



Indiana Criminal Justice Institute

ANNUAL REPORT

DEATH IN CUSTODY REPORTING ACT

This report includes 2023 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), as mandated by the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA), is responsible for collecting data regarding the number and manner of in custody deaths that occur across the State of Indiana. The 2020 calendar year was the first full year DCRA data was 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 2023 calendar year shows a total of 174 deaths in custody across the State of Indiana. This is 3 more deaths than were reported in 2022. In April 2022, COVID-19 related deaths were no longer recorded for DCRA data.

Of these 174 deaths, 56% occurred in state prisons, 28% resulted from police interactions, and 16% occurred in jails. Natural causes/illness accounted for the highest volume of deaths (40%), followed by use of force (21%), suicide (12%), accidental deaths (7%), drug overdose (3.4%), and homicide (2.8%).¹ Twenty-six deaths are still pending investigation.

The decedents were predominately White (73%), followed by Black (26.4%). The race was unknown for 1 decedent. The majority of decedents identified as non-Hispanic (96%), with only .6% identifying as Hispanic. Six individual's ethnicity was unknown. The average number of age groups was well dispersed. The 65+ age group represents the highest number of decedents at 36 decedents. The 35-44 age group represents 20% of decedents. When grouped more broadly, the majority of decedents (63%) were under the age of 55. Those ages 18 – 24 represented the fewest number of decedents with 4%. There was one decedent under the age of 18 years old.

LaPorte, Marion, Hendricks, Henry, and Madison counties were the top five counties reporting the highest number of deaths. Collectively, these five counties accounted for 48% of all 2023 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. The males were predominately incarcerated in state prison facilities, which accounted for 55.4% of total deaths in custody, with the leading manner of death being natural causes/illness, representing 38.5% of deaths, followed by suicide with 7.5%.

¹ Use of force is a death attributed to the use of force by a law enforcement or corrections officer. Homicide is defined as an incident between 2 or more incarcerated individuals resulting in a death.



BACKGROUND

In FY 2019, the responsibility of collecting data on deaths 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 state and federal law 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 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, the fourth full calendar year of DCRA data collected by ICJI.



DATA & METHODS

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, which then enters those reports into ICJI's portal. Jails and prisons remain the most prevalent and consistent death in custody reporters in Indiana, as police agencies typically have fewer deaths in custody.

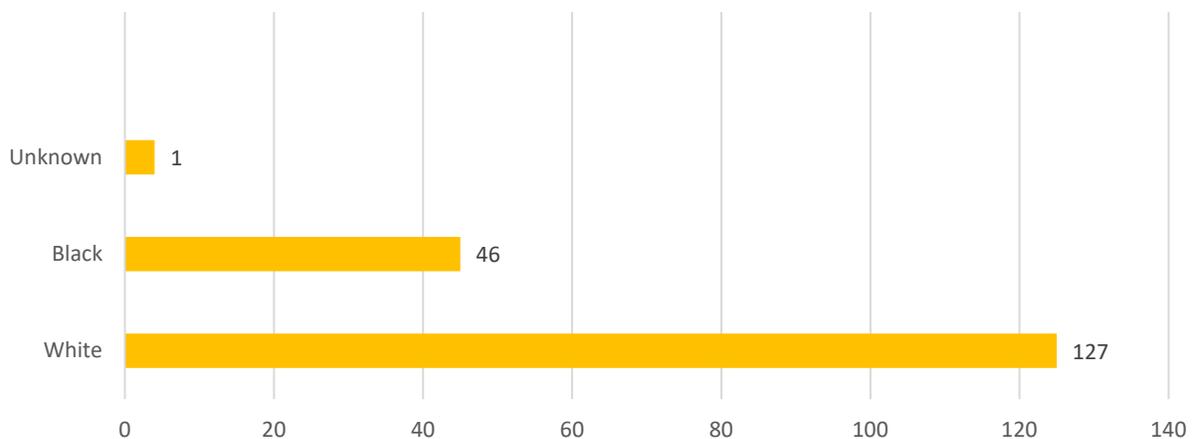
To gather custody-related deaths that are not reported to ICJI via the portal, researchers at the ICJI rely upon media reports, which are primarily gathered using Google Alerts. The ICJI collaborated with other agencies responsible for collecting DCRA data to determine the most comprehensive list of 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 the 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, not all deaths across the state may be captured each quarter.

DATA OVERVIEW

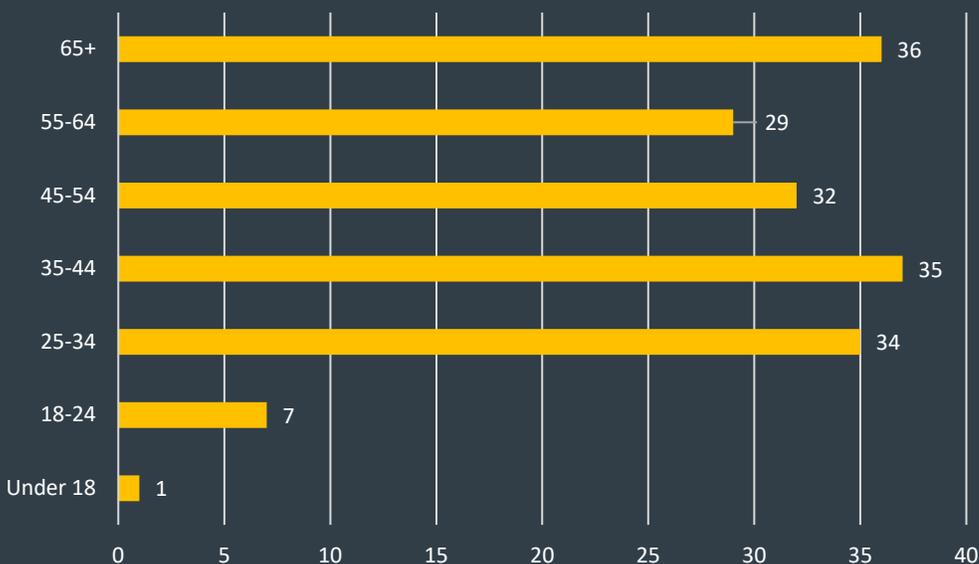
In 2023, ICJI collected reports for 174 deaths in custody. Those 174 deaths represented all chronicled deaths in custody across jails, prisons, and law enforcement interactions.

Male decedents represented 91% of decedents. The remaining 9% were female. Most decedents were White (73%), and 26% were Black. The race for 1 decedent was unknown. One decedent identified as Hispanic, with around 96% identifying as non-Hispanic. The ethnicity was unknown for the remaining 6 decedents.

RACE OF DECEDENTS



AGE OF DECEDENTS

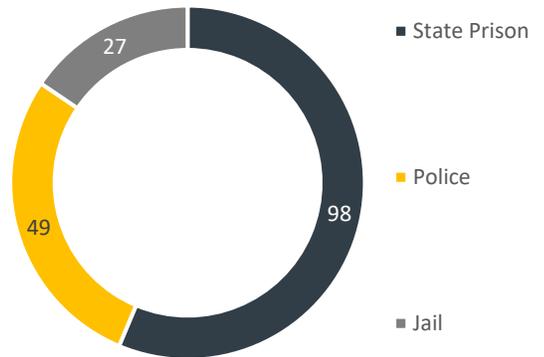


The ages of decedents were well dispersed. The four age groups with the highest number of decedents reported were 65+ (21%), 35-44 (20%), and 25-34 (19.5). The 18-24 age group accounted for the fewest number of deaths, representing 4% of decedents. Most (63%) decedents were under 55, with the remaining 37% being 55 or over.

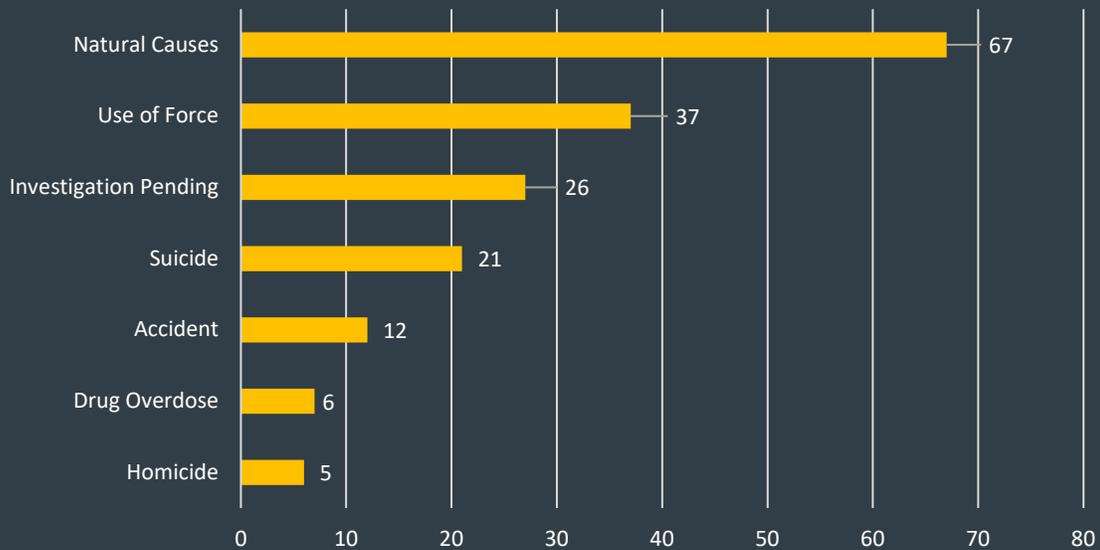
The majority of deaths occurred in state prisons (56%). Deaths during police interactions accounted for the second-largest number of decedents (28%), followed by jail deaths (16%).

The primary manner of death reported was natural causes/illness, accounting for 39% of deaths. Use of force was the second most common manner of death (21%), followed by suicide (12%), accidental deaths (7%), drug overdose (3%) and deaths caused by homicide (3%). The manner of death for 26 decedents is still pending investigation.

Agency Type

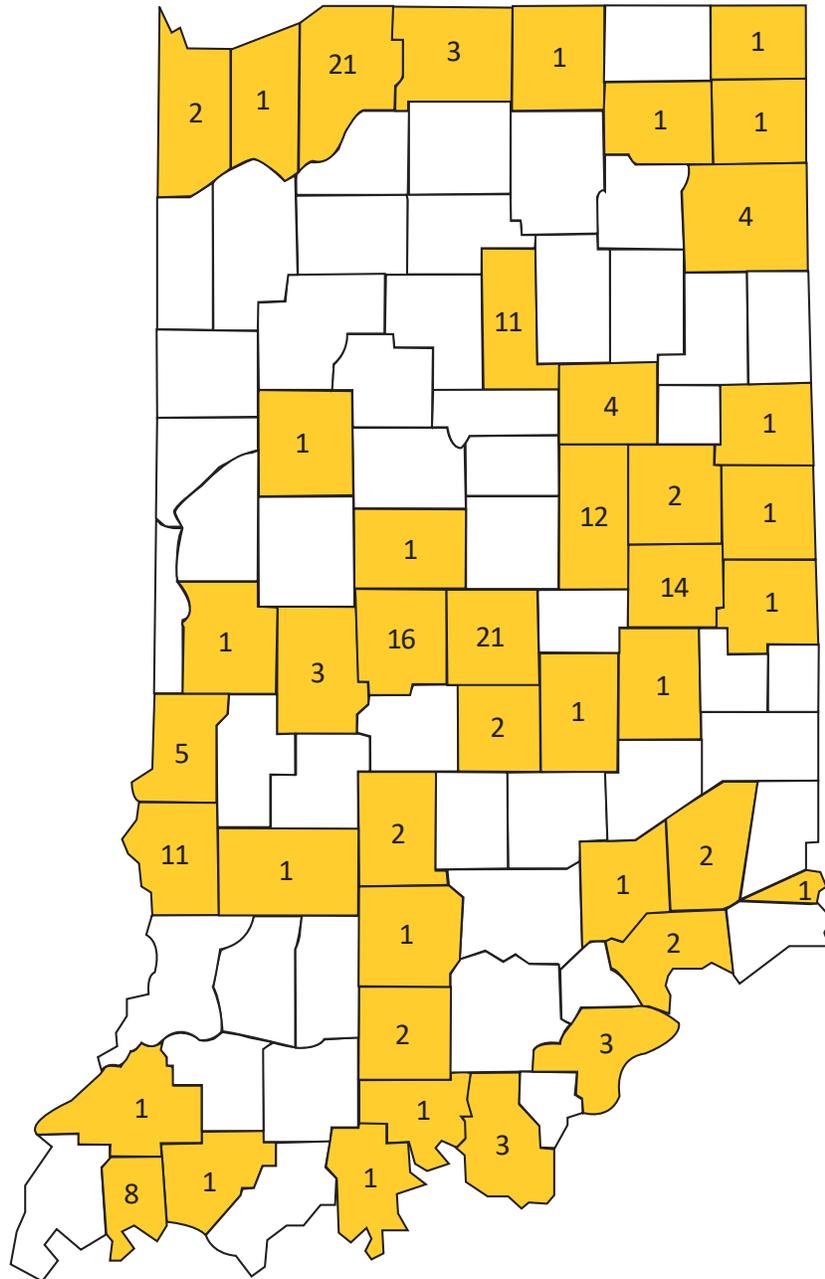


MANNER OF DEATH



In 2023, deaths in custody were recorded in 43 of the 92 counties in Indiana.^[2] LaPorte County and Marion County had the highest number of deaths, with 21 deaths, respectively. Hendricks and Henry County followed with 16 and 14 deaths. Of those 43, 21 counties reported a single death. The table below shows the ten counties with the highest number of in custody deaths. The map below depicts deaths in custody by county.

County	Number of Decedents	Percentage of Total
LaPorte	21	12.1%
Marion	21	12.1%
Hendricks	16	9.2%
Henry	14	8.0%
Madison	12	6.9%
Miami	11	6.3%
Sullivan	11	6.23%
Vanderburgh	8	4.6%
Vigo County	5	2.9%
Allen County	4	2.3%

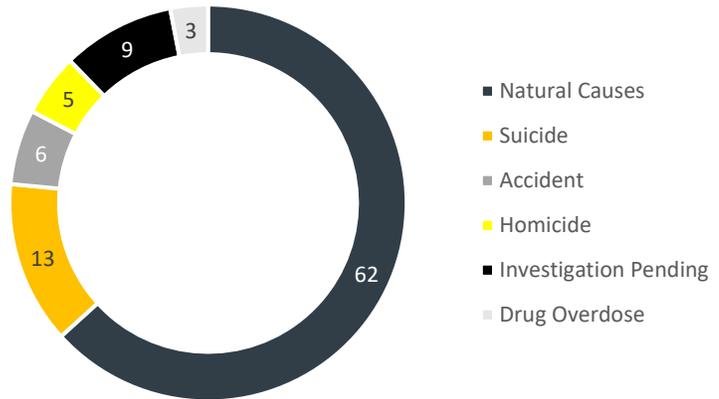


^[2] When reviewing data for the number of decedents per county, it is important to note that counties housing multiple agencies or agency types will likely have a higher number of decedents than those counties housing fewer agencies and agency types (i.e., a county with a County Jail, state prison, and multiple police departments).

STATE PRISON

Deaths occurring in 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 during any quarter of the 2023 calendar year. Of the 174 deaths reported for 2023, 56%, or 98, of those deaths occurred within a state prison. Nearly 63% of deaths reported within the state prisons were due to natural causes/illness. Roughly 13% of deaths resulted from suicide, 6% were classified as accidental, 5% were homicides and 3% were classified as drug overdose. Nine prison deaths are still pending investigation in the manner of death.

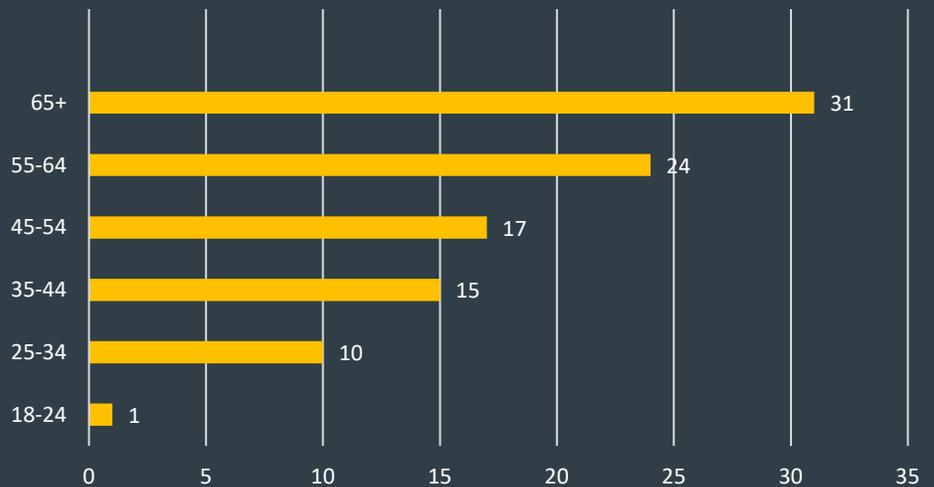
MANNER OF DEATH (STATE PRISON)



Males represented 97% of decedents. White individuals accounted for 79% of decedents, and Black individuals accounted for 21%. About 96% were non-Hispanic, with 1 individual identifying as Hispanic. The ethnicity of 3 decedents was unknown. Roughly half (44%) of decedents were under the age of 55, and the other half (56%) of decedents were 55 or older. A full breakdown of decedents by age can be found below.

Within IDOC Prisons, LaPorte County accounted for the highest number of in-custody deaths with 20%. Hendricks County had the second-highest number of deaths at 15%, followed by Henry County at 12%, and Miami County at 11%.

AGE OF DECEDENTS (STATE PRISON)



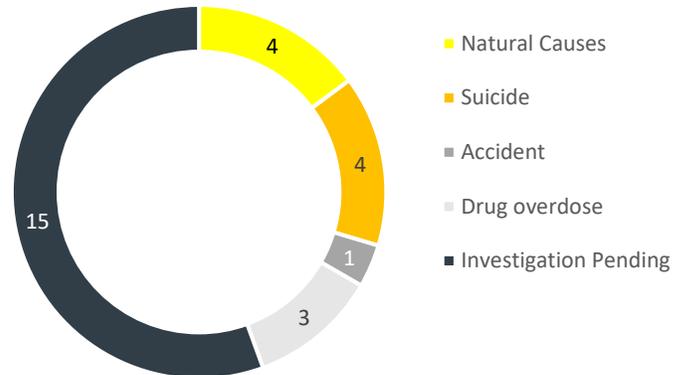
JAIL

Jails across the state reported 27 deaths in custody for the 2023 calendar year. Most (56%) of the reported deaths are still pending investigation. Natural causes/illness and suicide each accounted for 4 deaths. Drug overdoses accounted for 3 deaths. Accidents were the manner of death for 1 decedent (4%).

Males represent 70% of decedents, with females accounting for the remaining 30%. Most decedents were White (74%). Black individuals represented 26% of decedents. The majority (70%) of decedents were younger than 45 years old.

To view an in-depth breakdown of the age of decedents, see the table below.

MANNER OF DEATH (JAIL)



AGE OF DECEDENTS (JAIL)

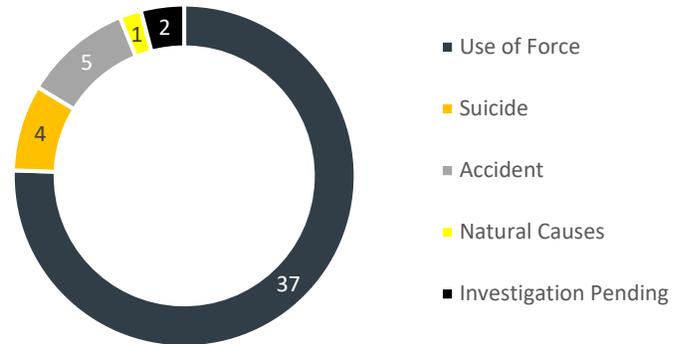
Marion and Allen County each accounted for 2 jail deaths. Twenty-three counties reported 1 death.



POLICE

Using reports submitted into the portal and deaths gathered via ICJI’s media methodology, 49 decedents were reported for police-related deaths in the 2023 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 49 decedents, 76% of the deaths were a result of the use of force by an officer, accident represented 10% of police-related deaths, and suicide represented 8%. There was 1 natural cause of death recorded and 2 deaths are pending investigation.

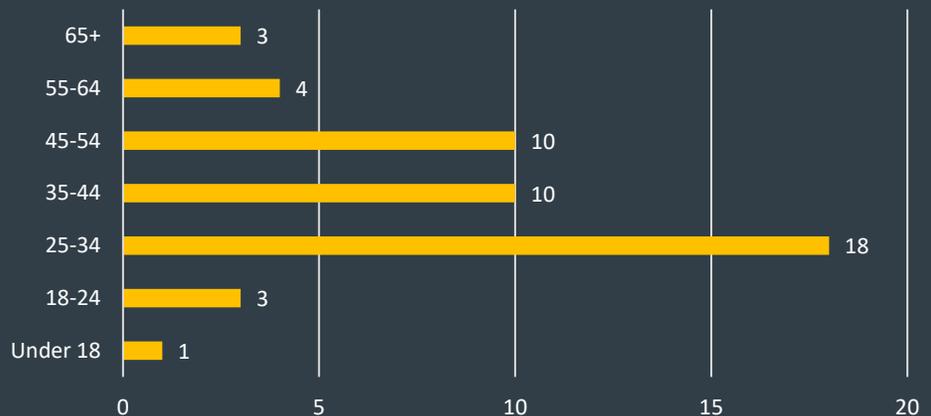
MANNER OF DEATH
(POLICE-RELATED INCIDENTS)



Ninety percent of the decedents were male, and the remaining 10% of the decedents were female. The majority of decedents were White (61%), 37% were Black, and the race of 1 individual was unknown. The ethnicity of decedents was 94% non-Hispanic, and the ethnicity of 6% was unknown. Decedents between the ages of 25 and 54 accounted for 78% of deaths. See the table below for a further breakdown of age.

Most police-related deaths occurred in Marion County (24%), followed by Vanderburgh County (14%). Grant County accounted for 6%. St. Joseph, Clark, Harrison, Monroe, and Vigo counties each accounted for 4%. Seventeen counties all reported one death resulting from police interaction in 2023.

AGE OF DECEDENTS
(POLICE-RELATED INCIDENTS)





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 fourth 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 has created an interactive dashboard of all collected DCRA data, sortable by year, which is hosted on the ICJI website. The dashboard can be found [here](#). 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.



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