

HENNEPIN COUNTY
MINNESOTA

Medical Examiner
Annual Report for 2023



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Hennepin County Medical Examiner

Mission

To investigate and determine cause and manner of death in all cases within the jurisdiction of the office in compliance with Minnesota statutes, and to advance the knowledge of death investigative professionals and partnering agencies through training and education to improve health, safety, and quality of life.

Vision

The Medical Examiner envisions a standard of excellence whereby death investigative professionals conduct thorough, accurate death investigations by harnessing innovative technologies and solutions in a regional office that serves a diverse population with timely, accurate, and compassionate investigations run by professional staff equipped with state-of-the-art technology and resources.

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in our 2023 Annual Report. Included within the pages is a statistical breakdown of the total caseload of our three-county service area — Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott counties.

The Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office is accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners and administers an Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education approved fellowship program in forensic pathology.

In 2023 our new building afforded us the opportunity to increase efficiencies, minimize workforce injuries, and plan ahead for maximizing our anthropology space.

In the following pages, I invite you to learn more about our office and the important work we do.



Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Baker M.D.' with a stylized flourish.

Andrew Baker, M.D.

Chief Medical Examiner of
Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott counties



Jurisdiction Map

The Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office has jurisdiction to investigate all sudden or unexpected deaths in Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott counties.

Population by county (2023)

Hennepin 1,297,847

Dakota 449,658

Scott 156,529

Area by county in square miles

Hennepin 607

Dakota 587

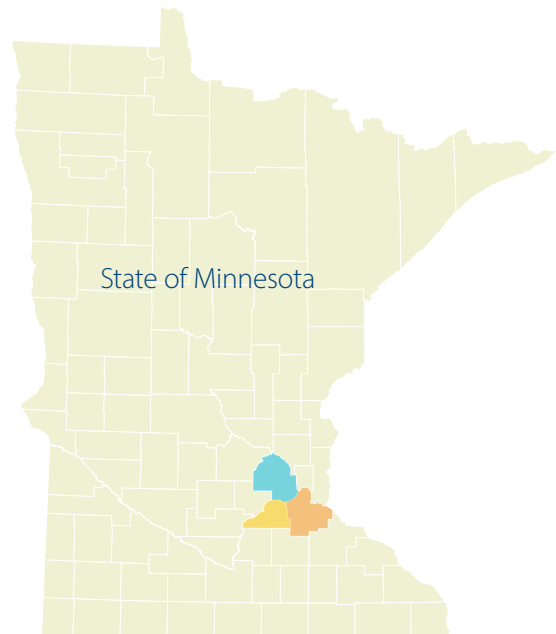
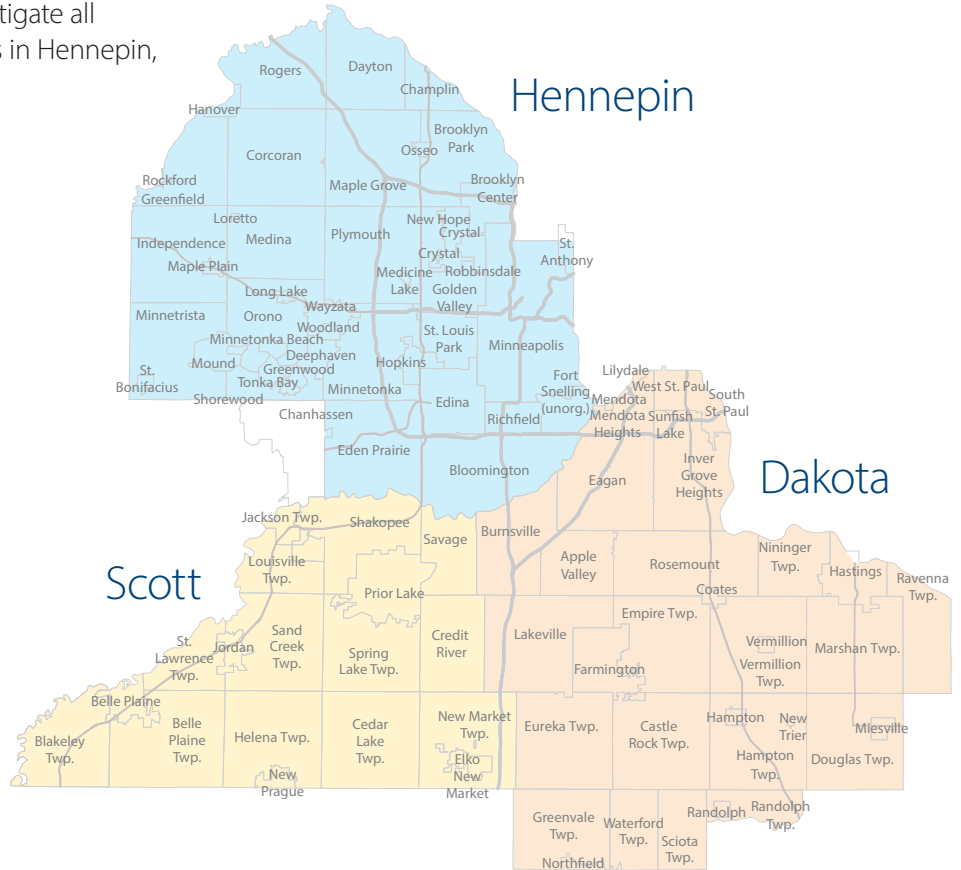
Scott 368

Number of cities by county

Hennepin
45 cities and 1 unorganized territory (Fort Snelling)

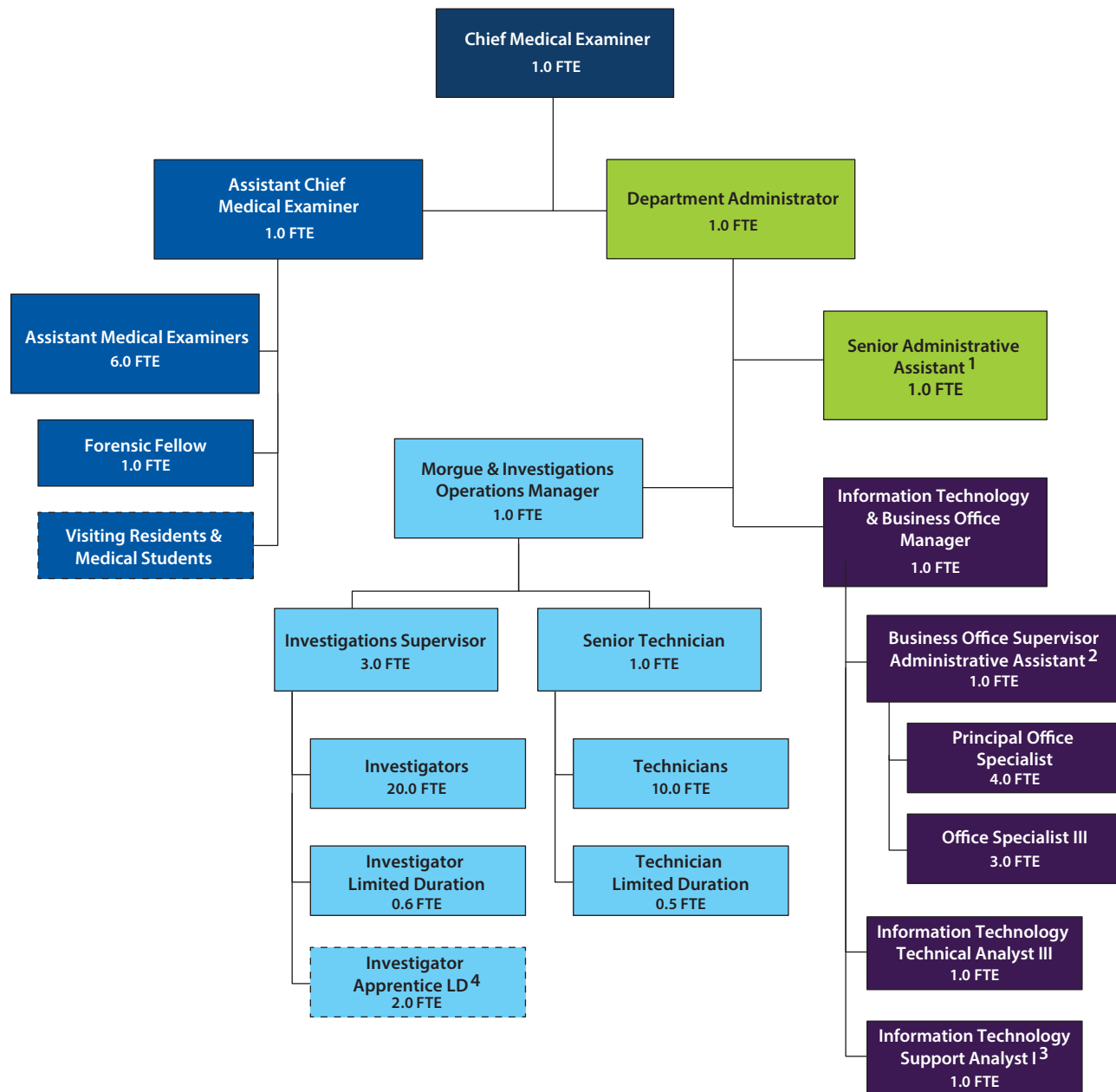
Dakota
21 cities and multiple townships and unincorporated communities

Scott
8 cities and 10 townships, multiple unincorporated communities, and the Shakopee Mdwakanton Sioux Community



Andrew M. Baker, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner of Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott counties.

Organizational Chart



2023 (as of June 1, 2023)

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions: 56.0

Limited Duration FTE funded positions: 2.1

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded positions: 2.0

1 Intermediate Administrative Assistant (2022 Budget)

2 Records Info Specialist (2022 Budget)

3 Information Technology Trainee program ended Dec. 2022

4 Medical Examiner Investigator Trainee (ARPA funded through 2023)

Medical Examiner's Office Adopted Budget — 2023

The Medical Examiner is responsible for investigating all known or suspected homicides, suicides, accidental deaths, drug related deaths, medically unattended deaths, and those that constitute a threat to public health and safety in Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott counties. The office provides autopsy services for other jurisdictions on a referral basis and provides authorization for cremation.

| Budget Summary | 2021 Actual | 2022 Budget | 2023 Budget |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Budgeted Property Tax Requirement* | \$5,406,173 | \$6,762,111 | \$7,358,965 |
| Other Taxes | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Federal | 186,218 | 152,163 | 0 |
| State | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Local | 1,702,320 | 1,839,304 | 2,194,599 |
| Investment Earnings | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Fees for Services | 54,658 | 0 | 45,000 |
| Fines and Forfeitures | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Licenses and Permits | 491,111 | 565,000 | 570,000 |
| Other Revenue | 147,362 | 125,000 | 122,000 |
| Other Financing | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Revenues | \$7,987,843 | \$9,443,578 | \$10,290,564 |
| Personal Services | \$6,282,954 | \$7,547,286 | \$8,361,174 |
| Commodities | 100,341 | 89,800 | 105,940 |
| Services | 2,096,131 | 1,599,229 | 1,768,350 |
| Public Aid Assistance | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Capital Outlay | -11,642 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Charges | 24,223 | 207,263 | 55,100 |
| Grants | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Expenditures | \$8,492,006 | \$9,443,578 | \$10,290,564 |
| Budgeted Positions (Full-Time Equivalents) | 45.2 | 52.6 | 58.1 |

*Reflects the adjusted property tax requirement budget, not actual property tax collections.

Functions of the Medical Examiner

Receiving death reports

When a reportable death occurs, the Medical Examiner's Office gathers pertinent data, including the person's name, address, age, sex, race, marital status, next of kin, a summary of medical history, physical findings, and name of last attending physician.

Preserving evidence

At the location of the death, the Medical Examiner Investigator takes custody and arranges transport of the body, personal property, and associated evidence.

Deciding jurisdiction

The Medical Examiner decides who has jurisdiction to investigate the death, and reserves the right to accept or decline jurisdiction. If the person died from natural causes and has seen an attending physician within 365 days, the office usually declines jurisdiction. If the office accepts jurisdiction, or if the death is due in part to an injury, the Medical Examiner must sign the death certificate.

Facilitating tissue, eye, and organ donation

The Medical Examiner must receive notification and provide authorization before any agency arranges to recover tissues, eyes, or organs.

Performing autopsies

The Medical Examiner determines whether state interest compels an autopsy to answer medical and legal questions in the public interest, to protect public health, or to address a question of law. Families have the right under state law to object to an autopsy in some circumstances.

Determining cause and manner of death

The Medical Examiner assists families, law enforcement agencies, and the legal system by determining a scientifically unbiased and logical cause and manner of death. In many cases, family members benefit from the information derived from a death investigation and autopsy.

Managing public and private information

Basic demographic information and the cause and manner of death are matters of public record under Minnesota law (Minnesota Statute §13.83). The Medical Examiner treats the rest of the information as protected non-public data and gives it the same discretion as a medical record.

In homicide cases, the Medical Examiner provides information and autopsy reports only to the law enforcement agencies investigating the death and to the prosecutor in the county where the homicide occurred.

Types of Reportable Cases

Deaths that meet certain criteria in Hennepin, Dakota, or Scott counties must be reported, including all sudden or unexpected deaths and all deaths that may be due entirely, or in part, to any factor other than natural disease. These include:

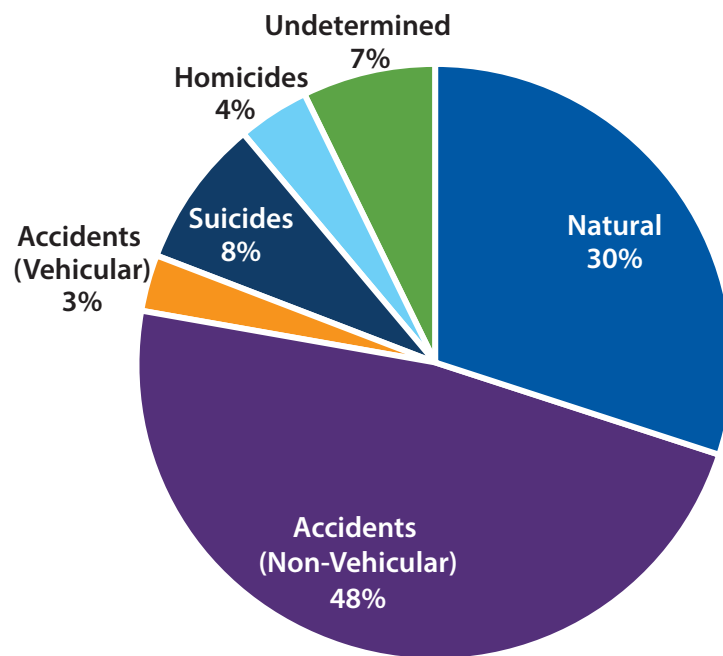
1. Unnatural deaths, including violent deaths arising from homicide, suicide, or accident;
2. Deaths due to a fire or associated with burns or chemical, electrical, or radiation injury;
3. Unexplained or unexpected perinatal and postpartum maternal deaths;
4. Deaths under suspicious, unusual, or unexpected circumstances;
5. Deaths of people whose bodies are to be cremated or otherwise disposed of in such a manner that the bodies will later be unavailable for examination;
6. Deaths of inmates of public institutions and people in custody of law enforcement officers, who have not been hospitalized primarily for organic disease;
7. Deaths that occur during, in association with, or as the result of diagnostic, therapeutic, or anesthetic procedures (these include operating room deaths);
8. Deaths due to culpable neglect;
9. Stillbirths of 20 weeks or longer gestation, not attended by a physician;
10. Sudden deaths of people not affected by recognizable disease;
11. Unexpected deaths notwithstanding a history of underlying disease;
12. Deaths in which a fracture of a major bone such as a femur, humerus, or tibia has occurred within the past six months;
13. Deaths not attended by a physician, occurring outside of a licensed health care facility or licensed residential hospice program;
14. Deaths of people not seen by their physician within the past 120 days;
15. Deaths occurring in an emergency department;
16. Stillbirths or deaths of newborn infants in which there has been maternal use of or exposure to unprescribed controlled substances, including street drugs, or in which there is history or evidence of maternal trauma;
17. Unexpected deaths of children;
18. Solid organ donors;
19. Unidentified bodies;
20. Skeletonized remains;
21. Deaths occurring within 24 hours of arrival at a health care facility, if death is unexpected;
22. Deaths associated with the decedent's employment;
23. Deaths of nonregistered hospice patients or patients in unlicensed hospice programs; and
24. Deaths attributable to acts of terrorism.

2023 Aggregate Data: Total, Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties:

| | Total | Hennepin | Dakota | Scott | Other |
|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|----------|
| Total Reported Cases | 8,839 | 6,401 | 1,890 | 543 | 5 |
| Total Case Percentage | 100% | 72.4% | 21.4% | 6.1% | 0.1% |
| Jurisdiction Accepted | 2,628 | 2,183 | 346 | 99 | 0 |
| Jurisdiction Accepted | 2,628 | 2,183 | 346 | 99 | |
| Naturals | 780 | 628 | 119 | 33 | |
| Accidents (not traffic) | 1,257 | 1,055 | 159 | 43 | |
| Traffic Accidents | 76 | 65 | 9 | 2 | |
| Suicides | 224 | 170 | 43 | 11 | |
| Homicides | 110 | 109 | 1 | 0 | |
| Undetermined | 178 | 153 | 15 | 10 | |
| No Death Certificate Required | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | |
| Total Examinations | 1,526 | 1,263 | 202 | 56 | 5 |
| Total Autopsies | 1,380 | 1,149 | 178 | 48 | 5 |
| External Examinations | 122 | 92 | 22 | 8 | 0 |
| Autopsies at Other Institutions | 21 | 20 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Anthropology Exams | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Donations | 727 | 536 | 159 | 32 | |
| Eyes | 458 | 321 | 116 | 21 | |
| Tissues/Bones | 201 | 148 | 42 | 11 | |
| Organs | 68 | 67 | 1 | 0 | |
| Other Data | | | | | |
| Scene Visits | 1,414 | 1,117 | 231 | 66 | |
| Cremations Approved | 11,644 | 9,085 | 1,979 | 573 | 7 |
| Subpoenas Answered | 193 | | | | |
| Bodies Transported | 1,831 | 1,492 | 263 | 71 | |
| Unclaimed Remains | 30 | 28 | 1 | 1 | |
| Data Requests | 3,924 | 3,274 | 432 | 143 | 75 |

Jurisdiction Accepted Cases by Manner of Death: Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties 2023

| | Hennepin | | Dakota | | Scott | | Total |
|-------------------------------|----------|------|--------|------|-------|------|-------|
| | total | by % | total | by % | total | by % | |
| Jurisdiction Accepted | 2,183 | 83 | 346 | 13 | 99 | 4 | 2,628 |
| Naturals | 628 | 81 | 119 | 15 | 33 | 4 | 780 |
| Accidents (not traffic) | 1,055 | 84 | 159 | 13 | 43 | 3 | 1,257 |
| Traffic Accidents | 65 | 85 | 9 | 12 | 2 | 3 | 76 |
| Suicides | 170 | 75 | 43 | 20 | 11 | 5 | 224 |
| Homicides | 109 | 99 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 110 |
| Undetermined | 153 | 86 | 15 | 8 | 10 | 6 | 178 |
| No Death Certificate Required | 3 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |

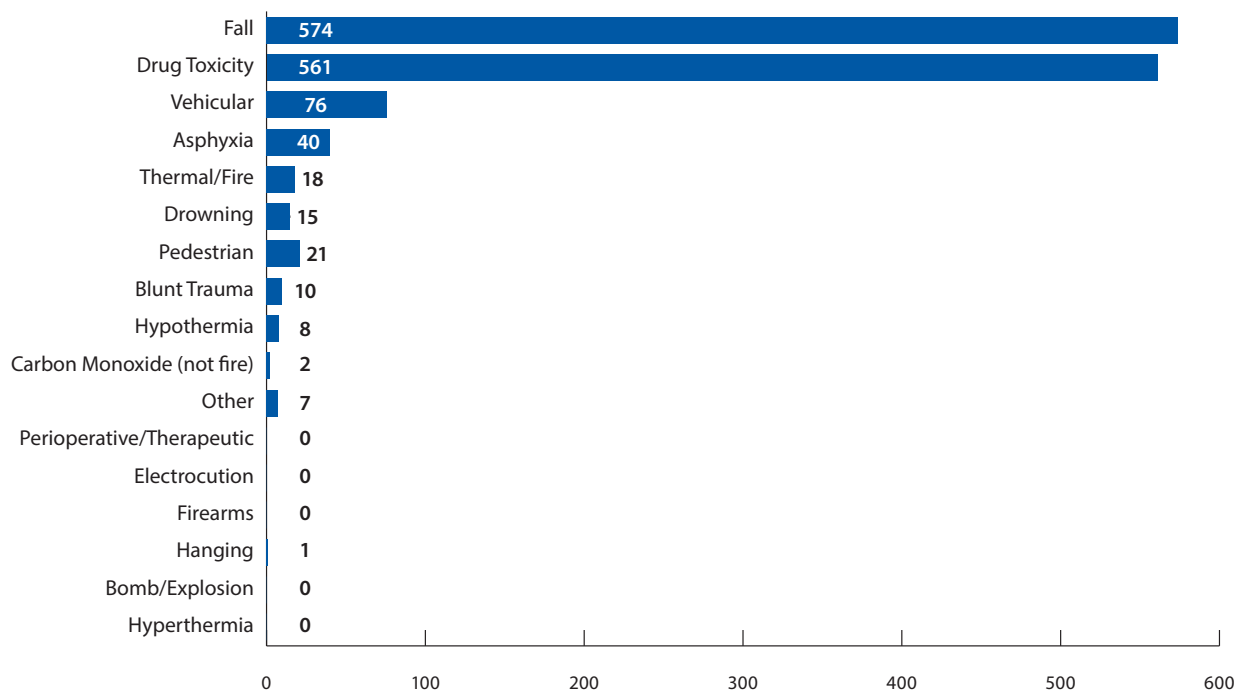


Natural Deaths: Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties 2023

| | Total (Exam + No Exam) | | | Total |
|---|------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Hennepin | Dakota | Scott | |
| Arteriosclerotic Heart Disease | 29 | 10 | 2 | 41 |
| Arteriosclerotic and Hypertensive Heart Disease | 40 | 8 | 6 | 54 |
| Hypertensive Heart Disease | 16 | 4 | 0 | 20 |
| Valvular Heart Disease | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Aortic Disease | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Cardiac (miscellaneous) | 16 | 3 | 0 | 19 |
| Natural Causes | 352 | 69 | 20 | 441 |
| Chronic Alcoholism | 69 | 11 | 2 | 82 |
| Cerebrovascular Disease | 16 | 3 | 0 | 19 |
| Seizure Disorder | 7 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| Neurological Disease (other) | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Respiratory (asthma, COPD) | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Gastrointestinal and Hepatic | 8 | 1 | 0 | 9 |
| Genitourinary and Renal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Infectious Diseases | 22 | 1 | 0 | 23 |
| Diabetes and metabolic | 11 | 3 | 0 | 14 |
| Pulmonary Thromboemboli | 16 | 2 | 0 | 18 |
| Prematurity | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Malignancy | 10 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Congenital Diseases | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Debility | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| TOTAL | 628 | 119 | 33 | 780 |

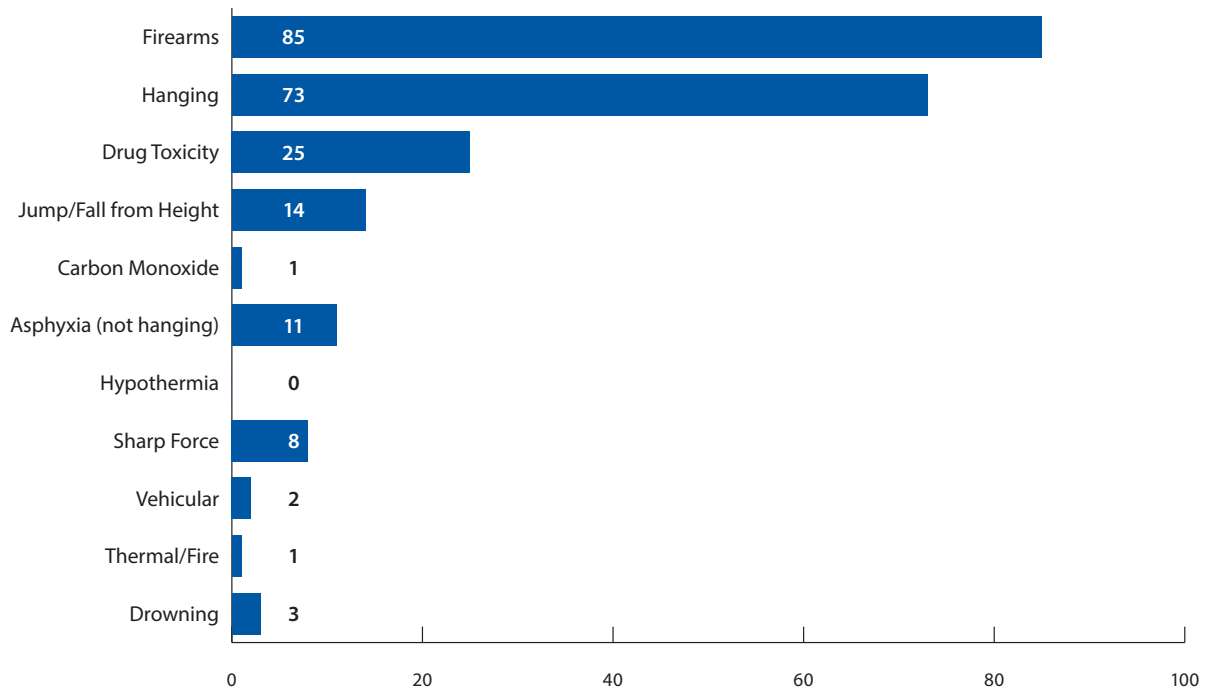
Accident Deaths: Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties 2023

| | Hennepin | Dakota | Scott | TOTAL |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Fall | 452 | 97 | 25 | 574 |
| Drug Toxicity | 493 | 53 | 15 | 561 |
| Vehicular | 65 | 9 | 2 | 76 |
| Asphyxia | 33 | 6 | 1 | 40 |
| Thermal/Fire | 18 | 0 | 0 | 18 |
| Drowning | 13 | 1 | 1 | 15 |
| Pedestrian | 21 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| Blunt Trauma | 7 | 2 | 1 | 10 |
| Hypothermia | 8 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Carbon Monoxide (not fire) | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Other | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Perioperative/Therapeutic | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Electrocution | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Firearms | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hanging | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Bomb/Explosion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hyperthermia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 1,120 | 168 | 45 | 1,333 |



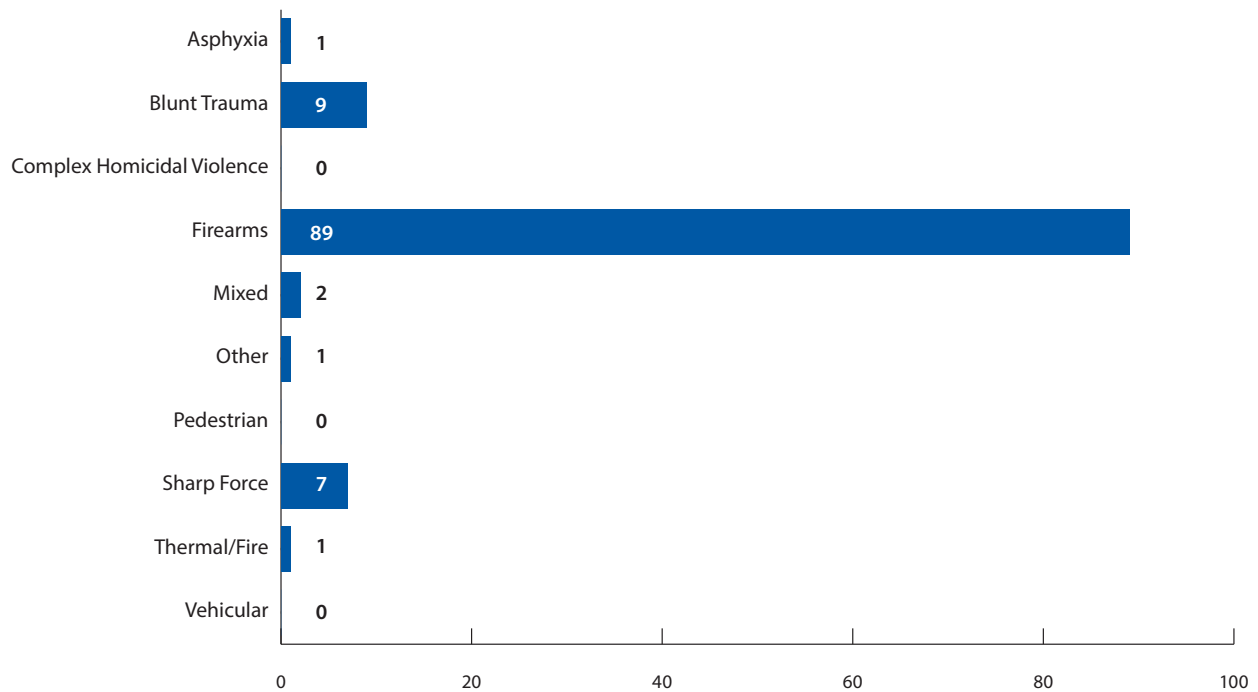
Suicide Deaths: Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties 2023

| | Hennepin | Dakota | Scott | TOTAL |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Firearms | 63 | 17 | 5 | 85 |
| Hanging | 55 | 14 | 4 | 73 |
| Drug Toxicity | 18 | 5 | 2 | 25 |
| Jump/Fall from Height | 13 | 1 | 0 | 14 |
| Carbon Monoxide | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Asphyxia (not hanging) | 8 | 3 | 0 | 11 |
| Hypothermia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sharp Force | 7 | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| Vehicular | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Thermal/Fire | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Drowning | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 170 | 43 | 11 | 224 |



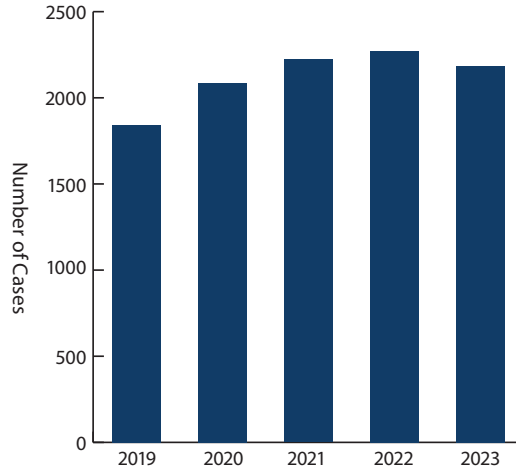
Homicide Deaths: Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties 2023

| | Hennepin | Dakota | Scott | TOTAL |
|----------------------------|------------|----------|----------|------------|
| Asphyxia | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Blunt Trauma | 9 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Complex Homicidal Violence | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Firearms | 89 | 0 | 0 | 89 |
| Mixed | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Pedestrian | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sharp Force | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Thermal/Fire | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Vehicular | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 109 | 1 | 0 | 110 |



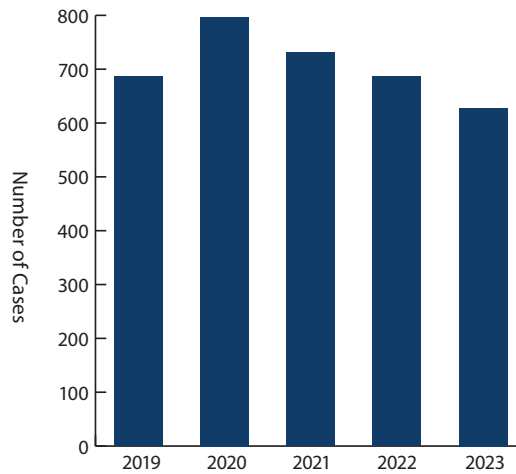
Cases Accepted: Hennepin County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 1,841 |
| 2020 | 2,088 |
| 2021 | 2,222 |
| 2022 | 2,270 |
| 2023 | 2,183 |



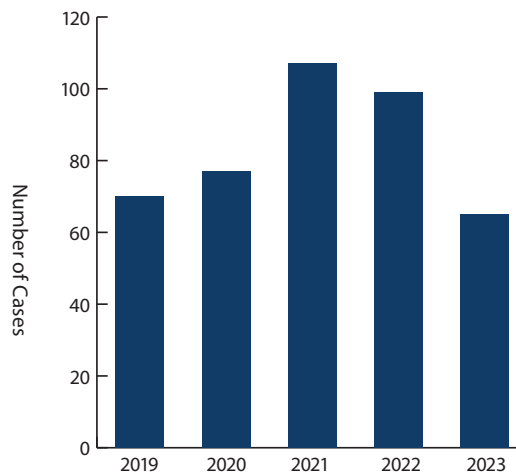
Natural Deaths: Hennepin County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 687 |
| 2020 | 797 |
| 2021 | 731 |
| 2022 | 687 |
| 2023 | 628 |



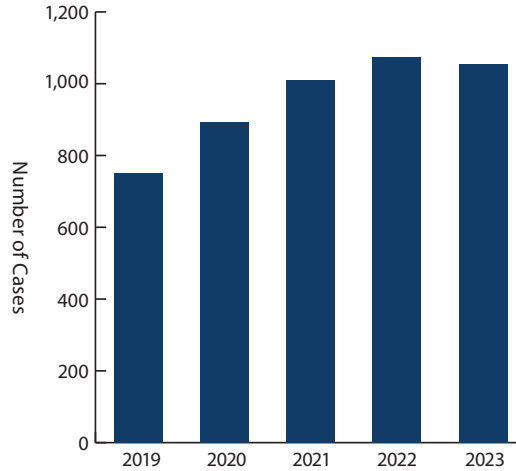
Traffic Accidents: Hennepin County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 70 |
| 2020 | 77 |
| 2021 | 107 |
| 2022 | 99 |
| 2023 | 65 |



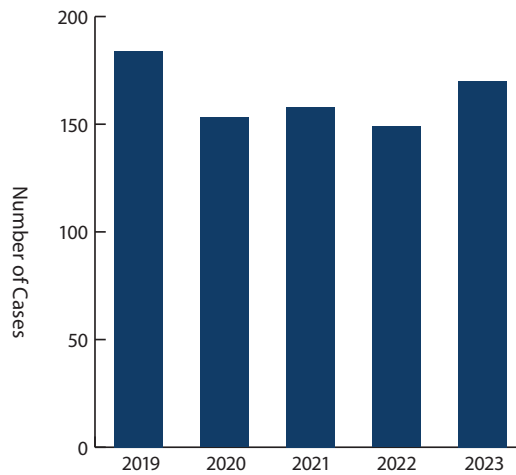
Accidents (Non-Traffic): Hennepin County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 752 |
| 2020 | 893 |
| 2021 | 1,009 |
| 2022 | 1,073 |
| 2023 | 1,055 |



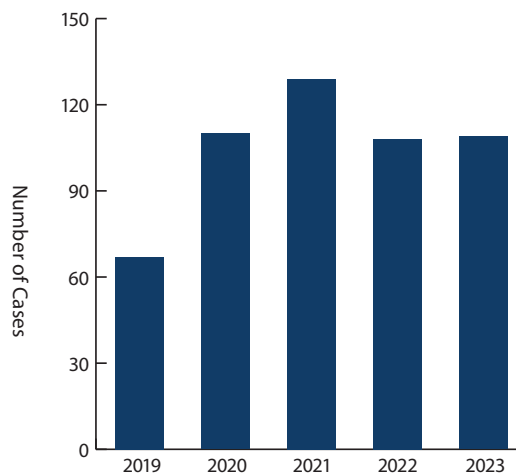
Suicide Deaths: Hennepin County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 184 |
| 2020 | 153 |
| 2021 | 158 |
| 2022 | 149 |
| 2023 | 170 |



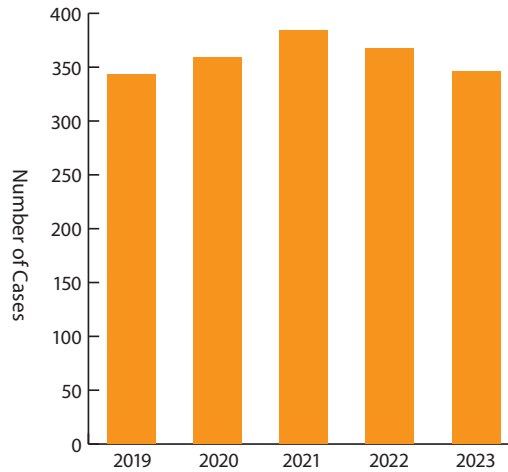
Homicide Deaths: Hennepin County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 67 |
| 2020 | 110 |
| 2021 | 129 |
| 2022 | 108 |
| 2023 | 109 |



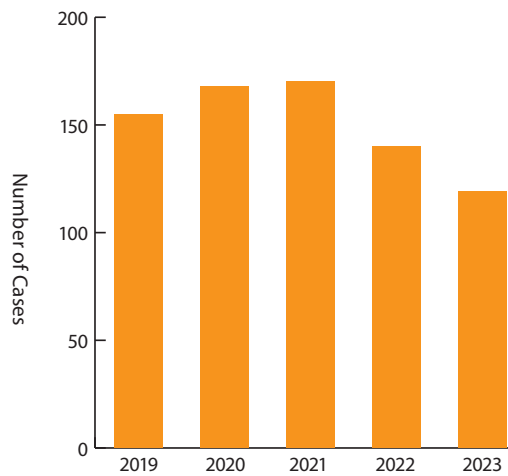
Cases Accepted: Dakota County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 343 |
| 2020 | 359 |
| 2021 | 384 |
| 2022 | 367 |
| 2023 | 346 |



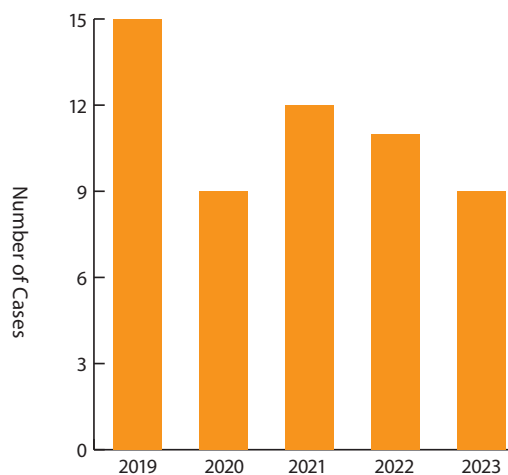
Natural Deaths: Dakota County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 155 |
| 2020 | 168 |
| 2021 | 170 |
| 2022 | 140 |
| 2023 | 119 |



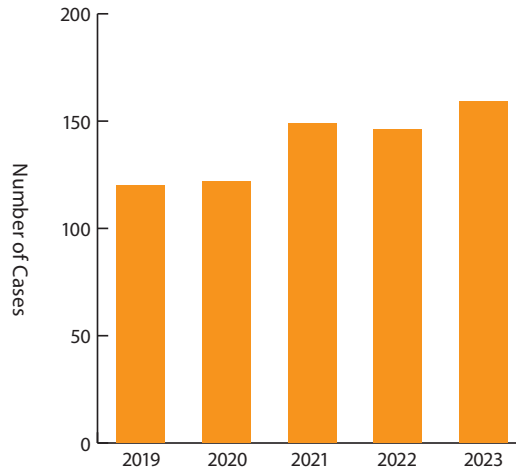
Traffic Accidents: Dakota County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 15 |
| 2020 | 9 |
| 2021 | 12 |
| 2022 | 11 |
| 2023 | 9 |



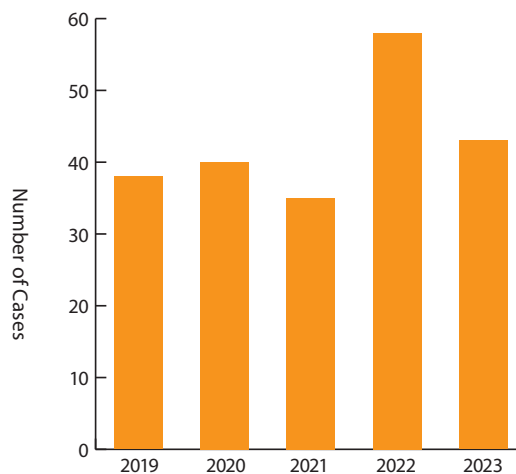
Accidents (Non-Traffic): Dakota County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 120 |
| 2020 | 122 |
| 2021 | 149 |
| 2022 | 146 |
| 2023 | 159 |



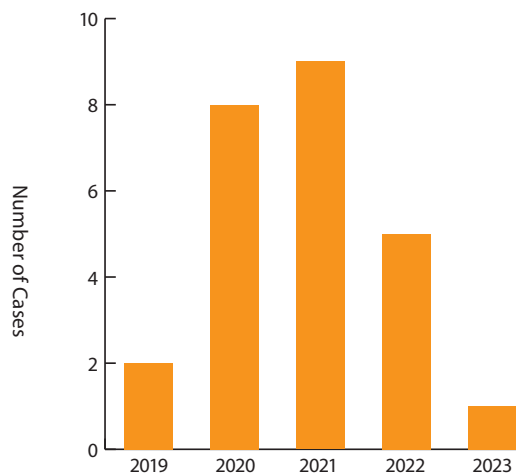
Suicide Deaths: Dakota County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 38 |
| 2020 | 40 |
| 2021 | 35 |
| 2022 | 58 |
| 2023 | 43 |



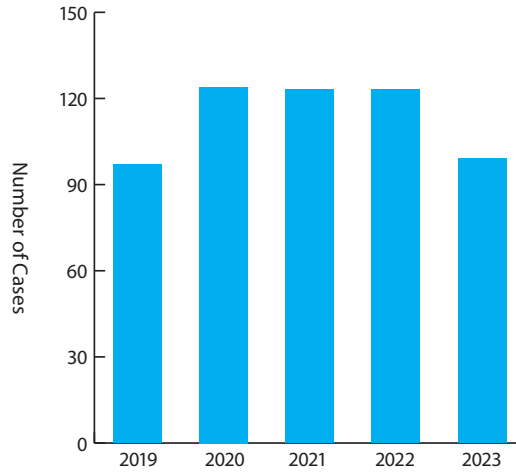
Homicide Deaths: Dakota County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 2 |
| 2020 | 8 |
| 2021 | 9 |
| 2022 | 5 |
| 2023 | 1 |



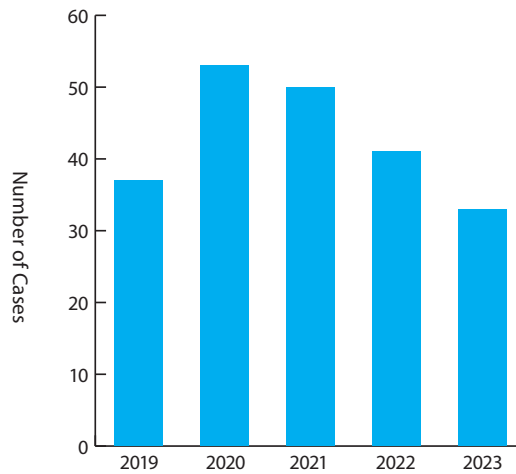
Cases Accepted: Scott County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 97 |
| 2020 | 124 |
| 2021 | 123 |
| 2022 | 123 |
| 2023 | 99 |



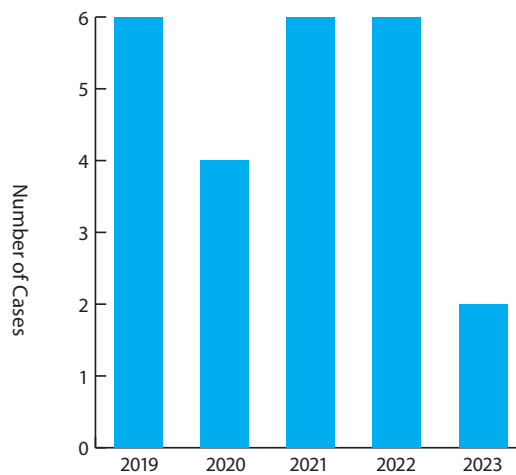
Natural Deaths: Scott County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 37 |
| 2020 | 53 |
| 2021 | 52 |
| 2022 | 41 |
| 2023 | 33 |



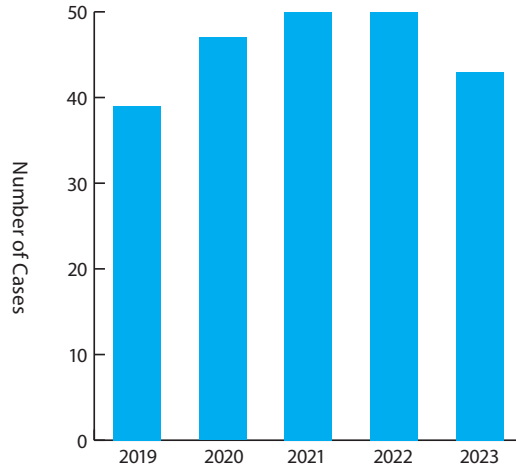
Traffic Accidents: Scott County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 6 |
| 2020 | 4 |
| 2021 | 6 |
| 2022 | 6 |
| 2023 | 2 |



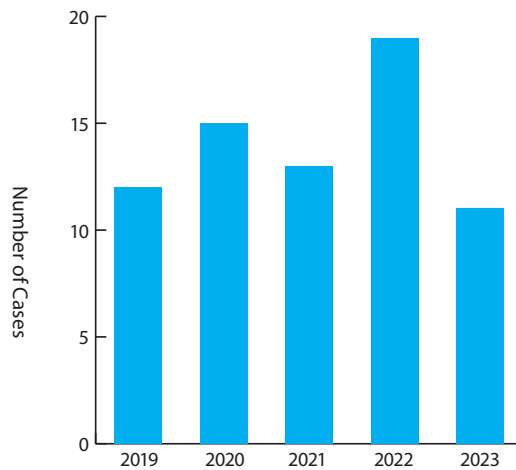
Accidents (Non-Traffic): Scott County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 39 |
| 2020 | 47 |
| 2021 | 50 |
| 2022 | 50 |
| 2023 | 43 |



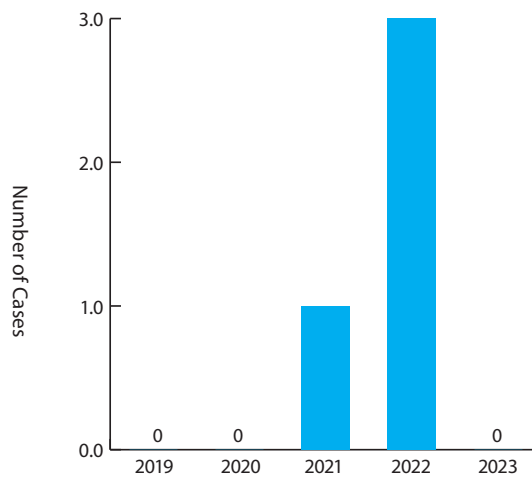
Suicide Deaths: Scott County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 12 |
| 2020 | 15 |
| 2021 | 13 |
| 2022 | 19 |
| 2023 | 11 |



Homicide Deaths: Scott County 2019–2023

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2019 | 0 |
| 2020 | 0 |
| 2021 | 1 |
| 2022 | 3 |
| 2023 | 0 |





Hennepin County
Medical Examiner

14250 County Road 62
Minnetonka, MN 55345

612-215-6300

hennepin.us/me

Andrew M. Baker, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner
of Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott counties