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This report provides a summary and statistical analysis of the deaths that were investigated by the Mesa County Coroner's Office in the year 2020. Mesa County encompasses an area over 3300 square miles, which consists of desert, agricultural, and mountain areas. Mesa County is home to approximately 155,469 people in 12 communities (<https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/co/mesa-county-population>). The largest of these is Grand Junction, followed by Fruita and Palisade. Other towns and unincorporated areas of the County include Clifton, Fruitvale, De Beque, Collbran, Mesa, Mack, Loma, Gateway, Glade Park, and Whitewater.

The Coroner and/or Deputy Coroner are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Coroner's mission is to satisfy the legal requirements of the office in an expeditious manner. The primary task of the Coroner's Office is to determine the cause and manner of death of those who have died in Mesa County or in those whose traumatic event originated in Mesa County. An autopsy may be required depending upon the circumstances of the death. Not all deaths that the Coroner's Office investigates requires a full autopsy.

The Coroner's Office investigates sudden, unexpected deaths, especially those that occur under violent or suspicious circumstances. The deaths to be reported to the Mesa County Coroner's Office include all deaths occurring in Mesa County as outlined below regardless of where or when the initial injuring event occurred. In addition, all deaths in which the initiating injuring event occurred in Mesa County shall be reported to Mesa County Coroner's Office.

The deaths to be reported to Mesa County Coroner's Office are as follows:

- From disease which may be hazardous, contagious, or may constitute a threat to the health of the general public
- From external violence, an unexplained cause, or under suspicious circumstances
- Where no physician is in attendance, or where, though in attendance, the physician is unable to certify the cause of death
- From thermal, chemical, or radiation injury
- From criminal abortion
- While in the custody of law enforcement officials or while incarcerated in a public institution
- When the death was sudden and happened to a person who was in good health
- From an industrial accident or any death suspected to involved with the decedent's occupation
- When death occurs in a hospital less than 24 hours after admission to a hospital or after any invasive procedure
- Any death suspected to be due to alcohol intoxication or the result of exposure to drugs or toxic agents
- Any death due to neglect or suspected neglect
- Any stillbirth of 20 or more weeks gestational age unattended by a physician
- Any maternal death to include death of a pregnant woman regardless of the length of the pregnancy, and up to six weeks (or one year) post-delivery, even where the cause of death is unrelated to the pregnancy

- Any death of an infant or child where the medical history has not established a significant pre-existing condition

Staff for 2020

Victor Yahn, F-ABMDI	Coroner
Stacie Dix, D-ABMDI	Deputy Coroner
Nina Strayhorn, D-ABMDI	Deputy Coroner
Morgan Hart	Deputy Coroner
Alexis Prall	Deputy Coroner
Peter Schimek	Deputy Coroner

General Statistics (Including deaths transferred to the county of origin)

Mesa County population in 2020 per census data	155,469
Total Mesa County deaths	2059
Percentage of Mesa County citizens who died in 2020	1.32%

Number of deaths investigated 917

Scene Investigations	376
- Victor Yahn	44
- Stacie Dix	129
- Nina Strayhorn	59
- Morgan Hart	18
- Alexis Prall	75
- Peter Schimek	51

Facility Investigations	541
- Victor Yahn	85
- Stacie Dix	147
- Nina Strayhorn	70
- Morgan Hart	28
- Alexis Prall	116
- Peter Schimek	95

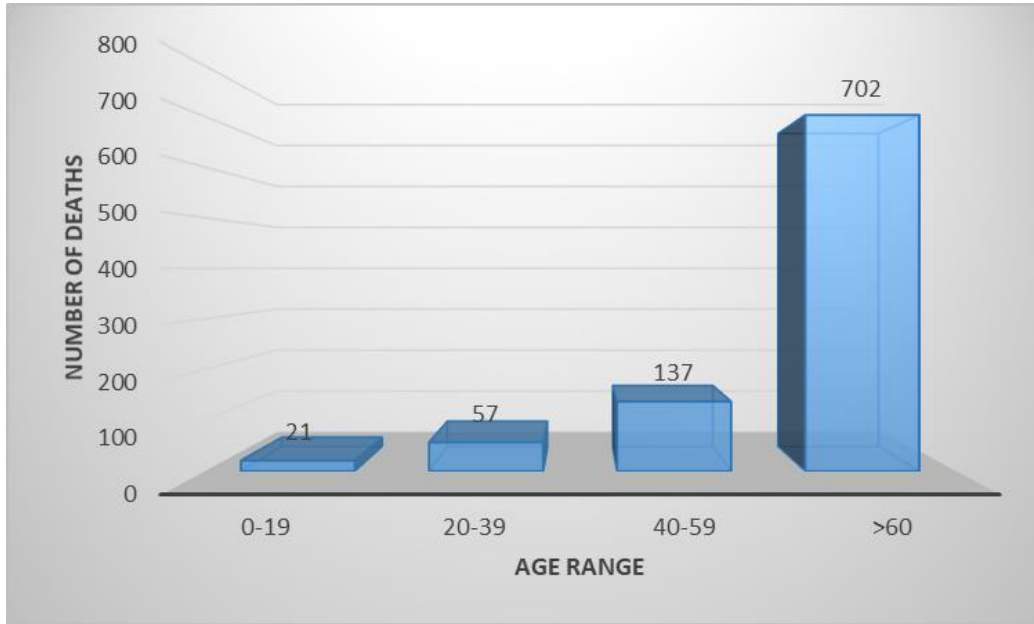
Percentage of total deaths investigated	45%
Number of deaths originating in other counties	91
Jurisdiction declined	16

Number of postmortem examinations (Mesa County)	134
Percentage of deaths having an examination	6.5%
- Complete Autopsies	128
- Partial Autopsies	01
- External Examinations	05

Toxicology performed (Mesa County)	158
Gender of those deaths investigated	
Males	557
Females	360
Race of those deaths investigated	
Caucasian	839
Hispanic	56
Native American	13
Black	06
Asian	03
Other/Unknown	00
Body Transport	
Coroner's Office	336
Mortuaries – from scene	60
Mortuaries – from facilities	521
Additional Information	
Unidentified bodies	0
Organ and Tissue referrals	24
Donated to CMU Forensic Investigation Research	0
Unclaimed bodies	6
Exhumations	0

The following information pertains only to deaths that were not transferred back to the county of origin.

Age



In the 0 to 19 years old age group, there were fourteen deaths, which included thirteen males and eight females. Of these, seven were natural deaths; six were stillborn/miscarriages/preterm births; one 16-year-old from cancer. Eight deaths were accidents; two 2-month-olds positional asphyxia with bed sharing, one 1-year-old blunt force head injuries, one 3-year-old drowning, one 12-year-old multiple blunt force injuries, one 16-year-old blunt force head injuries, one 18-year-old multiple blunt force injuries and one 19-year-old mixed drug intoxication. Five were suicides; one 11-year-old hanging, one 12-year-old hanging, one 15-year-old hanging, one 19-year-old multiple blunt force injuries and one 19-year-old drug intoxication. One was undetermined; a 4-month-old without a clear cause involved in bed sharing. No homicides this year.

Manner of Death

Manner	# of cases	# of postmortem exams	% receiving a postmortem exam **
Natural	622	25	4%
Accident	147	55	37%
Suicide	48	45	94%
Homicide	8	8	100%
Undetermined	1	1	100%

** In the 92 accidental deaths in which no postmortem examination was performed, were decedents who were hospitalized for an extended period of time and the injuries were well documented in the hospital and/or care facility. Of these 92 deaths; Sixty five deaths were from complications of a fall from standing height or a low height such as bed. Twelve were from drug intoxication. Eight were associated with motorized vehicle/ATV/motorcycle. Two were pedestrian verse vehicle. Two were from thermal injuries. One was a fall from a height of 20 feet. One was a fall from a motorized skateboard. One from a foreign body obstruction. Two suicides had been in the hospital for an extended period of time from the initial incident. The other one was an individual that was from a self-inflicted act when they were 17-years-old.

Accidental Deaths

Type	Number of deaths
Motor vehicle (MV) crash	20
Falls	72
Drug intoxication	36
Pedestrian vs. Motor vehicle (MV)	3
Drowning	3
Thermal injuries	5
Other **	8

**The “other” cases include: two co-sleeping, two being pinned under a boat trailer, one train verse pedestrian, one foreign body obstruction, a fall from a motorized skateboard and one bicycle crash.

The 20 motor vehicle crash-related deaths displayed the following data:

- Drivers – 18
 - Bulldozer – 1
 - Car/Truck - 4
 - Motorcycle/ATV - 13
- Passengers – 2
- Motorcycle/ATV wearing a helmet – 2
- Motorcycle/ATV without a helmet – 11
- Motorcycle/ATV unknown if wearing a helmet – 0
- Not included in the accidents was a suicide motorcycle crash.
- Automobile victims wearing a seatbelt – 2
- Automobile victims not wearing a seatbelt – 3
- Automobile victims unknown if wearing a seatbelt – 2
- Alcohol and/or drugs involved in 6 of the driver’s deaths (33% of cases)
 - Alcohol (absent of drugs) in 3 deaths

- Drugs (absent of alcohol) in 0 deaths
- Combination of both alcohol and drugs in 3 deaths
- Unknown if alcohol and/or drugs involved in 2 deaths due to hospitalization for extended time

The drownings consisted of:

- 1 adult Colorado River (Positive for alcohol)
- 1 adult canal (Positive for methamphetamine)
- 1 child canal (Negative)

The drug intoxications consisted of:

- 20 were mixed drug intoxications
 - 4 Methamphetamine and opiate intoxication (They were in the hospital for an extended time with no samples to test)
 - 1 Amphetamine, morphine, diazepam and gabapentin
 - 1 Fentanyl, oxycodone and alcohol
 - 1 Cocaine and alcohol
 - 3 Heroin and methamphetamine
 - 3 Methamphetamine and fentanyl
 - 1 Tramadol and quetiapine
 - 1 Alcohol and opiate (They were in the hospital for an extended time with no samples to test)
 - 1 Fentanyl and oxycodone
 - 1 Alcohol and unknown sleeping pills (They were in the hospital for an extended time with no samples to test)
 - 1 Methamphetamine, methadone and clonazepam
 - 1 Dextromethorphan, mitragynine, gabapentin
 - 1 Benzodiazepines and opiates (They were in the hospital for an extended time with no samples to test)
- 16 were from a single drug
 - 9 Methamphetamine
 - 2 Fentanyl
 - 1 Alprazolam
 - 1 Cocaine
 - 1 Mitragynine
 - 1 Chloroethane
 - 1 Heroin
- 6 suicides from drug intoxication (Not counted with Accidental Deaths).
 - 1 Insulin
 - 1 Fentanyl and gabapentin
 - 1 Diphenhydramine
 - 1 Quetiapine
 - 1 Amlodipine
 - 1 ingestion of an unspecified toxin(s)

Homicides

The eight homicides had the following characteristics:

- 1 death due to stab wounds
- 7 deaths due to gunshot wounds

Natural deaths

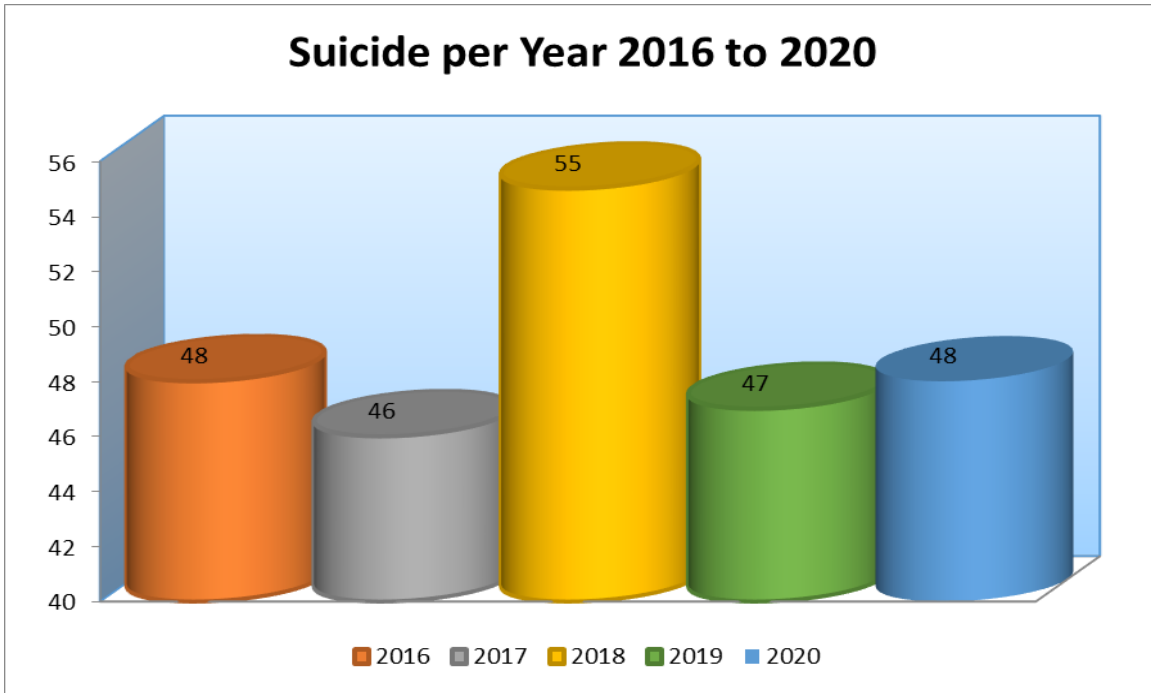
Of the 622 natural deaths investigated, the majority of the deaths were cardiovascular related (336 deaths, 54%). Deaths due to cardiovascular causes include myocardial infarcts (heart attacks), heart arrhythmias, strokes, and aneurysms. There were 119 deaths related to infectious causes (predominantly pneumonia in elderly individuals), 46 cancer related deaths, 13 deaths related to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and 51 deaths due to effects of chronic alcoholism. The remaining 57 deaths were primarily from complications of other long-standing disease processes.

Undetermined

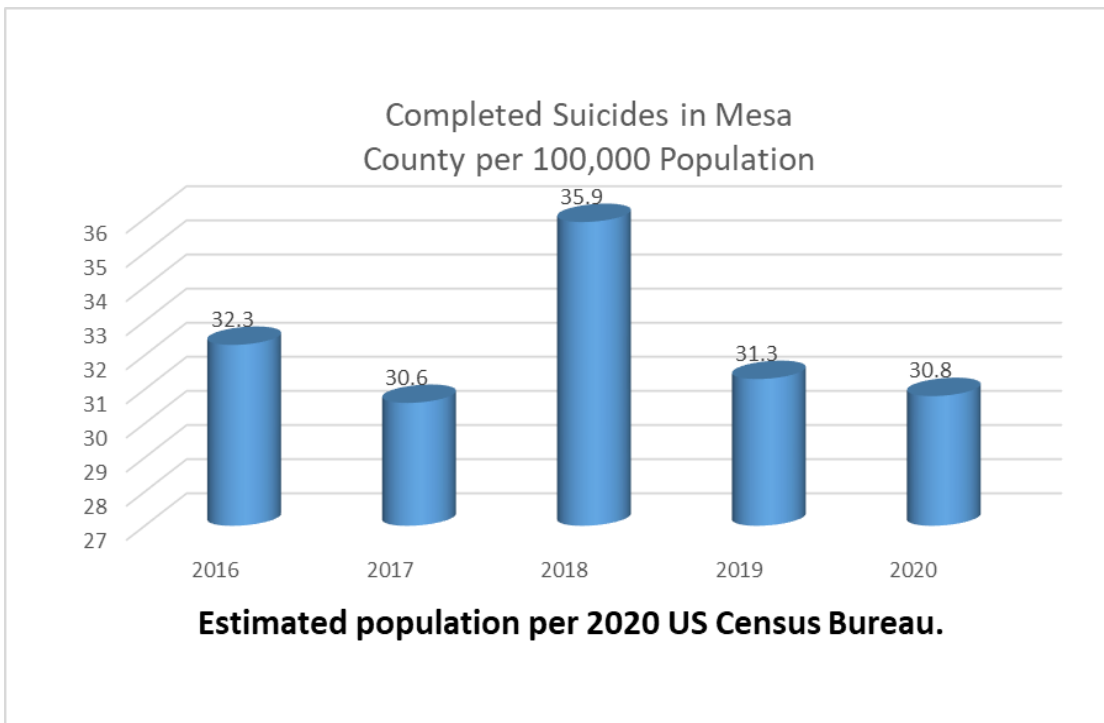
There was only one undetermined death. It was an infant in an unsafe sleep environment.

Suicides

OVERVIEW



Suicides rates are often expressed in number of suicides per 100,000 people.



There were 48 suicides in 2020. 40 of the 48 suicides were male; whereas, 8 suicides were female. Twenty-three suicides were from gunshot wounds. Fifteen suicides were hangings. Six suicides were from drug intoxications. Two suicide were sharp force injuries. One suicide was a motorcycle crash. One suicide was an individual that jumped off an overpass in Jefferson County, landing on a semi and was not discovered until they were trading out trucks in Mesa County.

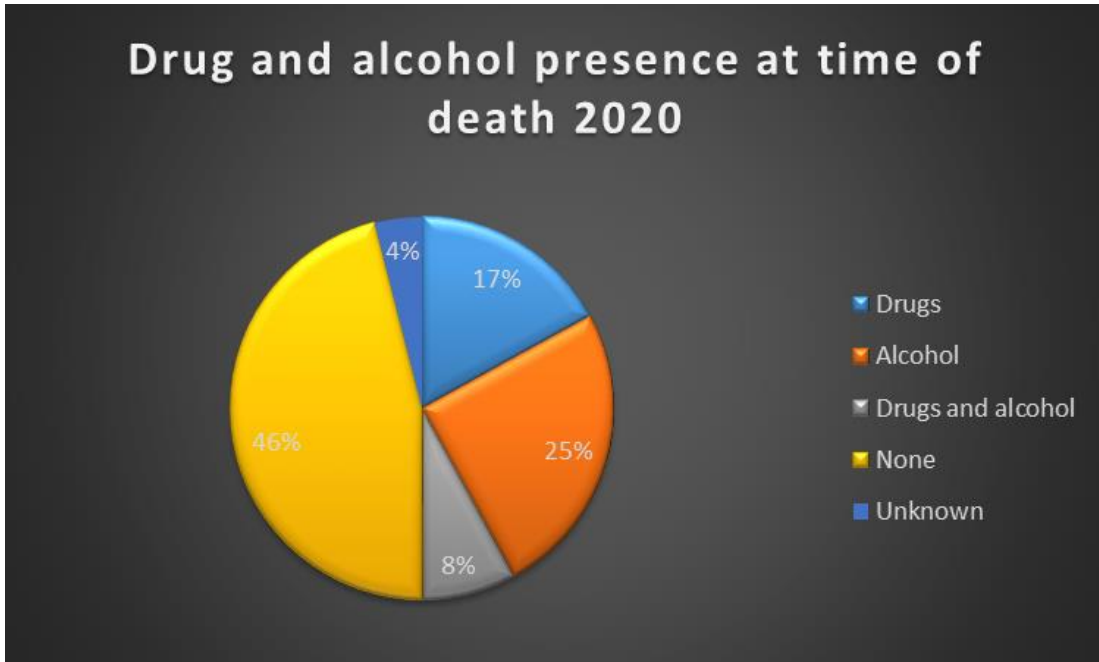
- Males age range was 11 to 86-years-old
 - 20 gunshot wound
 - 11 hanging
 - 5 drug intoxication
 - 2 multiple blunt force injuries
 - 2 sharp force injuries
- Females age range was 12 to 81-years-old
 - 4 hanging
 - 3 gunshot wound
 - 1 drug intoxication

SUICIDE AND AGE

The following table displays suicide by age range and method.

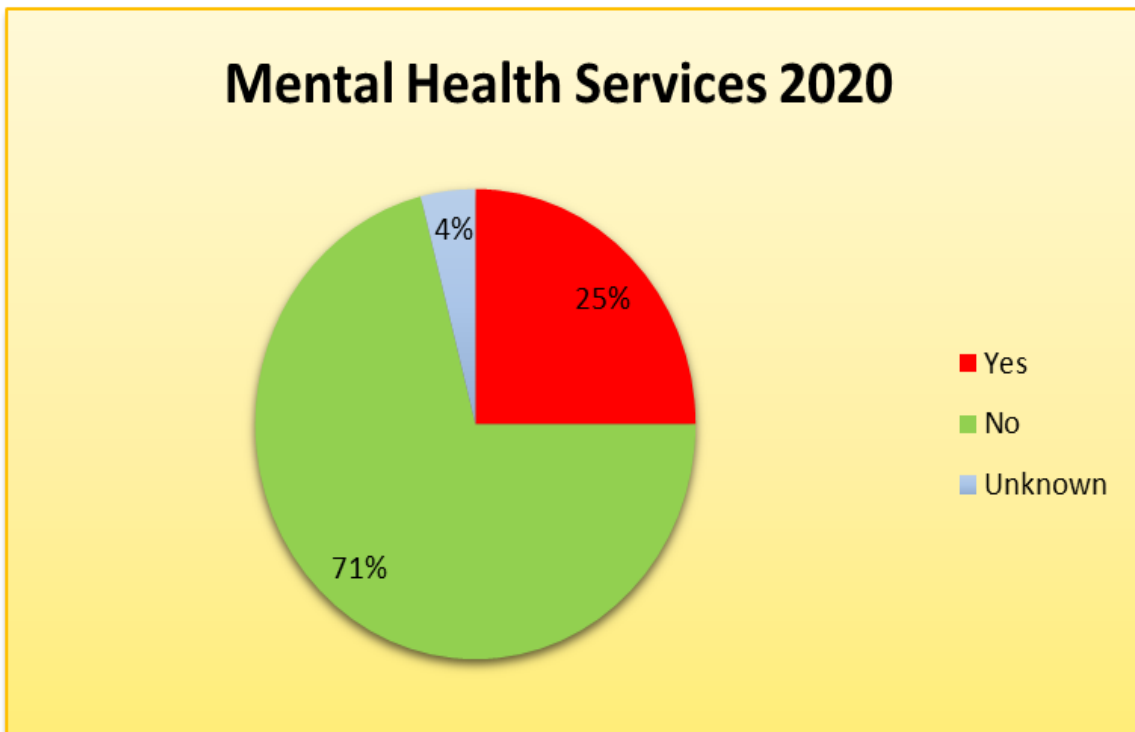
Suicide by Age Range and Method 2020							
Age Range	Drug Intoxication	Gunshot Wound	Hanging	Sharp force injuries	Multiple Blunt Force Injuries	Open field	Total
0 to 9							0
10 to 19	1		3		1		5
20 to 29	2	4	1	2			9
30 to 39		1	3				4
40 to 49	1	2	2				5
50 to 59		8	2		1		11
60 to 69	1	2	4				7
70 to 79	1	3					4
80 Plus		3					3

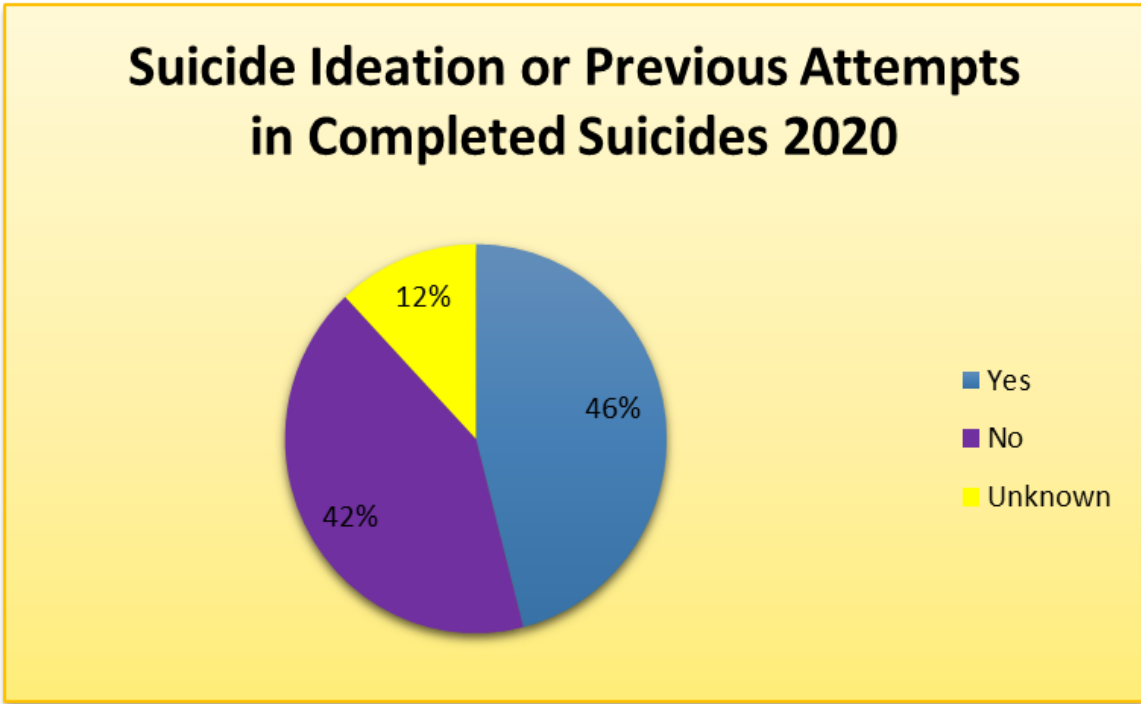
TOXICOLOGY



MENTAL HEALTH AND TREATMENT

Families and friends of many of the suicide victims expressed that the decedents were depressed prior to the decedent's death.





SUICIDES TRENDS

The table below shows the number of suicides by month from 2016 to 2020.

Completed Suicides per Year 2016 to 2020 by Month					
Month	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	4	4	6	5	2
February	5	5	6	5	6
March	3	5	2	1	1
April	3	3	8	2	5
May	3	2	4	4	5
June	4	4	5	6	1
July	2	2	7	8	8
August	5	6	3	5	4
September	4	3	5	4	2
October	3	5	4	2	6
November	4	7	0	3	7
December	8	3	5	2	1
Suicides per Year	48	46	55	47	48
Suicide % of Case Load	7.1%	7.0%	8.2%	6.0%	5.2%

The Mesa County Coroner's Office worked closely with Mesa County Public Health on the suicide data. Please see their completed report at health.mesacounty.us/wp-content/uploads/2020_suicide_report_final.pdf

Links:

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Suicide Prevention Foundation: www.suicidepreventionfoundation.org

References:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/mesacountycolorado/PST045217>