine & Heroin Intoxication) - 1

Fentanyl, Acetyl Fentanyl, Cocaine, & Xylazine Intoxication - 1

Fentanyl, Cocaine, Mitragynine, & Xylazine Intoxication - 1

Fentanyl and Methamphetamine Intoxication - 1

Fentanyl, Butyrylfentanyl, and Cocaine Intoxication - 1

Combined Drug Intoxication - 2

Heroin Intoxication - 1

Methamphetamine Intoxication - 1

Dilated Cardiomyopathy (Carfentanil & Cocaine Intoxication) - 1

Anoxic Encephalopathy due to Drug Intoxication - 1

84% of all deaths attributed to Fentanyl

46% of all deaths attributed to Cocaine

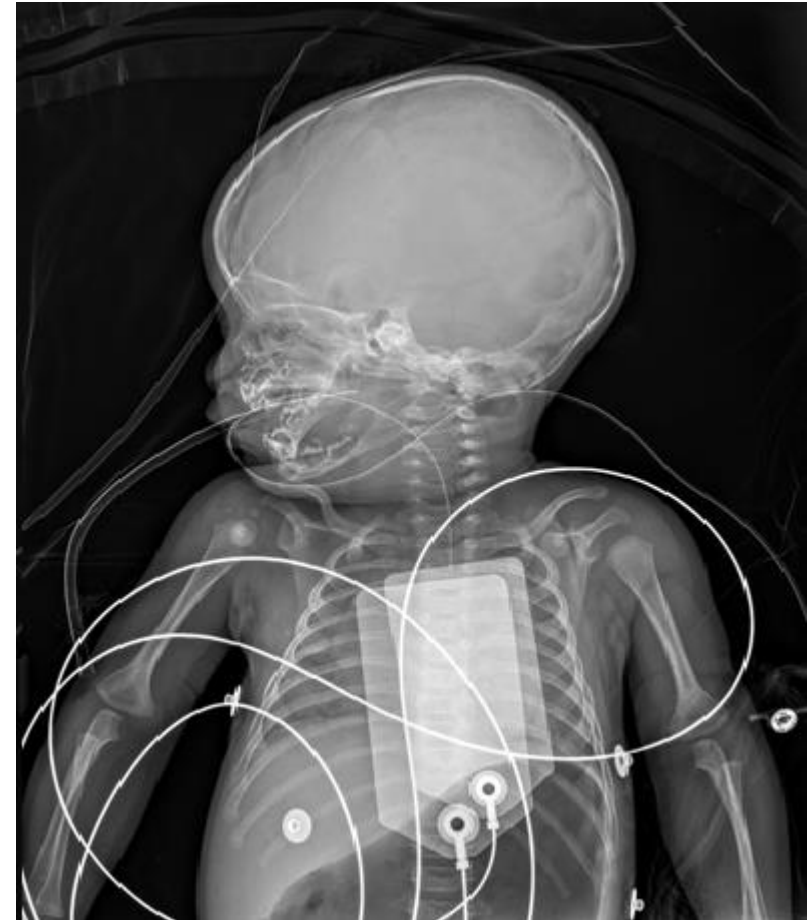
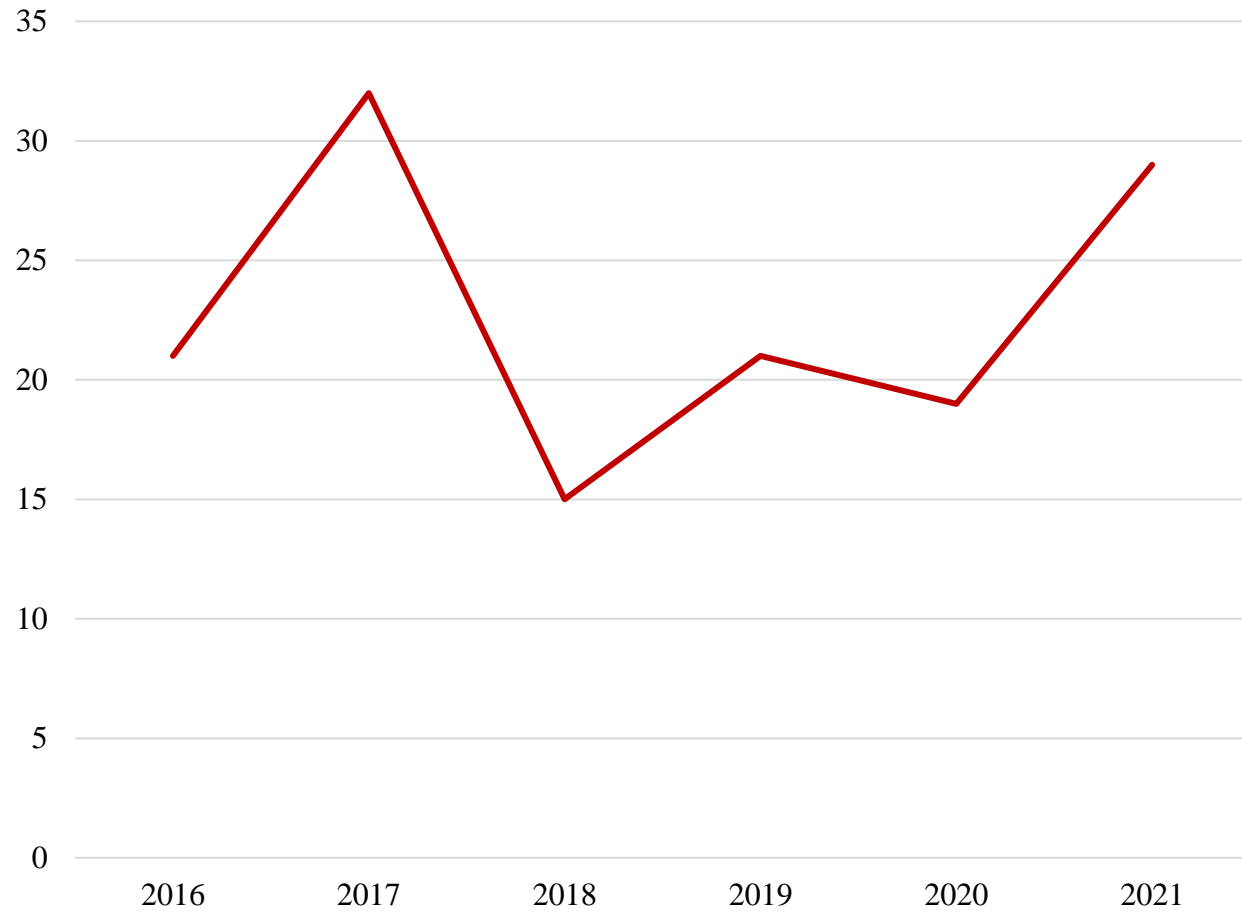
15% of all deaths attributed to Heroin

2021 Donations

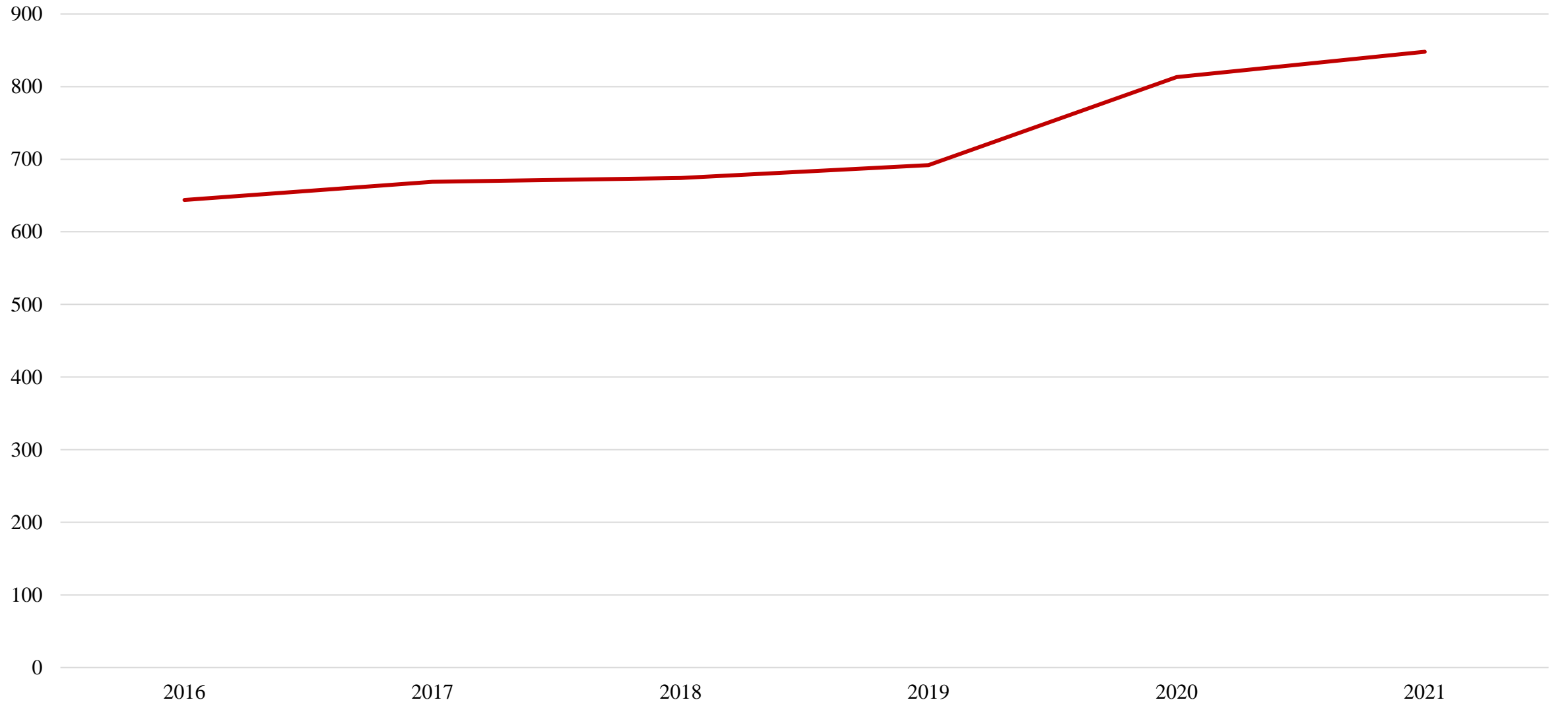
- 578 calls to Gift of Hope (380 at Riverside Medical Center & 198 at AMITA St. Mary's Hospital)
- Three (3) organ donors (Two (2) at Riverside Medical Center & One (1) at AMITA St. Mary's Hospital)
- 25 tissue donors (14 at Riverside Medical Center & 11 at AMITA St. Mary's Hospital)
- Overall organ authorization rate = 73%
- Overall tissue authorization rate = 59%



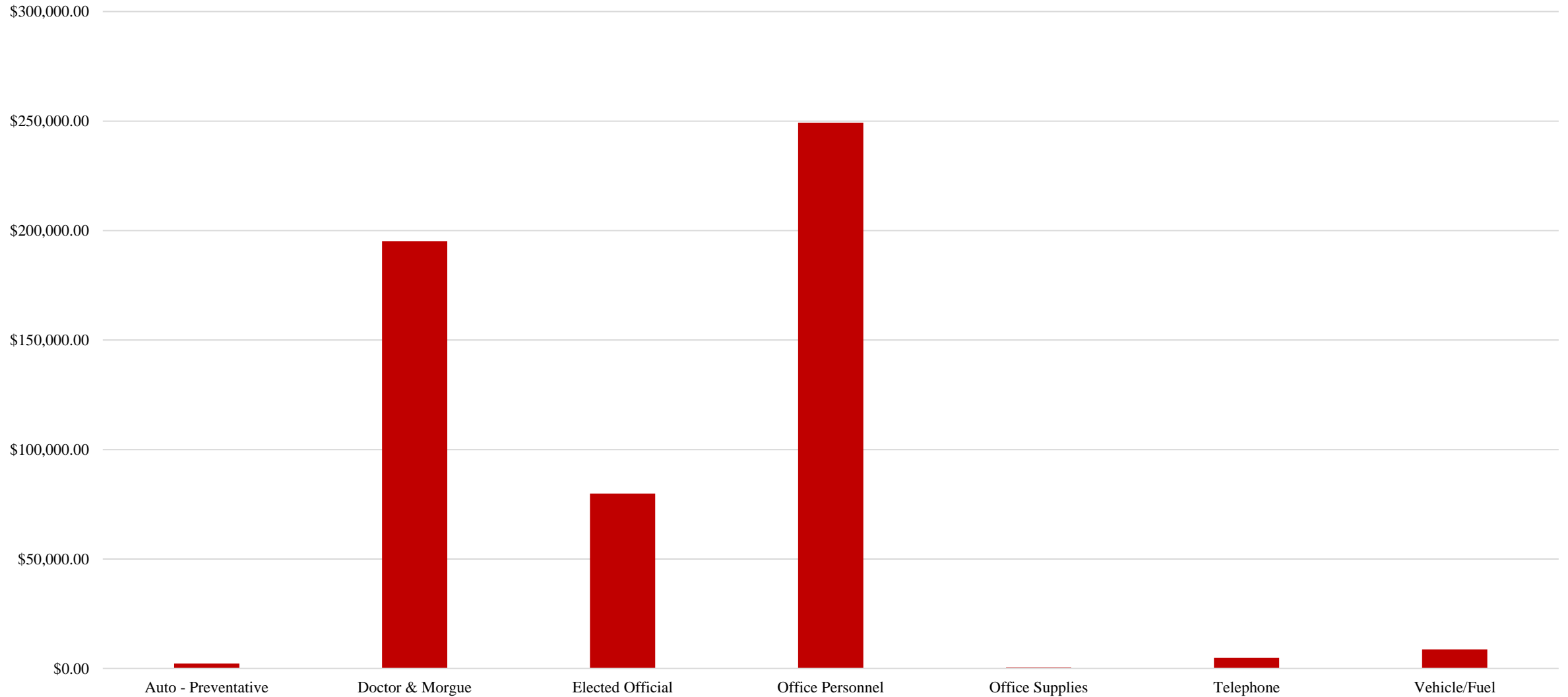
X-Rays Performed



Cremation Permits Issued

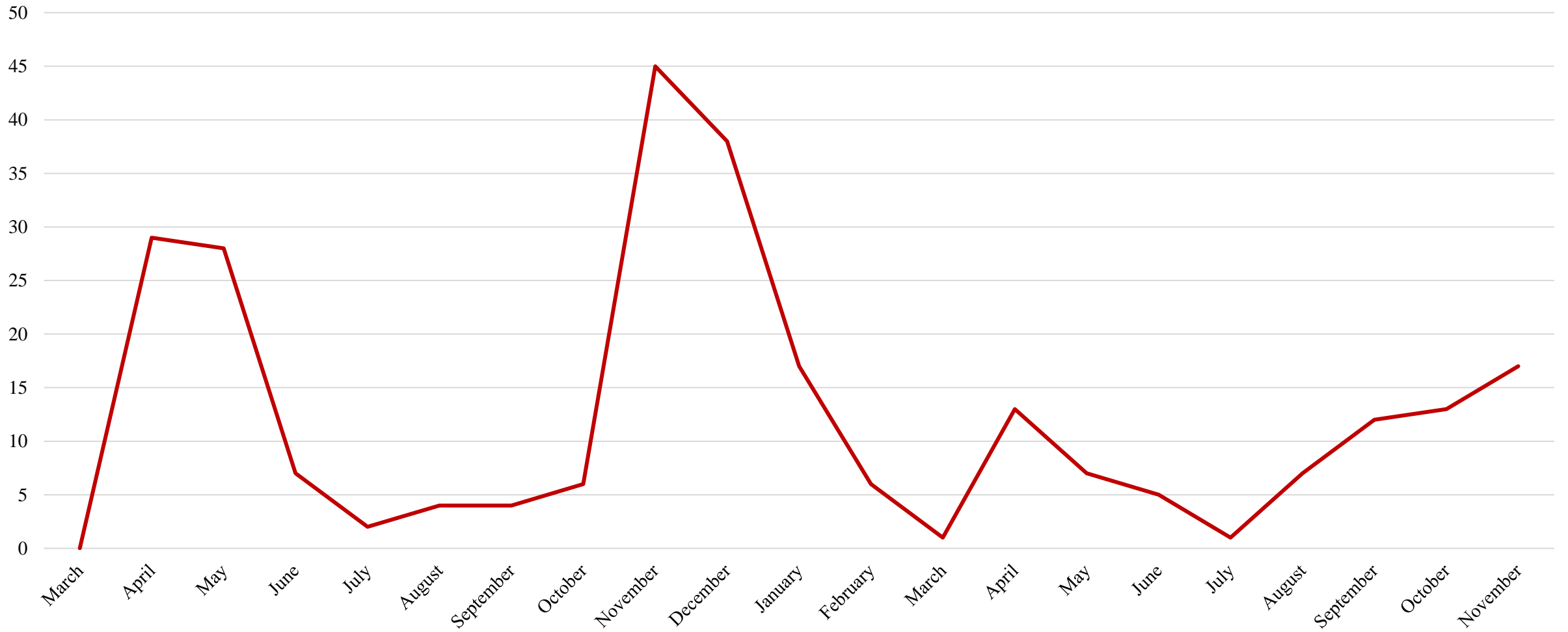


FY2021 Expenses



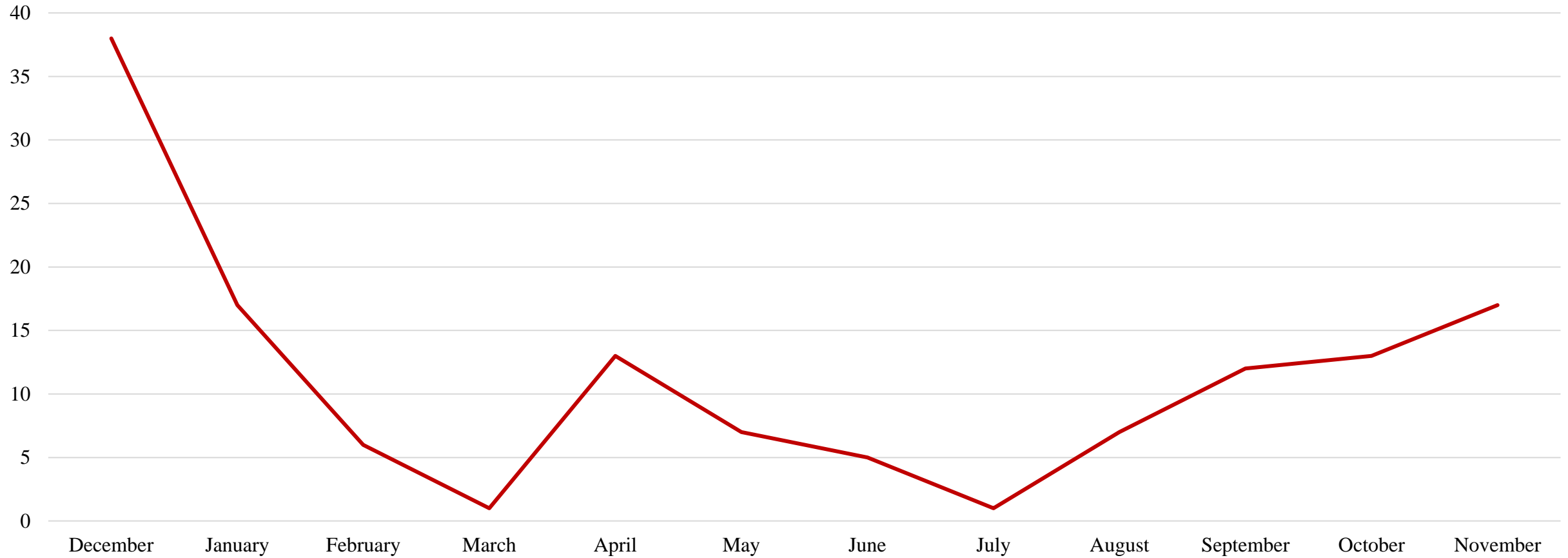
COVID-19 Data

March 2020 – November 2021



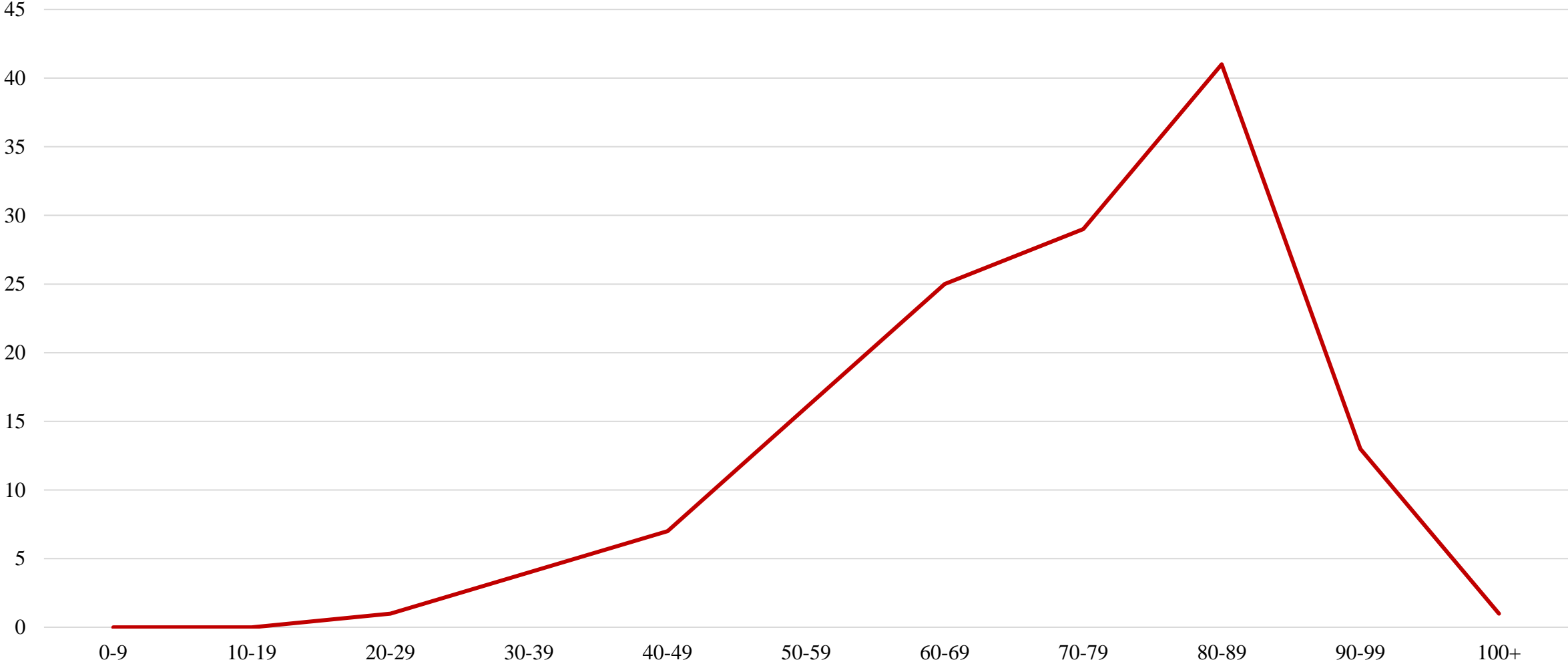
COVID-19 Data

FY2021 Deaths by Month



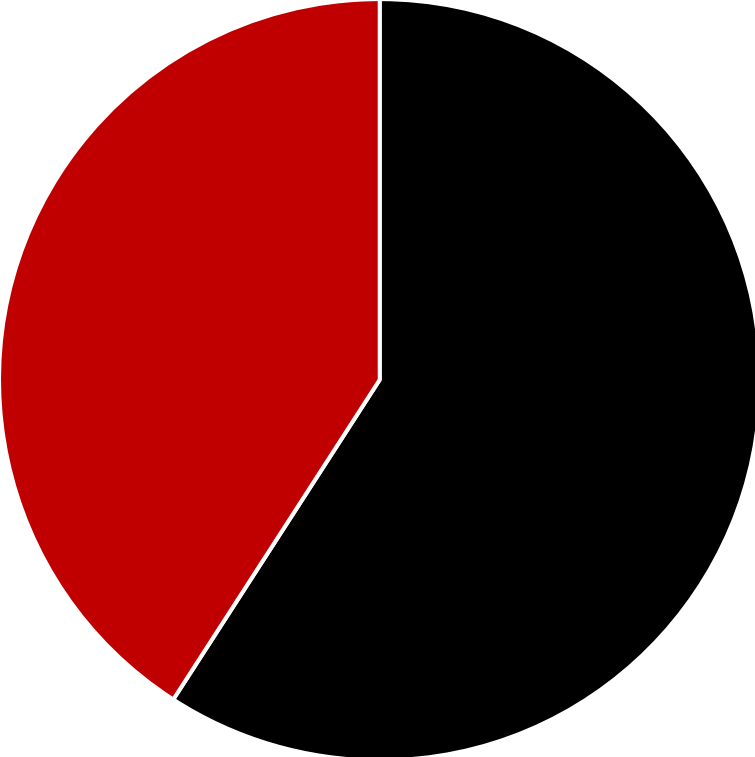
COVID-19 Data

FY2021 Deaths by Age



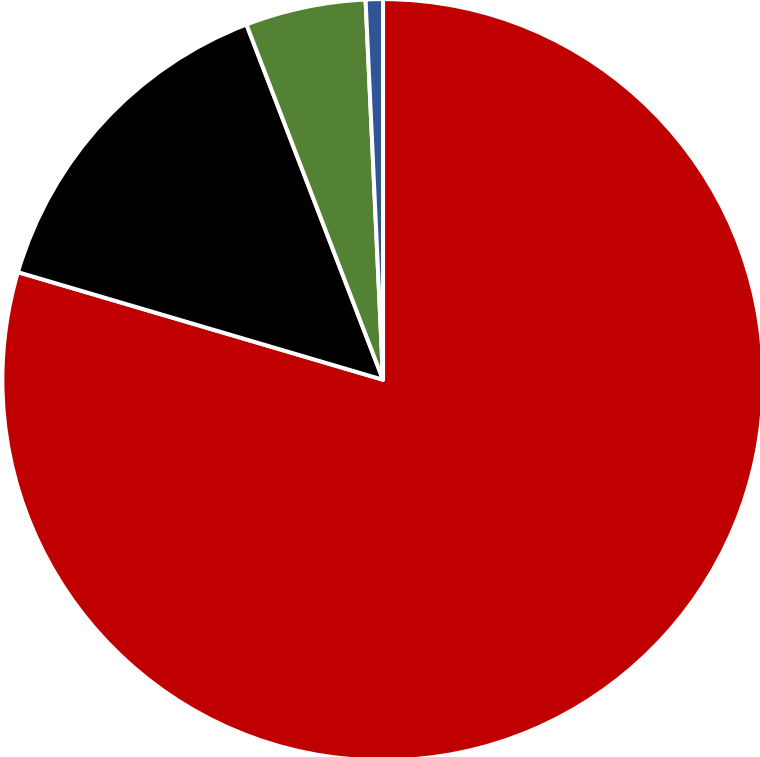
COVID-19 Data

FY2021 Deaths by Gender



■ Male ■ Female

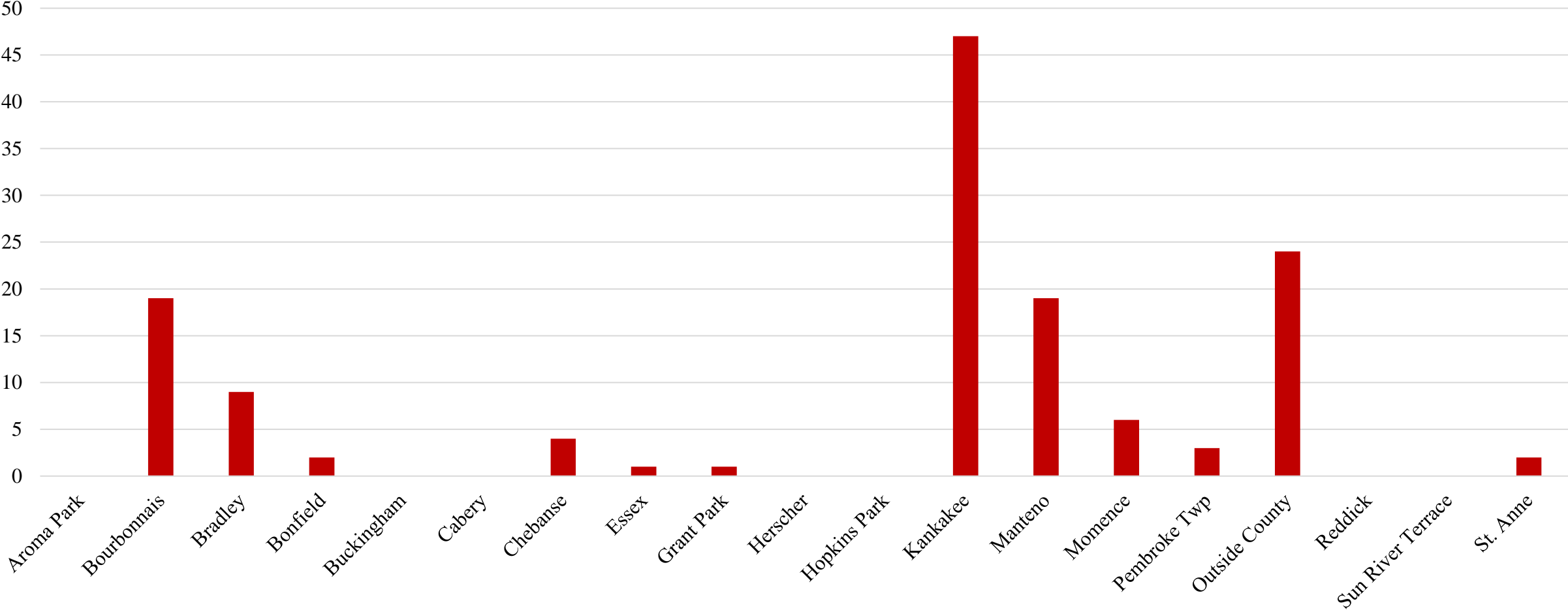
FY2021 Deaths by Race



■ Caucasian ■ African American ■ Hispanic ■ Asian Indian

COVID-19 Data

FY2021 Deaths by Place of Residence



Community Outreach

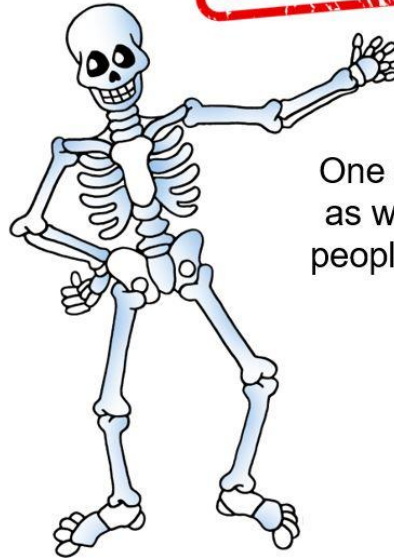


Social Media

- 25 social media post
- 54,809 total interactions
- 27,900 largest post interaction



DID YOU KNOW?



One organ donor could save up to **eight** lives as well as enhance the lives of more than **25** people. Sign up to be an organ donor today by visiting www.LifeGoesOn.com.



Website Data



Home History Role Of The Coroner Staff Coroner In-Action FOIA Cremation Permits Statistics Contact Us

- 8,376 site visits

Kankakee County Coroner's Office



www.kankakeecountycoroner.org

Firearms Training



*Special thanks to Sheriff Michael Downey and the Kankakee County Sheriff's Department for all the support!