



County of San Diego Department of the Medical Examiner 2020 Mid-Year Report

Report time frame: Jan - Jun 2020

Total cases
1,751
(+5% from 1,674 in 2019)
Note: Total includes 3 cases still under investigation*

Accident
857
(+2%)

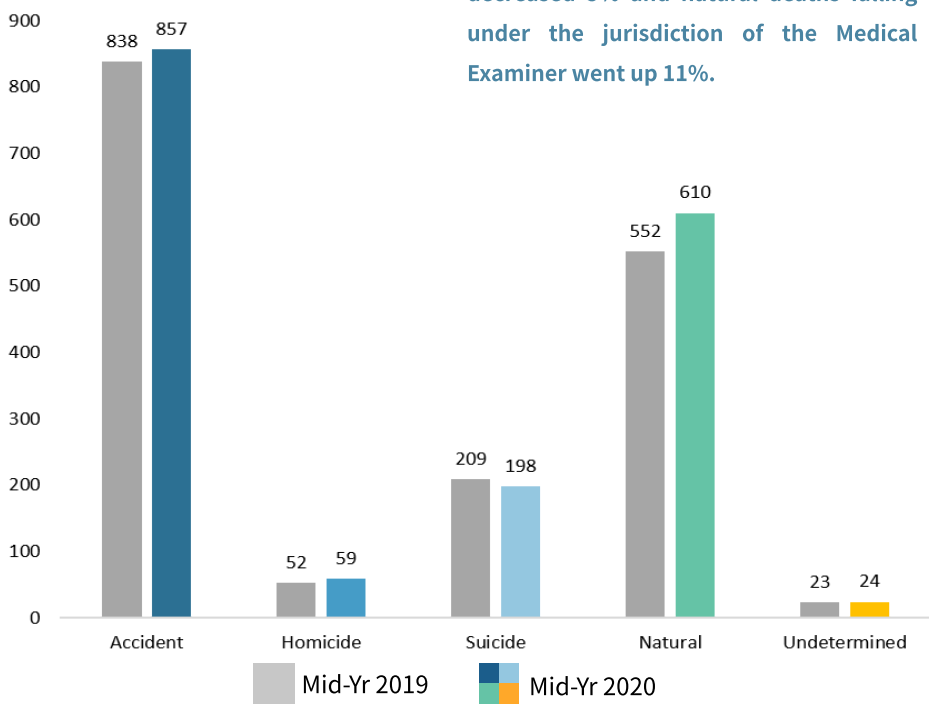
Homicide
59
(+14%)

Suicide
198
(-5%)

Natural
610
(+11%)

MANNER OF DEATH

Comparing cases from mid-year 2019 to 2020, accidental deaths have increased 2%, homicides were up by 14%, suicides decreased 5% and natural deaths falling under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner went up 11%.

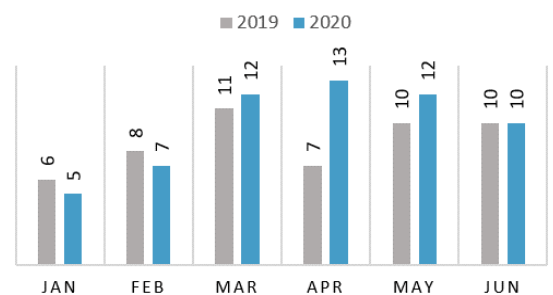


Homicides

↑ 14% INCREASE
(52 to 59)
mid-year 2019 to 2020

As of mid-year 2020, firearms were the leading method of death in 54% of homicide cases (32 of 59).

- 80% were male
- Average Age was 36
- Rates per 100,000 of Population**:
Black: 8.3 (highest rate with 14 homicides); Hispanic 1.4; White 1.2; Asian/Pacific Islander: 1.1



Suicides

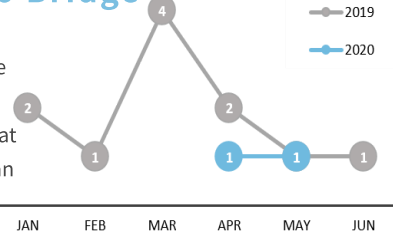
↓ 5% DECREASE
(209 to 198)
mid-year 2019 to 2020

As of mid-year 2020, firearms were the leading method of death in 38% of suicide cases (76 of 198)

- 79% were male
- Average Age was 46.6
- Rates per 100,000 of Population**:
White: 9.1 (highest rate with 137 suicides); Asian/Pacific Islander: 4.3; Black: 4.2; Hispanic: 2.5

Coronado Bridge

There were 2 Coronado Bridge suicide deaths compared to 11 at mid-year 2019, an 82% decrease



Natural Deaths

Only a relatively small number of Natural deaths occurring in the County fall under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner. Those that may be investigated include deaths believed to be natural but that occurred suddenly and unexpectedly where the decedent had not seen their health care provider in the last 20 days of life. A majority of these cases are Cardiovascular events which accounted for 64% of Natural deaths falling under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner.

COVID-19

Deaths due to COVID-19 are reportable to the Medical Examiner; however, in most cases the decedent's own doctor is able to complete the death certificate and the Medical Examiner is not further involved. At mid-year (6/30), the Medical Examiner had tested 104 decedents and found 7 positive results (a 6.7% positive rate). As of Oct. 15, 235 decedents have been tested with 17 positive (a 7.2% positive rate).

The work of the Department of the Medical Examiner is largely based on Government Code § 27491, which states that all unnatural deaths including homicides, suicides, accidents, and deaths in custody are under the coroner/medical examiner's jurisdiction to investigate. Also falling under our jurisdiction are infectious diseases reaching epidemic proportions, deaths in state or local institutions, and deaths believed to be natural but that occurred suddenly and unexpectedly where the decedent had not seen their health care provider in the last 20 days of life. Note: All deaths that fall under § 27491 are also subject to whether the facts indicate the death occurred under natural circumstances and the physician of record has sufficient knowledge to reasonably state the cause of death occurred under natural circumstance. Therefore, not every death that falls under one of these categories will be investigated by the Medical Examiner's office. See Govt. Code § 27491.

*Due to some cases still under investigation during this report time frame, manner of death counts and associated insights may adjust slightly as those cases are closed.
**Population Rates are based on 2019 population estimates from SANDAG



ACCIDENTS

Unintentional Drug, Medication, and Alcohol Caused Deaths remained high, representing 45% of all accidental deaths as of Mid-Year 2020



- Unintentional deaths due to drug, medication, and/or alcohol toxicity increased by 21% (320 to 387)
- The average age was 45, the youngest was 17, and oldest was 78; 70% were male
- Methamphetamine was a causative factor in 53% of all unintentional overdose cases and saw a 7% increase (190 to 204)
- Deaths where Fentanyl was a causative factor increased by 126% (69 to 156)

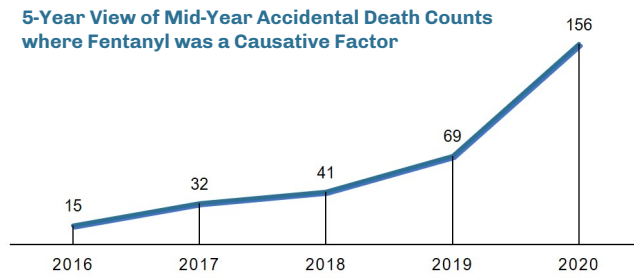
Note: Counts listed for Methamphetamine and Fentanyl include deaths where the drug either alone or with other drugs, medication and/or alcohol was a causative factor in death; these counts are not mutually exclusive and may include cases where both Fentanyl and Methamphetamine were a causative factor in death

Accidental Fentanyl-Caused Overdose Deaths

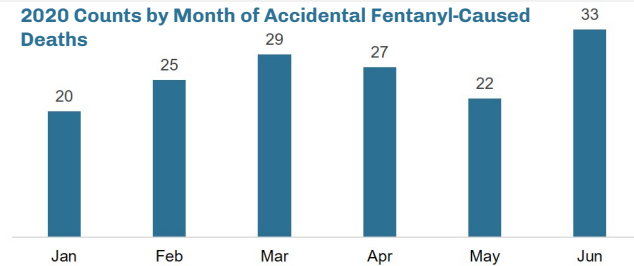
126% increase from Mid-Year 2019

This year deaths due to fentanyl, either alone or with another drug, have continued to increase at an even more rapid rate than previous years. This same trend occurred in Canada, the eastern US and the mid-west, and is now in San Diego County. In the previous decade deaths due to fentanyl often occurred when patients misused prescribed fentanyl. Now, deaths due to prescribed fentanyl are very uncommon, and most deaths result from people using illicitly obtained counterfeit pills made to resemble oxycodone or alprazolam, but instead containing deadly fentanyl.

5-Year View of Mid-Year Accidental Death Counts where Fentanyl was a Causative Factor



2020 Counts by Month of Accidental Fentanyl-Caused Deaths



FENTANYL DEATHS DECEDENT CHARACTERISTICS

72% male
64% white

20 Most common age (9 deaths), followed by age 32 (8 deaths)

64% occurred at home

32% had also taken Meth

FALLS

Falls accounted for 29% of all accidental deaths as of Mid-Year 2020

Falls decreased 11% (280 to 248)



- Blunt Head Trauma, including subdural hematoma, remained the leading cause of fall-related deaths, accounting for 46% (115) of these cases and was down 14% from 2019
- Deaths resulting from Hip/Femur Fracture represented 27% (66) of Fall cases

Motor Vehicle Related Deaths

represented 18% of all accidental deaths as of Mid-Year 2020

Motor Vehicle related deaths saw a slight mid-year increase of 3% (151 to 155); these include solo vehicle accidents, auto vs auto, pedestrian, motorcycle, and auto vs fixed object.



Pedestrian deaths remained the leading type of Motor Vehicle related death at 28% (44); there was no change compared to the mid-year 2019 count of 44



Motorcycle related deaths, including both solo and those involving another motor vehicle, saw a 30% decrease (23 to 16)



Auto vs Fixed Object cases increased 150% (10 to 25)

