



Indiana Criminal Justice Institute

Research Division

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# ANNUAL REPORT

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## Death in Custody Reporting Act

[www.in.gov/cji](http://www.in.gov/cji)

This report includes 2020 Death in Custody Reporting Act data for Indiana, as collected by the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute for the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

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Guided by a Board of Trustees representing all components of Indiana's criminal and juvenile justice systems, the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) serves as the state's planning agency for criminal justice, juvenile justice, traffic safety, and victim services. The Institute develops long-range strategies for the effective administration of Indiana's criminal and juvenile justice systems and administers federal and state funds to carry out these strategies.

The Indiana Criminal Justice Institute serves as Indiana's Statistical Analysis Center (SAC). The SAC's primary mission is compiling, analyzing, and disseminating data on a variety of criminal justice and public safety-related topics. The information produced by the SAC serves a vital role in effectively managing, planning, and creating policy for Indiana's many public service endeavors.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) is responsible for collecting data regarding death in custody across the State of Indiana, as mandated by the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA). The 2020 calendar year represents the first full year of DCRA data collected by ICJI. Data are reported directly to ICJI via a reporting tool housed on the ICJI's website. Additional data are collected through media alerts and searches. The data are then combined into the federally required report and submitted to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). The data for the 2020 calendar year shows a total of 217 deaths in custody across the State of Indiana. Of these 217 deaths, nearly 60% occurred in state prisons, 23% resulted from police interactions, 12% occurred in jails, and around 5% from state or local contract facilities. Natural causes/illness accounted for the highest volume of deaths (57%), followed by suicide (14.3%), accidental deaths (11.5%), use of force (11%), and homicide (2.3%). Seven deaths are still pending investigation.

The decedents were predominately white (61.8%), followed by those identifying as Black (29.5%). American Indians/Alaska Natives and those identifying as Asian each represented under 1% of decedents. The race was unknown for the remaining roughly 7% of decedents. The majority of decedents identified as Non-Hispanic (69%), with only 3.2% identifying as Hispanic. No single age group represented an overwhelming majority of decedents, with 25 – 34, 55 – 64, and 65+ each ranging from 19.4% to 22.6%. When grouped more broadly, the majority of decedents (58%) were over the age of 45. Those ages 18 – 24 represented the fewest number of decedents with 7.8%.

LaPorte, Madison, Miami, Sullivan, and Marion counties were the top five counties reporting the highest number of deaths. Collectively, these five counties accounted for 52% of all 2020 deaths in custody across the State of Indiana. The report provides a further breakdown of decedents by agency type for the manner of death, location, and demographic data.

Overall, the majority of deaths in custody across the state were white males over the age of 45. The males were predominately incarcerated in state prison facilities, which accounted for 60% of total deaths in custody, with the leading manner of death being natural causes/illness, representing 57% of deaths.

## BACKGROUND

In FY 2019, the responsibility of collecting data on death in custody as mandated by the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA) was redirected from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to State Administering Agencies (SAA) that receive Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) funding. As the SAA that receives Byrne JAG funding for the State of Indiana, the Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) within the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) has been collecting DCRA data since the last quarter of 2019. Once ICJI collects the DCRA data, the data is then reported to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). DCRA requires states and federal law

## DATA & METHODS

enforcement agencies to report certain information regarding the death of any person occurring while in custody. “In Custody” is defined as the death of “any person who is detained, under arrest, in the process of being arrested, is en route to being incarcerated, or is incarcerated at a municipal or county jail, state prison, state-run boot camp prison, boot camp prison that is contracted out by the state, any state or local contract facility, or other local or state correctional facility (including any juvenile facility).” Relevant data that is not directly reported to ICJI by agencies is gathered via media sources.

This report reflects data ranging from January 1st, 2020 to December 31st, 2020, the first full calendar year of DCRA data collected by ICJI.

Data for this report is collected in multiple ways from multiple sources. ICJI hosts an online reporting tool for agencies to report their in-custody deaths. Agencies are notified quarterly ahead of each reporting deadline. In addition, ICJI has a partnership with the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) to obtain prison data. Prisons report quarterly to IDOC and IDOC then enters those reports into ICJI’s reporting portal. Jails and prisons remain the most prevalent and consistent death in custody reporters in the State of Indiana, as the vast majority of police agencies across the state do not currently report into the portal.

To gather police-related deaths that are not reported to ICJI via the portal, researchers at the ICJI rely upon media reports, which are primarily gathered using Google Alerts. The ICJI collaborated with other agencies responsible for collecting DCRA data to determine the most comprehensive list of keywords to collect all media mentions of death in custody across the state. All relevant articles are reviewed weekly.

If a qualifying death is discovered, the details of the death and demographics of the decedent are verified through multiple sources including obituaries, other media reports, and the Indiana Court Information Technology Extranet (INcite) which is Indiana Supreme Courts’ secured website housing offender and court case data. At the close of each quarter, to ensure all deaths reported in the media have been captured in the dataset, the ICJI also utilizes independent third-party sites such as the Gun Violence Archive and the Washington Post’s Police Shooting Database. Despite these efforts, it is possible that not all deaths across the state are captured each quarter.

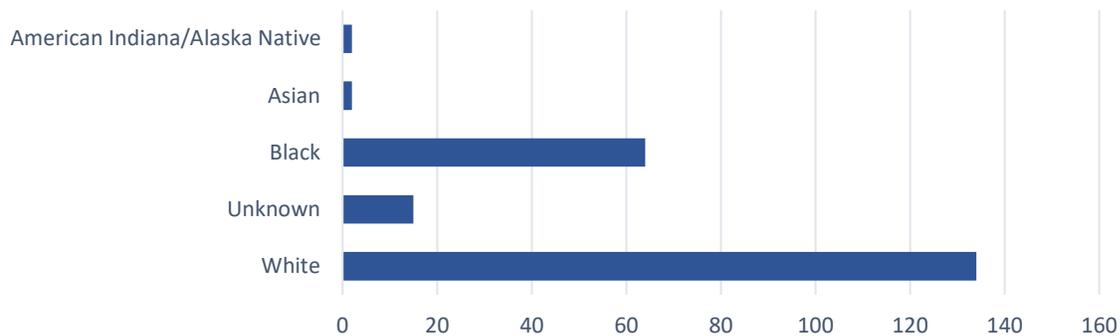
It is important to note the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on deaths in custody across the nation. Indiana facilities were not immune to the impacts of COVID-19 on the health of the individuals inside them. Deaths related to COVID-19 were categorized in the natural causes/illness category, which may account for higher percentages within this manner of death than both prior and future years.

## DATA OVERVIEW

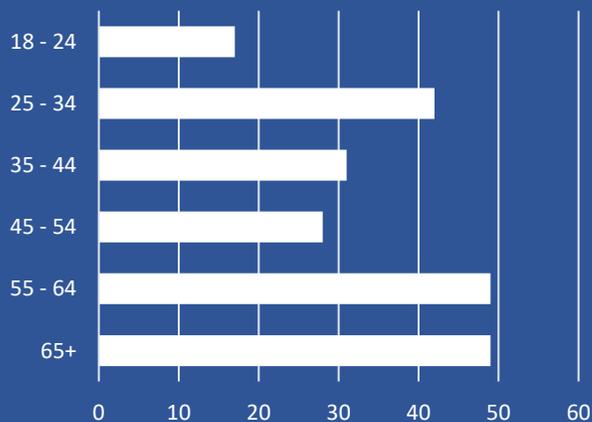
In 2020, ICJI collected reports for 217 deaths in custody. Those 217 deaths represented all recorded deaths in custody across jails, prisons, and law enforcement interactions.

Those identifying as male represented 95% of decedents. The remaining 5% identified as female. No decedents were reported that identified as any other gender. Most decedents identified as white (62%), followed by those identifying as Black (30%). Under 1% identified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Asian, respectively. The race for just under 7% of decedents was unknown. Only 3% of decedents identified as Hispanic, with around 69% identifying as Non-Hispanic. The ethnicity was unknown for the remaining roughly 28%.

RACE OF DECEDENTS



AGE OF DECEDENTS

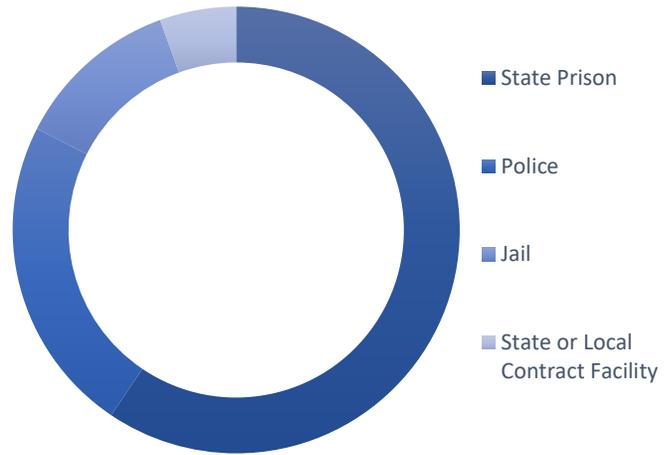


The ages of decedents were well disbursed. The three age groups with the highest number of decedents reported were 55-64 (23%), 65+ (23%), and 25-34 (19%). The 18-24 age group accounted for the fewest number of deaths, representing 8% of decedents. Just over 58% of decedents were over 45, with the remaining 42% being 44 or below.

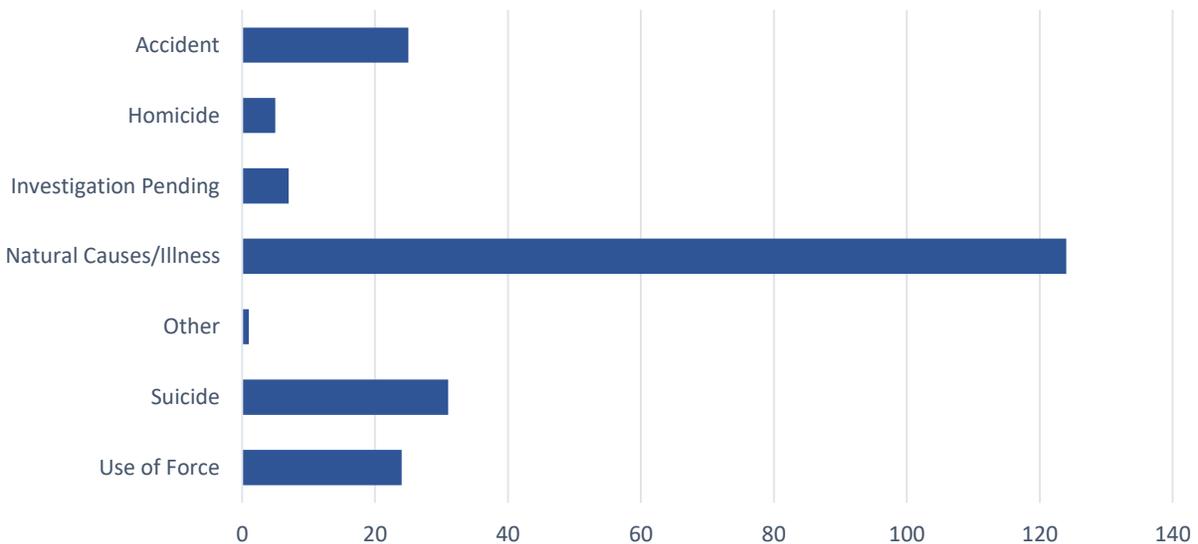
The majority of deaths occurred in state prisons (60%). Deaths during police interactions accounted for the second-largest number of decedents (23%), followed by jail deaths (12%). Approximately 6% of deaths occurred in state or local contract facilities.

The primary manner of death reported was natural causes/illness, accounting for just over 57% of deaths. Suicide was the second most common manner of death (14%), followed by accidental deaths (12%), deaths caused by use of force (11%), and homicide (2%). The manner of death for seven decedents is still pending investigation. One death was ruled as undetermined, which is represented as "other."

### AGENCY TYPE

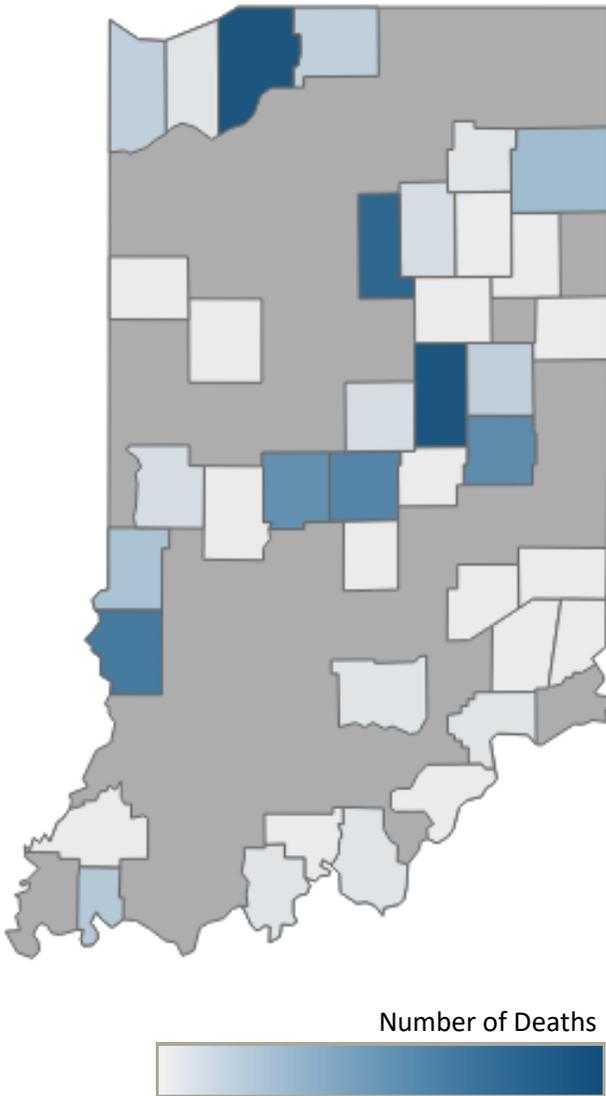


### MANNER OF DEATH



In 2020, deaths in custody were recorded in 38 of the 92 counties in Indiana.<sup>1</sup> LaPorte County and Madison County had the highest number of deaths, with 27 each. Miami County followed with 23 deaths. Of those 38 counties, 16 counties reported a single death. The table below shows the top 10 counties with the highest number of in custody deaths. The map below depicts deaths in custody by county.

Figure 1: Overall Deaths by County



County	Number of Decedents	Percentage of Total
LaPorte	27	12.4%
Madison	27	12.4%
Miami	23	10.6%
Sullivan	19	8.8%
Marion	17	7.8%
Henry	16	7.4%
Hendricks	15	6.9%
Allen	8	3.7%
Vigo	7	3.2%
Vanderburgh	6	2.8%

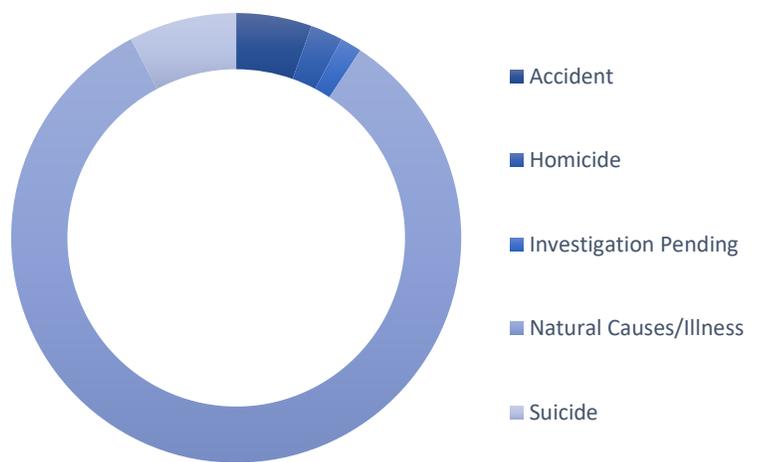
<sup>1</sup> When reviewing data for the number of decedents per county, it is important to note that counties housing multiple agencies or agency types will likely have a higher number of decedents than those counties housing fewer agencies and agency types (i.e., a county with a County Jail, state prison, and multiple police departments).

## STATE PRISON

Deaths occurring in the state prisons are reported to the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC). IDOC then reports those deaths to ICJI. Therefore, the data below is the aggregated data of all state prisons in Indiana that reported deaths to IDOC any quarter of the 2020 calendar year. Of the 217 deaths reported for 2020, just under 60%, or 129, of those deaths occurred within a state prison. Nearly 83% of deaths reported within the state prisons were due to natural causes/illness. Just under 8% of deaths resulted from suicide, 5% were classified as accidental, and 2% were homicides. Two prison deaths are still pending investigation in the manner of death.

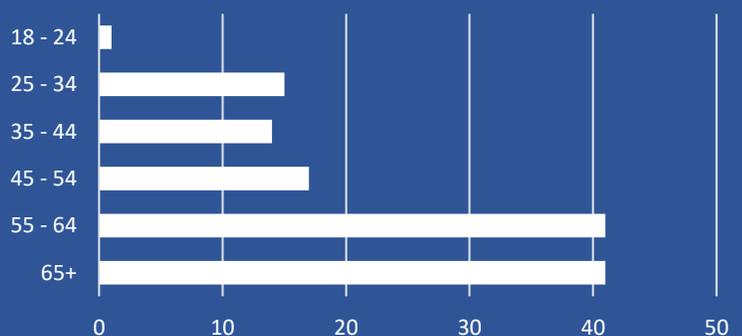
Males represented 98% of decedents. Those identifying as white accounted for 63% of decedents, Black (33%), Asian (<1%), and American Indiana or Alaska Native (<1%). The race of 3% of decedents was reported as unknown. Just under 81% were Non-Hispanic, with 2% identifying as Hispanic. The ethnicity of 22 decedents was unknown. Around 63% of the decedents were over the age of 55. A full breakdown of decedents by age can be found below.

MANNER OF DEATH



LaPorte County accounted for the highest number of in-custody deaths with 21%. Miami County had the second-highest number of deaths at 18%, followed by Madison County with just under 16%, Sullivan County with 15%, Hendricks County with over 11%, and Henry County with 7%. The remaining 12% of deaths were split between eight additional counties: Allen, Delaware, Marion, Putnam, Parke, Vigo, Perry, and Vanderburgh.

AGE OF DECEDENTS

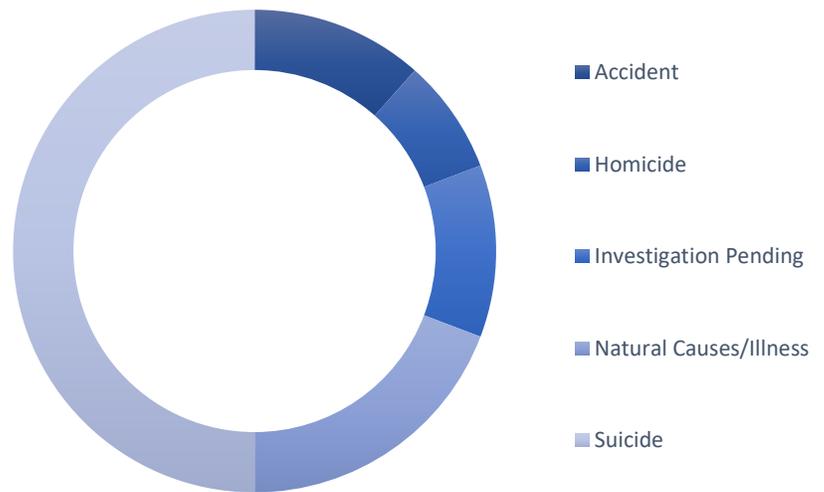


# JAIL

Jails across the state reported 26 deaths in custody for the 2020 calendar year. Suicide was the manner of death reported for 50% of decedents. Natural causes/illness accounted for the deaths of 19% of decedents. Around 11% of deaths were reported as accidents, just under 8% were homicides, and the remaining roughly 11% are still pending investigation.

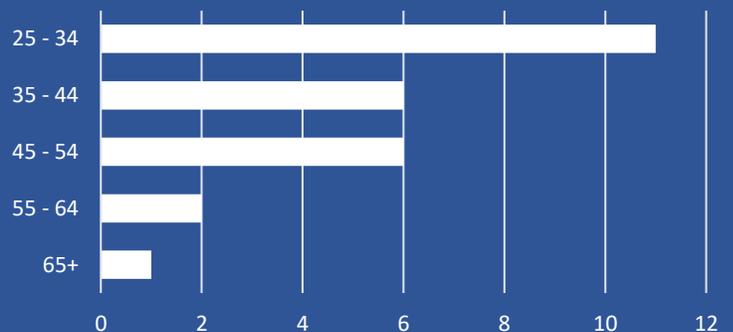
Males represent 85% of decedents, with females accounting for the remaining 15%. The majority of decedents identified as white (62%), 35% identified as Black, and just under 4% identified as Asian. Just over 42% of decedents were between the ages of 25 and 34. To view an in-depth breakdown of the age of decedents, see the table below.

MANNER OF DEATH



Marion County accounted for the majority of jail deaths with 46% of decedents. Whitley County and St. Joseph County had the second-highest number of deaths with each representing 7% of decedents. Allen, Crawford, Decatur, Franklin, Jackson, Johnson, Lake, Wabash, Wells, and Vigo Counties each had one death, or 4%, respectively,

AGE OF DECEDENTS



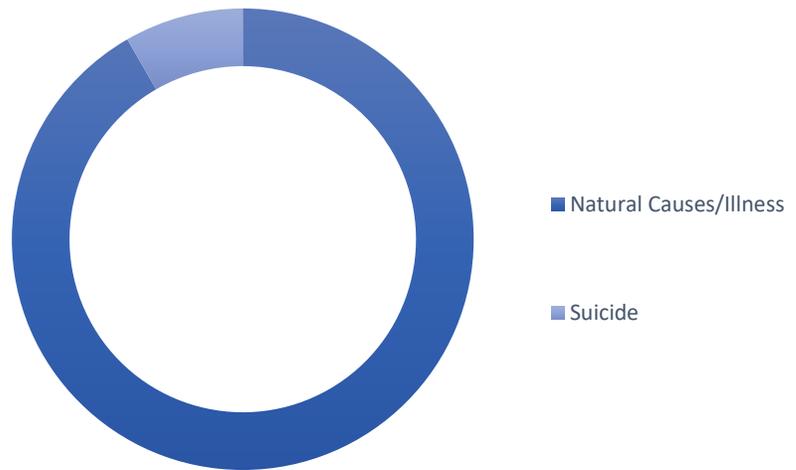
## STATE OR LOCAL CONTRACT FACILITIES

State or local contract facilities reported 12 deaths for the 2020 calendar year. Natural causes/illness accounted for 92% of deaths, with the manner of death for the remaining 8% being suicide.

All the decedents were male and Non-Hispanic. The race of 92% of decedents was white, with the remaining 8% being Black. The majority of decedents were 65+.

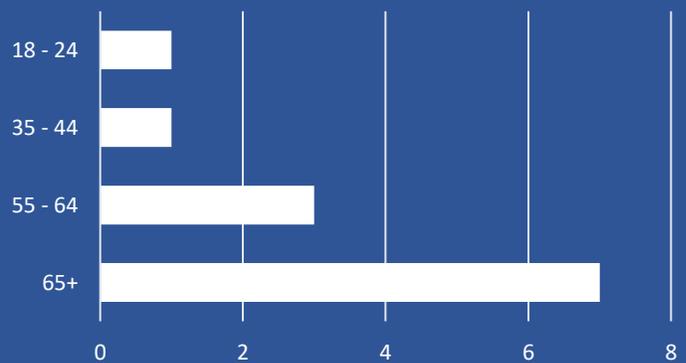
See the table below for a further breakdown of decedent age.

MANNER OF DEATH



Henry County represented 50% of deaths for state or local contract facilities. Madison County had the second-highest number of deaths at 42%. Delaware County accounted for the remaining 8% of deaths.

AGE OF DECEDENTS

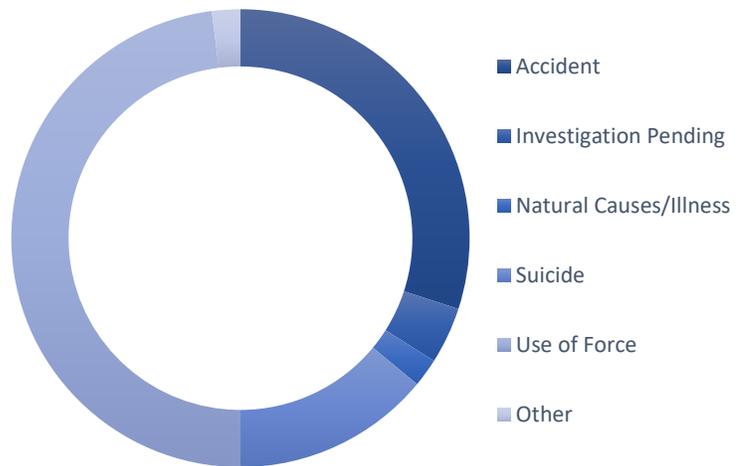


## POLICE

Between reports into the portal and deaths gathered via ICJI’s media methodology, 50 decedents were reported for police-related deaths in the 2020 calendar year. Police-related deaths are any deaths that occur during an interaction with police. These interactions include, but are not limited to, deaths that occur during an arrest, while executing a warrant, responding to a disturbance call, and vehicle pursuit. Of those 50 decedents, 48% of the deaths were a result of the use of force by an officer, 30% of the deaths were accidents, 14% of the deaths were suicides, 2% were attributed to natural causes/illness, 2% were reported as “other,” and 4% of deaths are still pending investigation.

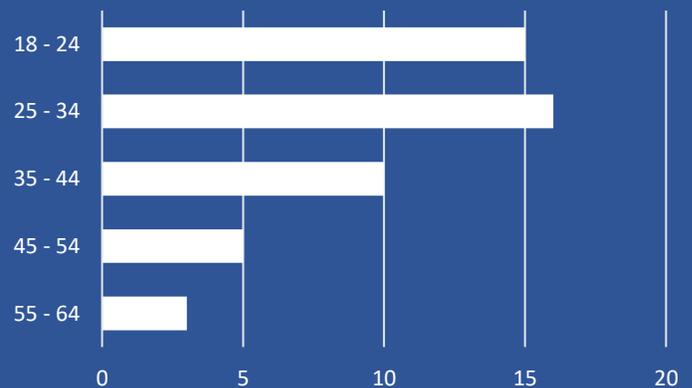
Ninety percent of the decedents were male, and ten percent were female. The majority of decedents identified as white (52%), 24% identified as Black, and 2% identified as an American Indian or Alaska Native. The race of 22% of decedents was unknown. The ethnicity of 4% of decedents was Hispanic, 36% identified as Non-Hispanic, and the ethnicity of 60% was unknown. Decedents between the ages of 18 and 34 accounted for 62% of deaths. See the table below for a further breakdown of age.

MANNER OF DEATH



The majority of police-related deaths occurred in Allen County (12%), followed by Vanderburgh County (10%), and Lake County (8%). St. Joseph County, Marion County, and Hamilton County each accounted for 6% of deaths. Porter, Wabash, Madison, Delaware, Vigo, Jefferson, and Harrison counties represented 4% of deaths, respectively. Benton, Tippecanoe, Huntington, Grant, Jay, Henry, Hancock, Jackson, Ripley, Dearborn, Gibson, and Clark counties accounted for 2% of deaths, respectively.

AGE OF DECEDENTS





## CONCLUSION

The ICJI is continuing to refine the collection methods for DCRA data through collaboration with other mandated reporting agencies, by following continually updated guidance from BJA, and by staying up to date with best practices. This report serves as the first annual DCRA report from the ICJI. The ICJI will continue to release DCRA data on an annual basis. In addition to the annual report, the ICJI is creating an interactive dashboard of all collected DCRA data, sortable by year, which will be housed on the ICJI website. This dashboard will be updated quarterly. The ICJI will continue reporting DCRA data to BJA each quarter. BJA produces reports of nationwide DCRA data for each year of data it collects, though these reports are often on a multiple-year delay. The ICJI is expected to remain the most reliable source for “real-time” DCRA data in the State of Indiana.

