

Champaign County  
Office of the Coroner



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Stephen E. Thuney

Coroner

# Illinois Coroner's Creed

Birth is the most important biological event in the life of any human being. If it does not occur, there is no being. If there is no person, no legal rights and duties arise, for the law related to the rights and the duties of living people, no inanimate objects.

Death, on the other hand, is the most important legal event for all human beings. When it occurs, all legal rights and duties devolving upon the person during his/her life span in a civilized jurisdiction are terminated. All persons with whom the deceased had legal relations at that moment in time are also directly affected by the occurrence of death. Moreover, both the deceased and the survivors may be greatly affected legally by **how** death occurred, **what** actually happened, **why** it occurred, and precisely **when** it occurred. Above all **who** died must be absolutely determined, and **where** death occurred is positively required for jurisdiction over the decedent is based upon a geographical location. The law becomes extremely active when a person dies. Wealth is redistributed. Contacts are altered. A wrongful death may give rise to tortuous claims. Tax obligations are always present. Public social benefits and private insurance policies are paid. Criminal laws may be involved. Creditors must be satisfied, and debtors located. Spouse and children, heirs and next-of-kin have their attachments rearranged. It is not surprising that for centuries the sovereign state has had an overriding interest in the death of its subject or citizens. The office of the Coroner, or the Office of the Medical Examiner, along with the state-licensed physician is legally charged with significant duties answering the pertinent questions relating to death: **Who, Where, When, What, How, Why**. Only when these questions have been answered correctly can all the proper legal issues arising at death be effectively handled for the proper administration of justice.

Although the legal aspects of death are most important, certainly the religious and humanitarian heritages of a civilized society also command a deep concern over the death of a human being. The spiritual faith in a religion as well as the humanitarian concern for a fellow human being demand correct answers to the questions of death: **Who, Where, How, When, and Why?** Human death obligates the living to acquire facts on which to apply just laws for each deceased member of the human race.

The obligation for proper death investigation is mandatory for legal and religious/humanitarian satisfactions in the human society. Let those responsible for death investigation take heed that they labor not only for the State, but also for God.

## **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Champaign County Coroner's Office is to provide independent and professional medicolegal death investigations as neutral experts utilizing investigative best practices and advanced forensic science while ensuring the highest level of compassion, dignity, and respect for the deceased and their family.

# OFFICE OF THE CORONER CHAMPAIGN COUNTY



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**Stephen E. Thuney**  
County Coroner

## INTRODUCTION

The Champaign County Coroner's Office conducts independent, comprehensive, and professional death investigations to determine the cause and manner of death in cases where the coroner has jurisdiction. This is accomplished through the continued cooperation between the Coroner's Office, law enforcement agencies, health care professionals, and the public.

The Champaign County Coroner's Office is staffed by an elected Coroner, Chief Deputy Coroner, 5 Deputy Coroner Investigators, 1 Deputy Coroner/Autopsy Technician, 1 Senior Medical Secretary, 1 Deputy Coroner (part-time).

The statistics compiled for this report will provide elected officials, the public, medical professionals, and law enforcement with beneficial information.

There were a total of 1913 deaths reported in Champaign County for the year ending December 31, 2023. This represents a decrease of 188 from calendar year 2022. Of the total deaths in 2023, the Coroner's Office conducted a coroner's investigation of 552, and reviewed 1361 medical deaths for potential further investigation. Of the deaths occurring in Champaign County, 1403 were residents of Champaign County, 510 were residents of other counties. The number of non-residents decreased 24% from 672 in 2022.

Coroner jurisdiction investigations determined 335 deaths were the result of natural causes, 158 deaths were from accidental causes, 16 deaths that were ruled homicide, and 32 deaths were ruled suicide in 2023. We assisted other jurisdictions 11 times by performing death notifications.

The office responded to 341 scene deaths in 2023. This represents a decrease of 4% from calendar year 2022.

There were 166 autopsies performed out of the 552 coroner death investigations in 2023. This represents 30% of the total coroner investigations conducted.

Toxicology testing was performed in 240 cases in 2023 compared to 252 cases in 2022.

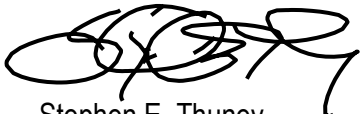
There were 158 accidental deaths in 2023 representing a 12% decrease from 2022. There were 32 deaths from motor vehicle incidents, 6 overdoses from prescription medications, 54 overdoses from illicit drugs (8 heroin, 42 illicit fentanyl, 13 methamphetamine, 14 cocaine, 7 alcohol), 41 overdose deaths involved more than one drug, 91 blunt force trauma (64 from falling), 1 drowning, and 6 other categories.

There were 16 homicide deaths investigated by the Champaign County Coroner's Office in 2023. This represents a decrease of 23% from 2022. All 16 deaths were male (3 white, 12 African American, 1 Hispanic), ages ranged from 16 to 59 years. Gunshot wounds accounted for 11 deaths, 4 stabbing, and 1 blunt force trauma.

There were 32 suicidal deaths in 2023. This represents a 21% decrease from 2022. Hanging accounted for 14 deaths, 10 gunshot wounds, 5 overdoses, 2 blunt force traumas, 1 carbon monoxide poisoning. Males accounted for 21 deaths and females 11. Ages ranged from 21 to 88 years.

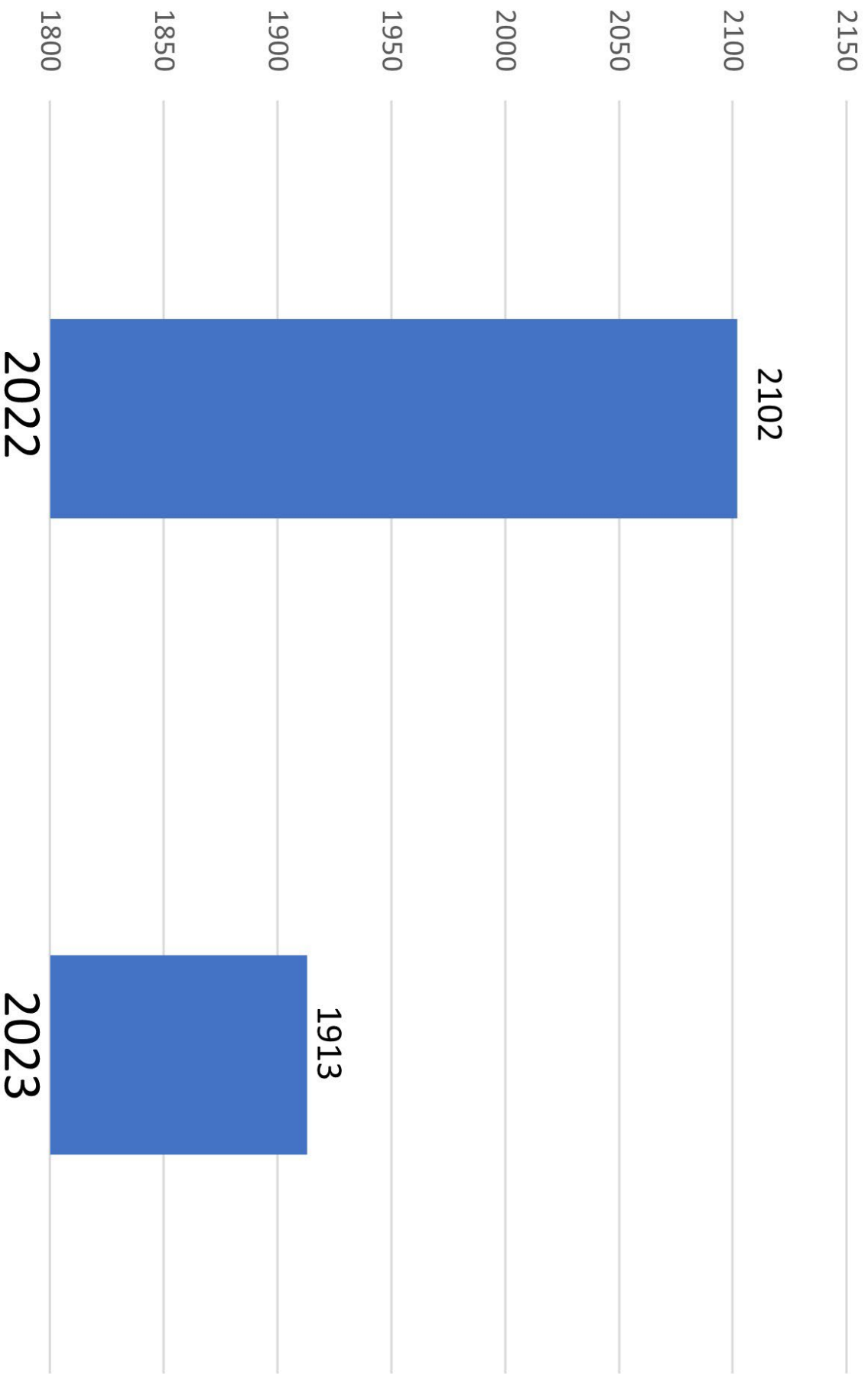
In the following pages you will find additional statistical information related to deaths in Champaign County in 2023. Please keep in mind this report represents investigation of deaths in which the coroner took jurisdiction.

Respectfully Submitted,

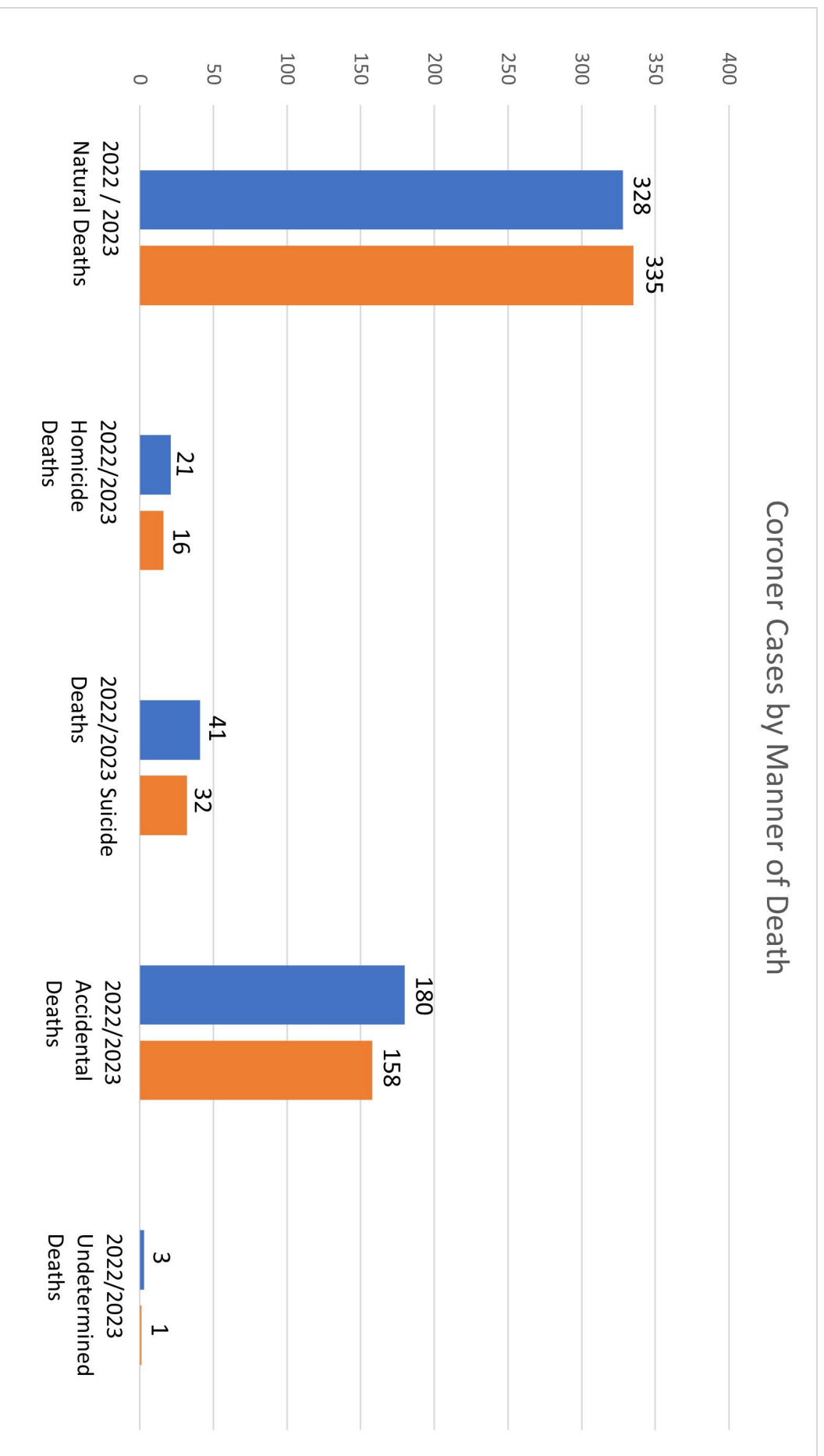
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Thuney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stephen E. Thuney  
Champaign County Coroner

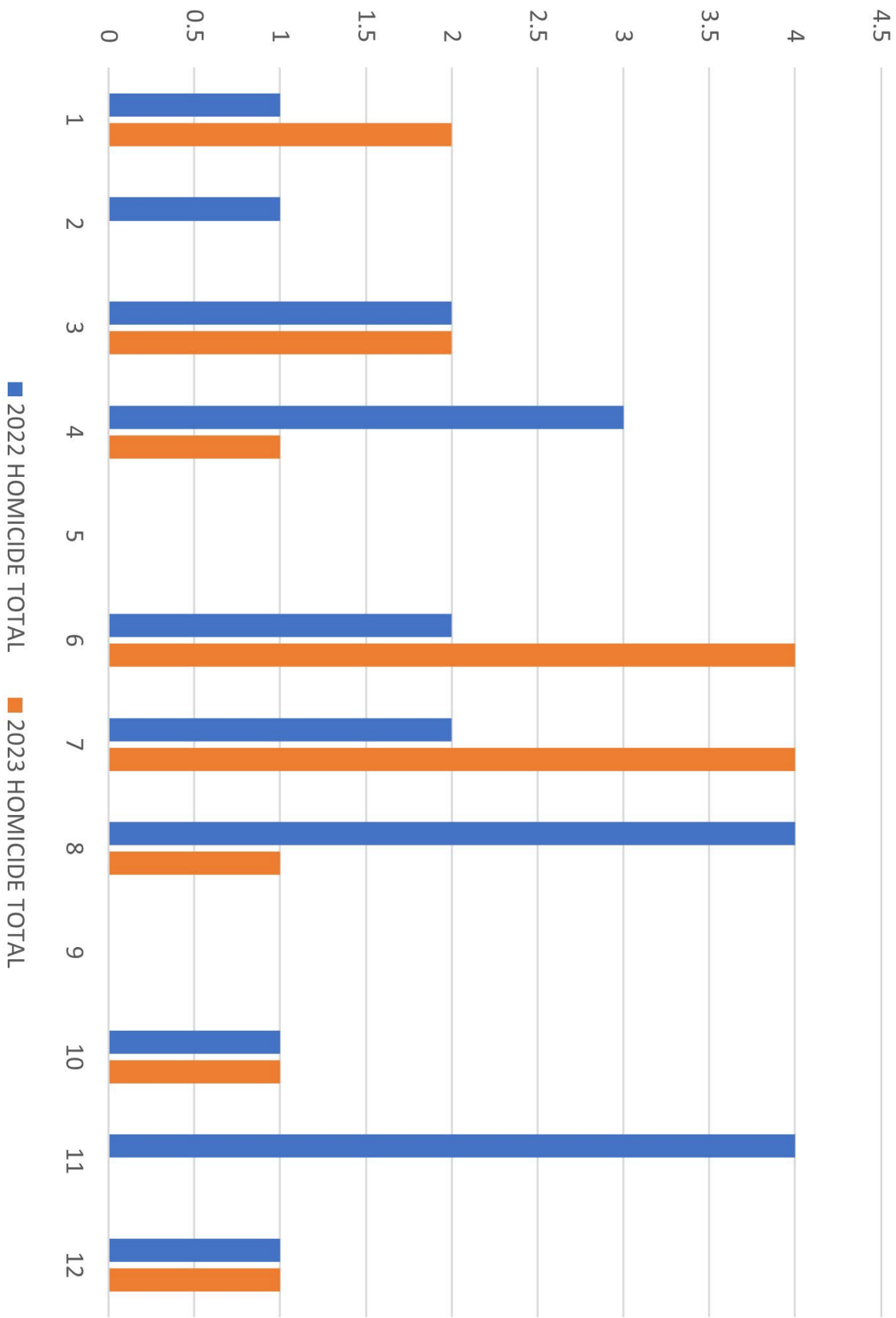
## Total Deaths Reported



## Coroner Cases by Manner of Death

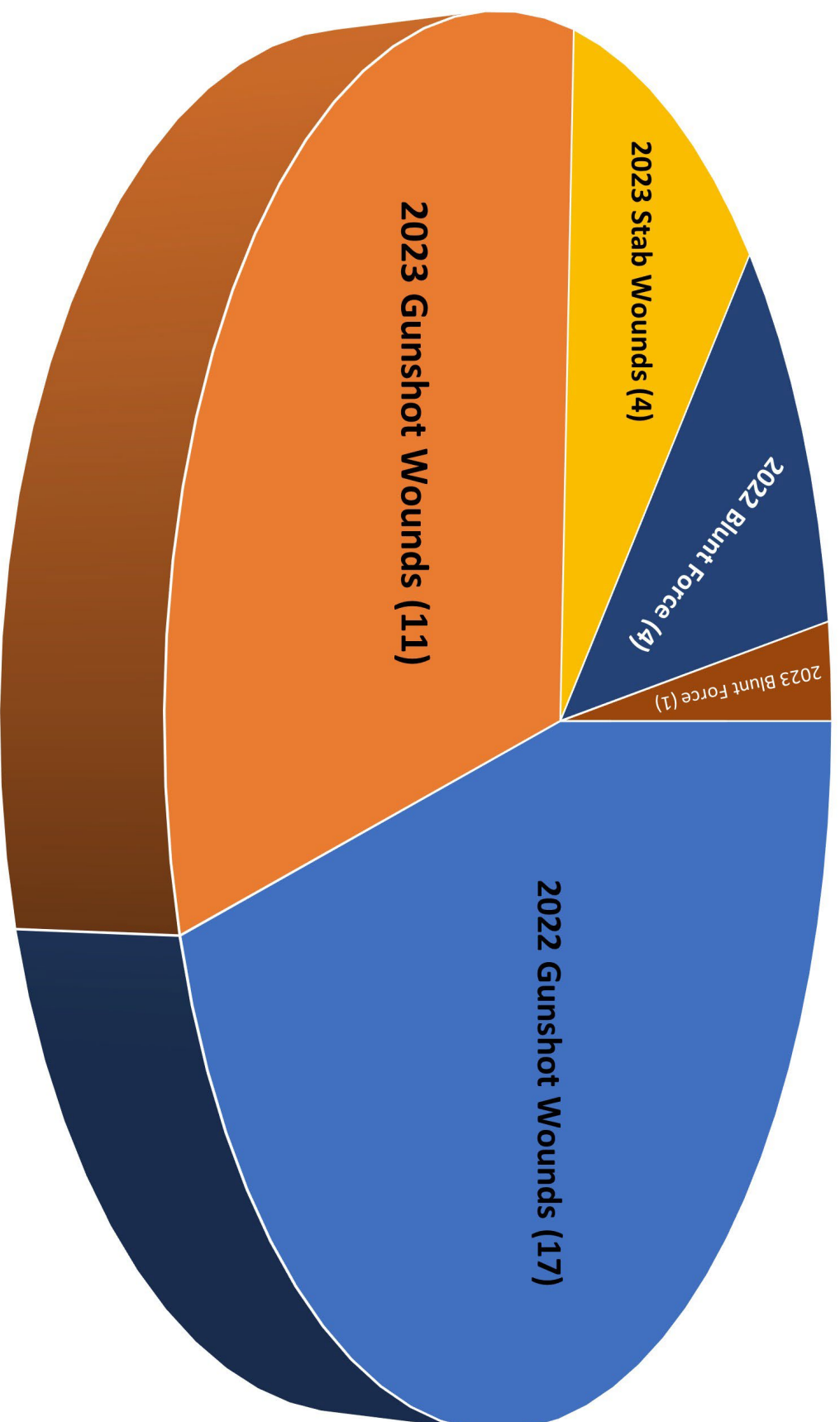


# Homicide Deaths 2022-2023

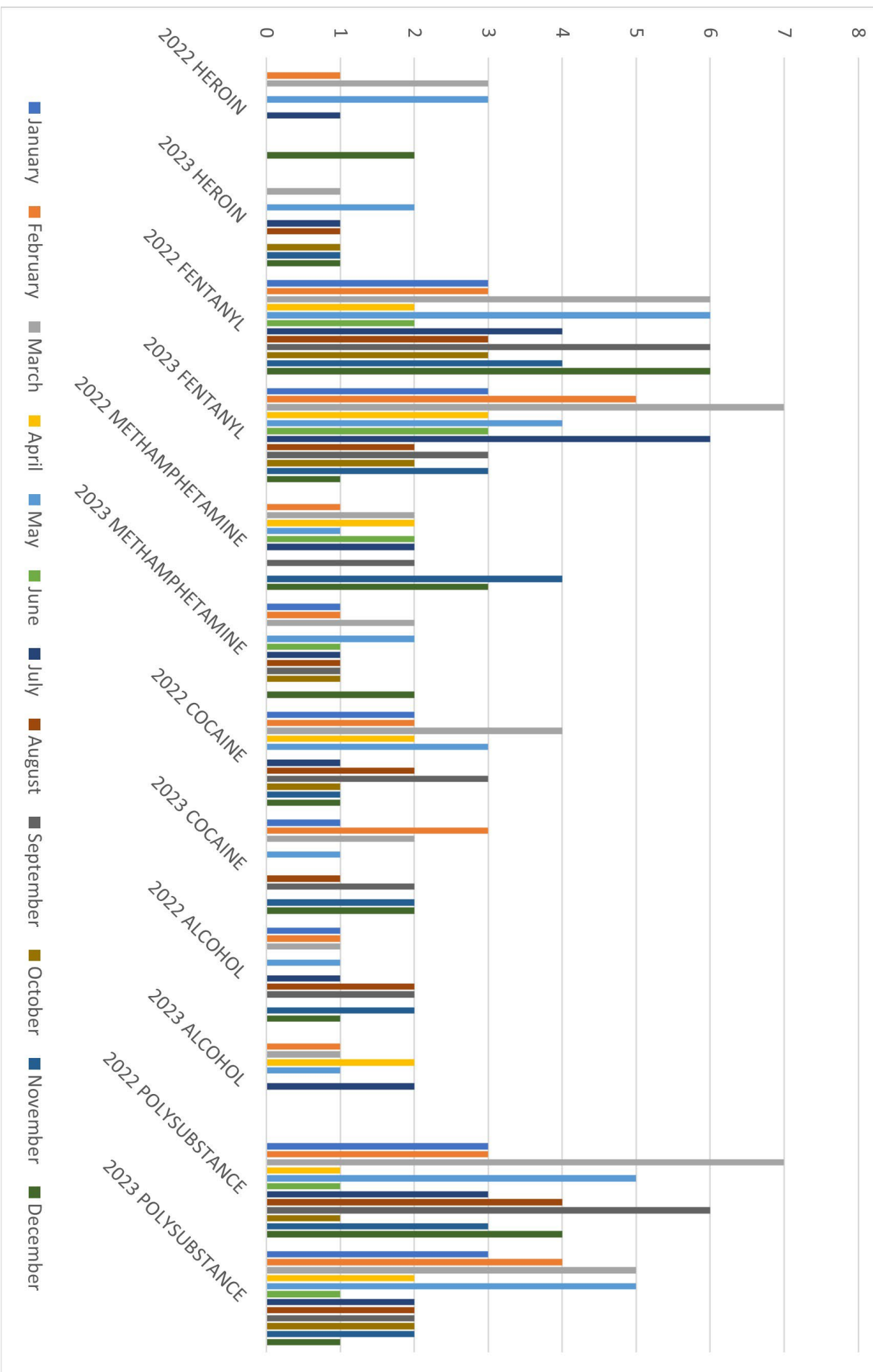




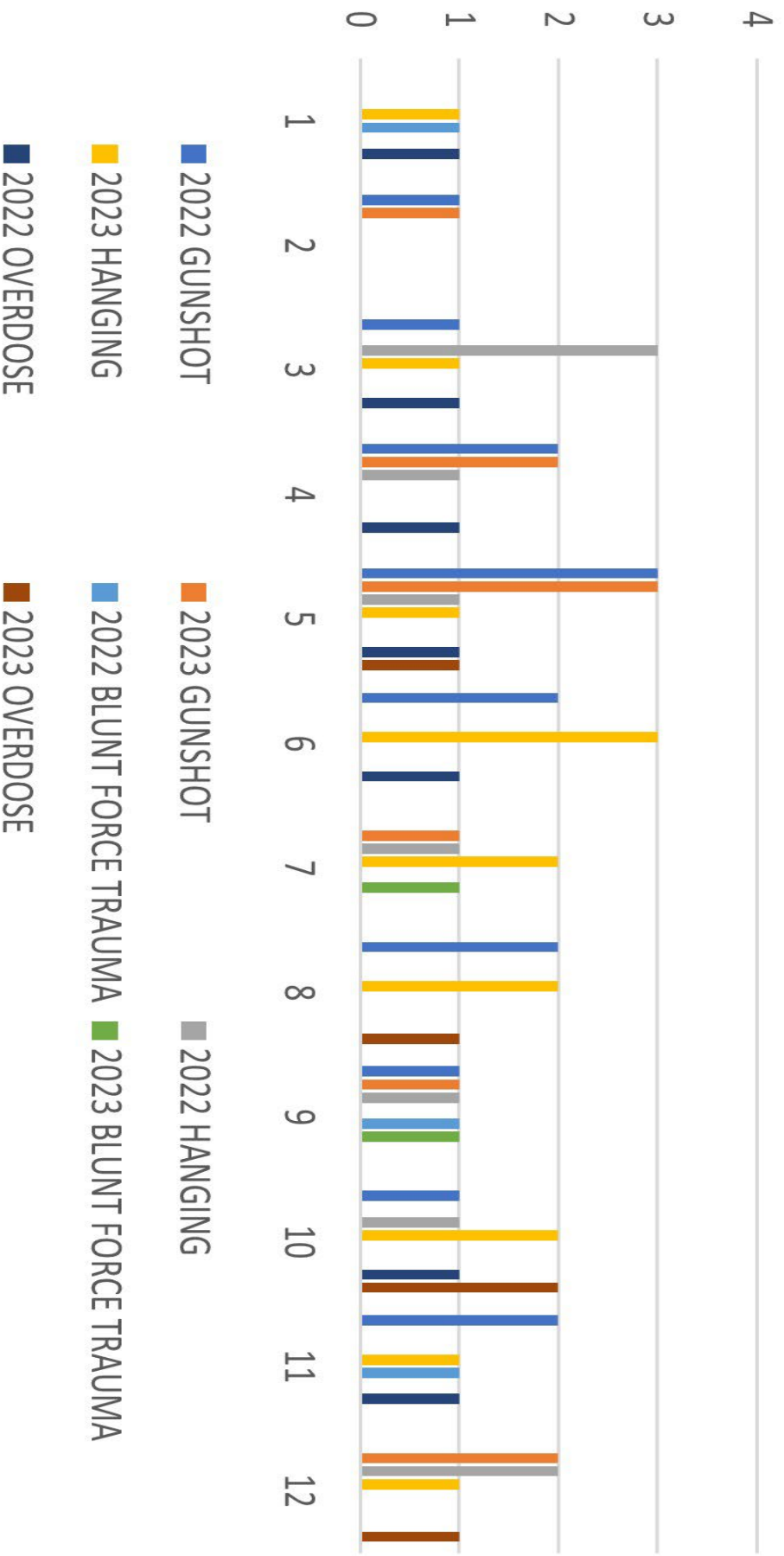
Homicide / Cause of Death



# Overdose Deaths 2022-2023



## Suicide Deaths / Method



## Autopsy Totals

