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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 2021. Mesa County encompasses an area over 3300 square miles, which consists of desert, agricultural, and mountain areas. Mesa County is home to approximately 157,987 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 2021

Victor Yahn, F-ABMDI	Coroner
Alexis Prall, D-ABMDI	Deputy Coroner
Peter Schimek, D-ABMDI	Deputy Coroner
Stacie Dix, D-ABMDI	Deputy Coroner
Julia Stern	Deputy Coroner

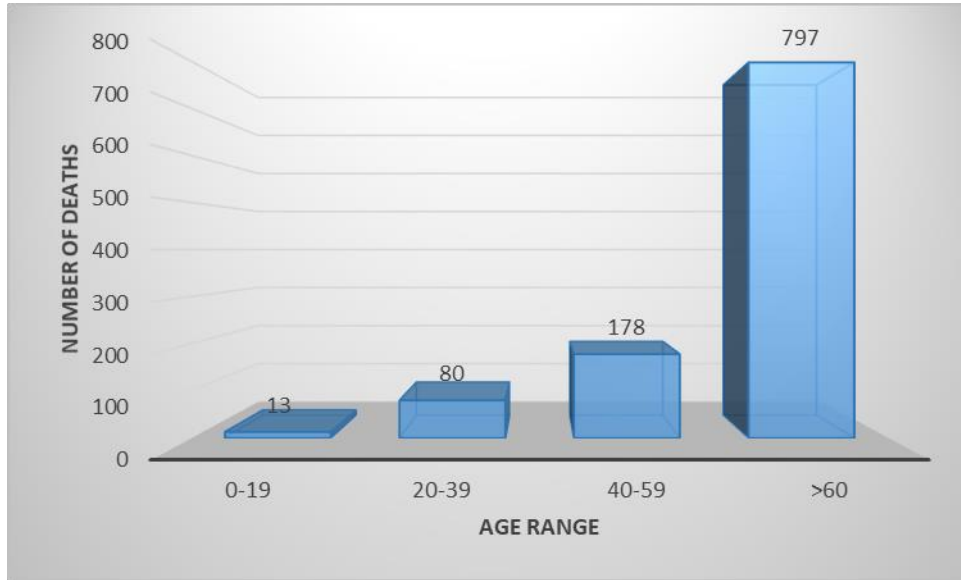
General Statistics (Including deaths transferred to the county of origin)

Mesa County population in 2021 per census data	157,987
Total Mesa County deaths	2,307
Percentage of Mesa County citizens who died in 2021	1.46%
Number of deaths investigated	1154
Scene Investigations	425
- Victor Yahn	31
- Alexis Prall	137
- Peter Schimek	140
- Stacie Dix	93
- Julia Stern	24
Facility Investigations	729
- Victor Yahn	58
- Alexis Prall	230
- Peter Schimek	240
- Stacie Dix	110
- Julia Stern	91
Percentage of total deaths investigated	50%
Number of deaths originating in other counties	86
Jurisdiction declined	07
Number of postmortem examinations (Mesa County)	151
Percentage of deaths having an examination	6.5%
- Complete Autopsies	119
- Partial Autopsies	01
- External Examinations	31
Toxicology performed (Mesa County)	187

Gender of those deaths investigated	
Males	701
Females	453
Race of those deaths investigated	
Caucasian	1030
Hispanic	97
Native American	16
Black	06
Asian	02
Other/Unknown	03
Body Transport	
Coroner's Office	379
Mortuaries – from scene	67
Mortuaries – from facilities	708
Additional Information	
Unidentified bodies	0
Organ and Tissue referrals	34
Donated to CMU Forensic Investigation Research	2
Unclaimed bodies	10
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 thirteen deaths, which included eight males and five females. Of these, five were natural deaths; one was stillborn/miscarriages/preterm births; one 2-year-old from myotubular myopathy; one 9-year-old from chronic abdominal compartment syndrome; one 15-year-old from epilepsy and one 15-year-old from COVID. Two deaths were accidents; one 3-year-old ran over by a truck; one 16-year-old drug overdose. Five were suicides; three 13-year-old from hanging, one 16-year-old drug overdose and one 19-year-old gunshot wound. One homicide.

Manner of Death

Manner	# of cases	# of postmortem exams	% receiving a postmortem exam **
Natural	865	32	4%
Accident	137	57	43%
Suicide	52	49	94%
Homicide	12	12	100%
Undetermined	1	0	0%

** In the 80 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 80 deaths; fifty seven deaths were from complications of a fall from standing height or a low height such as bed. Fourteen were from drug intoxication. Five were associated with motorized

vehicle/ATV/motorcycle. One was a fall from a motorized scooter. Two from uranium exposure. One from therapeutic complications. The suicides had been in the hospital for an extended period of time from the initial incident. The undetermined cause was a 58-year-old male that was in care facilities for months and stated to families he fell from a significant height when witnesses say he jumped. One postmortem examination was from a Utah case that could not be transferred back to them.

Accidental Deaths

Type	Number of deaths
Motor vehicle (MV) crash	18
Falls	60
Drug intoxication	39
Pedestrian vs Vehicle	2
Drowning	5
Thermal injuries	2
Other **	11

**The "other" cases include: two were uranium exposures, two environmental exposures, one electrocution, one hanging, one therapeutic complication, one positional asphyxia, one fall from a motorized scooter, one paraglider crash and one plane crash.

The 18 motor vehicle crash-related deaths displayed the following data:

- Drivers – 18
 - Car/Truck - 11
 - Motorcycle/ATV - 7
- Motorcycle/ATV wearing a helmet – 2
- Motorcycle/ATV without a helmet – 5
- Motorcycle/ATV unknown if wearing a helmet – 0
- Automobile victims wearing a seatbelt – 4
- Automobile victims not wearing a seatbelt – 6
- Automobile victims unknown if wearing a seatbelt – 1
- Alcohol and/or drugs involved in 9 of the driver's deaths (50% of cases)
 - Alcohol (absent of drugs) in 1 deaths
 - Drugs (absent of alcohol) in 5 deaths
 - Combination of both alcohol and drugs in 3 deaths

The drownings consisted of:

- 3 adults Colorado River (1 positive for alcohol; 1 positive for fentanyl/methamphetamine; 1 positive for methamphetamine)
- 1 adult canal (Positive for methamphetamine)
- 1 adult bathtub (Positive for methamphetamine)

The drug intoxications consisted of:

- 11 were mixed drug intoxications
 - 4 Methamphetamine and fentanyl
 - 1 Methamphetamine and methadone
 - 3 Fentanyl and alcohol
 - 1 Heroin, methamphetamine and fentanyl
 - 1 Cocaine, fentanyl and alcohol
 - 1 Benzodiazepines, barbiturates, opiates, methamphetamine, amphetamines, oxycodone
- 28 were from a single drug
 - 21 Methamphetamine
 - 4 Fentanyl
 - 1 Heroin
 - 2 Methamphetamine and carbon monoxide poisoning
- 8 suicides from drug intoxication (Not counted with Accidental Deaths).
 - 1 Tramadol
 - 1 Quetiapine and alcohol
 - 1 Diphenhydramine and alcohol
 - 1 Bupropion
 - 1 Quetiapine
 - 1 Amlodipine
 - 1 Fentanyl
 - 1 Acetaminophen

Homicides

The twelve homicides had the following characteristics:

- 3 death due to stab wounds
- 3 blunt force injuries
- 6 deaths due to gunshot wounds

Natural deaths

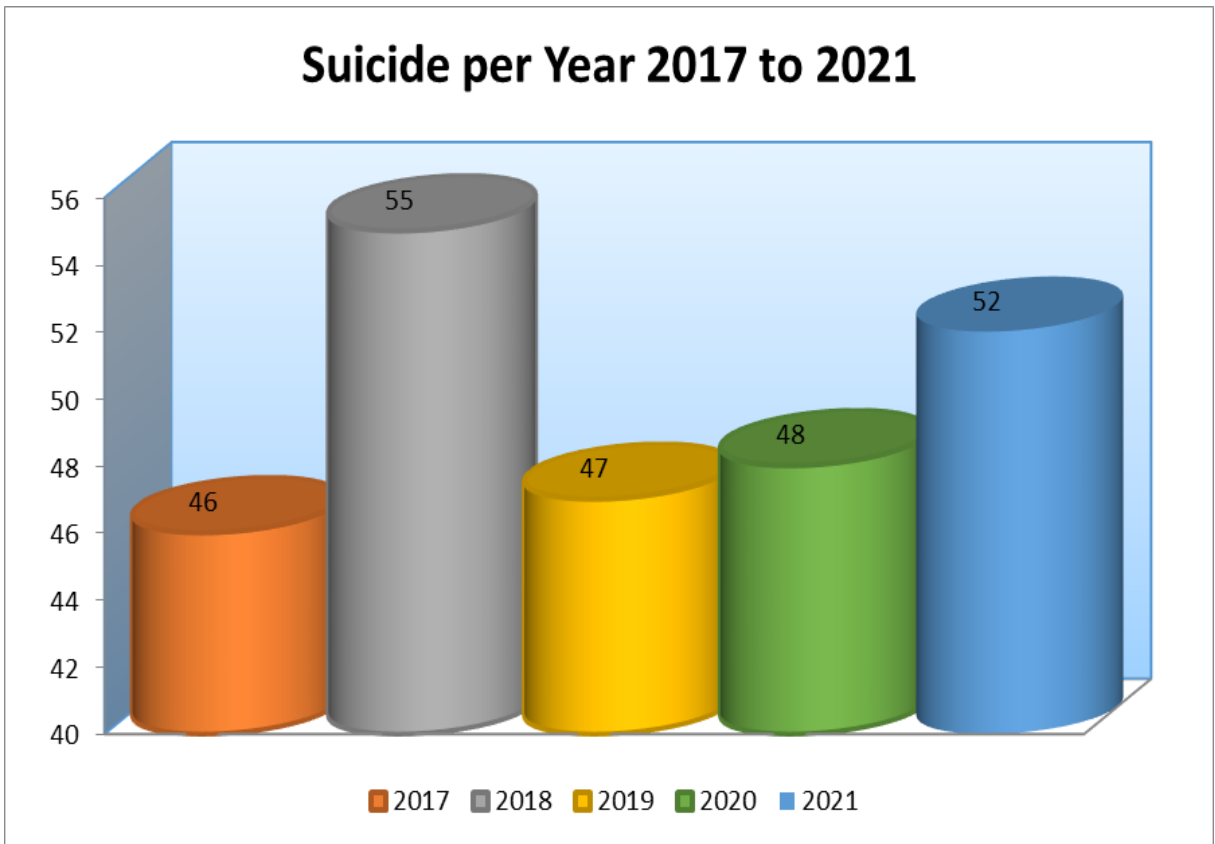
Of the 865 natural deaths investigated, the majority of the deaths were cardiovascular related (364 deaths, 42%). Deaths due to cardiovascular causes include myocardial infarcts (heart attacks), heart arrhythmias, strokes, and aneurysms. There were 292 deaths related to infectious causes (predominantly pneumonia in elderly individuals), 26 cancer related deaths, 37 deaths related to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and 49 deaths due to effects of chronic alcoholism. The remaining 97 deaths were primarily from complications of other long-standing disease processes.

Undetermined

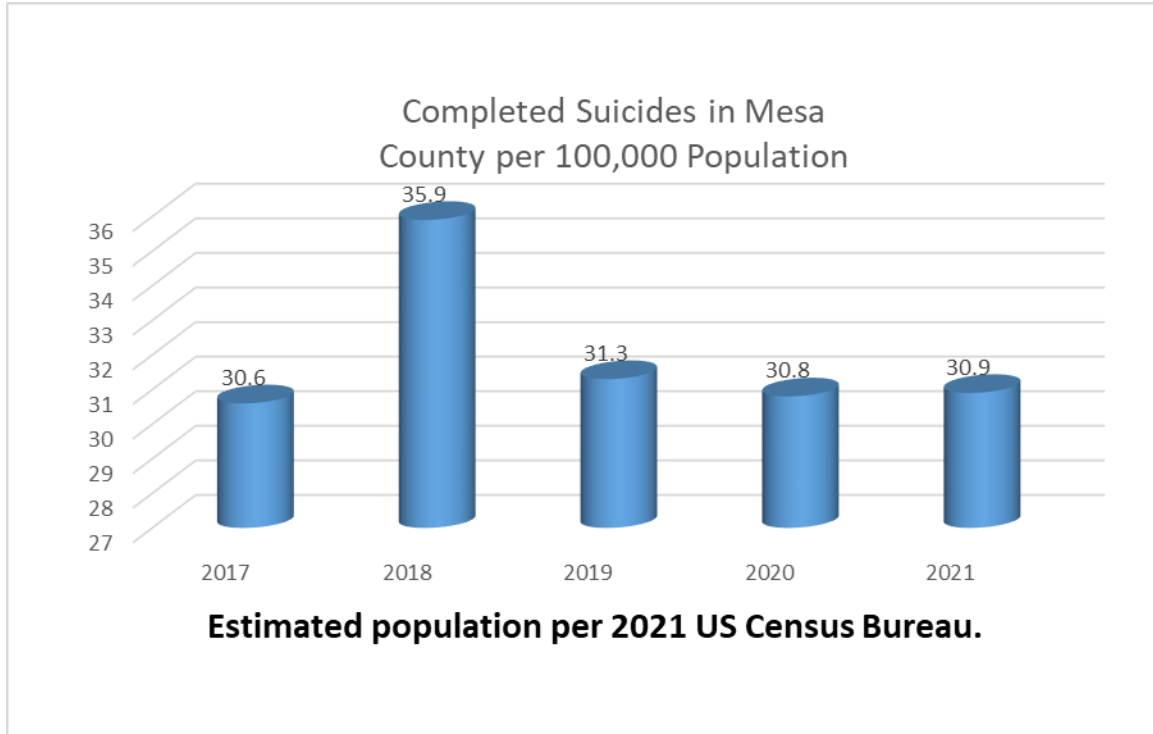
The undetermined cause was a 58-year-old male that was in multiple care facilities for months and stated to families and providers he fell from a significant height when witnesses say he jumped.

Suicides

OVERVIEW



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



There were 52 suicides in 2021. 37 of the 52 suicides were male; whereas, 15 suicides were female. Thirty two suicides were from gunshot wounds. Eight suicides were hangings. Nine suicides were from drug intoxications. Three suicides involved motor vehicles.

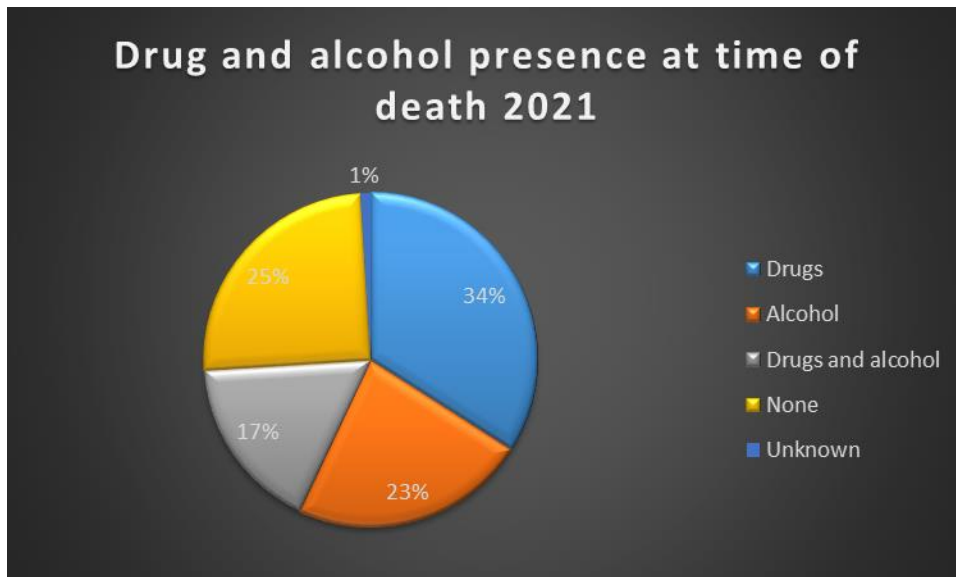
- Males age range was 13 to 91-years-old
 - 28 gunshot wound
 - 4 hanging
 - 3 drug intoxication
 - 2 multiple blunt force injuries
- Females age range was 13 to 87-years-old
 - 6 drug intoxication
 - 4 gunshot wound
 - 4 hanging
 - 1 multiple blunt force injuries

SUICIDE AND AGE

The following table displays suicide by age range and method.

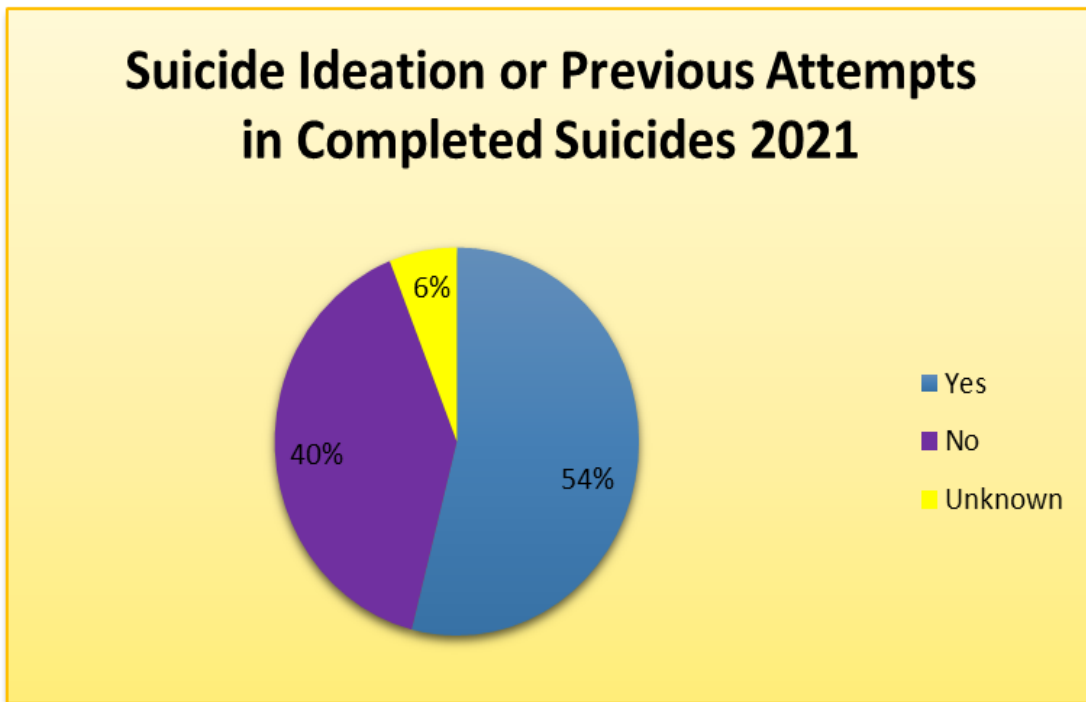
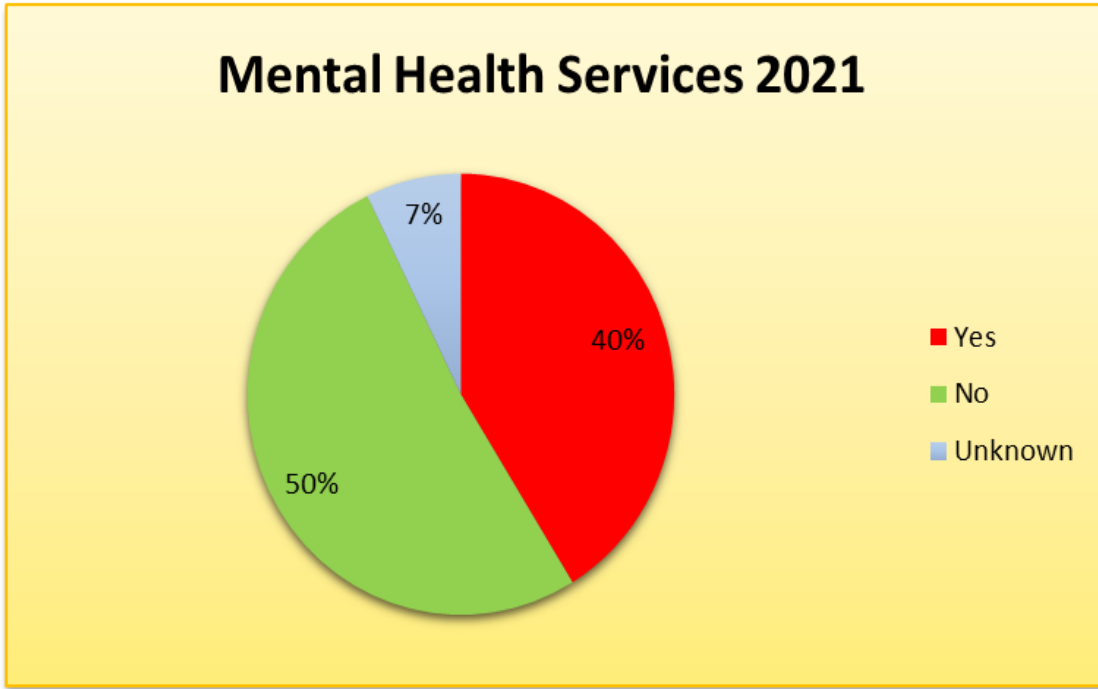
Suicide by Age Range and Method 2021							
Age Range	Drug Intoxication	Gunshot Wound	Hanging	Sharp force injuries	Multiple Blunt Force Injuries	Open field	Total
0 to 9							0
10 to 19	1	1	3				5
20 to 29	1	9					10
30 to 39	2	2	4		1		9
40 to 49	1	4			1		6
50 to 59	1	2	1		1		5
60 to 69	2	4					6
70 to 79		5					5
80 Plus	1	5					6

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 2017 to 2021.

Completed Suicides per Year 2017 to 2021 by Month					
Month	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
January	4	6	5	2	5
February	5	6	5	6	1
March	5	2	1	1	2
April	3	8	2	5	4
May	2	4	4	5	9
June	4	5	6	1	4
July	2	7	8	8	3
August	6	3	5	4	3
September	3	5	4	2	6
October	5	4	2	6	6
November	7	0	3	7	2
December	3	5	2	1	7
Suicides per Year	46	55	47	48	52
Suicide % of Case Load	7.0%	8.2%	6.0%	5.2%	4.5%

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>