

# Nevada State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System

## Report of 2019 Deaths – Washoe County Medical Examiner Jurisdiction

**Overview:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) is a program that supports state, territorial, county, and city health departments in obtaining more comprehensive and timelier data on overdose morbidity and mortality. The program is meant to enhance opioid overdose surveillance, reporting, and dissemination efforts to better inform prevention and early intervention strategies.

The information contained in this biannual report highlights **overdose mortality** within the Washoe County Medical Examiner’s (ME) jurisdiction utilizing the State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (SUDORS) for the period beginning **January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019**.

**Data Source:** SUDORS uses death certificates and coroner/medical examiner reports (including post-mortem toxicology testing results) to capture detailed information on toxicology, death scene investigations, route of drug administration, and other risk factors that may be associated with a fatal overdose.

**Case Definitions:** A death that occurred in Nevada where the decedent’s place of residence was Nevada and was assigned any of the following ICD-10 underlying cause-of-death codes on the death certificate: X40-44 (unintentional drug poisoning) or Y10-Y14 (drug poisoning of undetermined intent); or a death classified as a drug overdose death by the Medical Examiner/Coroner.

**Limitations:** Data is delayed due to the time required to abstract data from multiple sources. Data completeness is dependent on information documented at time of death and therefore leads to large amounts of missing data.

**The report includes details on:**

Section 1: Demographic Characteristics of Cases

Section 2: Breakdown of Top Substances Listed in the Cause of Death

Section 3: Mental Health, Substance Use, and Institutionalization Prior to Death

Section 4: Appendix (containing complete tables for sections 1-3)

### Key Findings:

**There were 172 total drug overdose deaths reported in SUDORS among Nevada residents living in the jurisdiction of the Washoe County Medical Examiner from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019.**

- Cases were mostly male, white, had a high school education or less and between the ages of 35-64 (Figures 1-4).
- Opioids were listed in the cause of death for 60% of cases (Table 2).
- Heroin was listed in the cause of death in about 21% of cases, prescription opioids were listed in 18% of cases, and fentanyl was listed in about 15% of cases (Figure 5).
- About 45% of cases reported methamphetamine as one of the substances in the cause of death (Figure 6).
- Approximately 47% of cases had a documented mental health problem prior to death (Figure 7).
- About 14% of cases had a documented prior history of overdose (Figure 8).
- About 9% of cases were recently released from a hospital prior to death (Figure 9).

### Questions or comments?

Please contact Nevada OD2A’s opioid epidemiologist, Shawn Thomas, MPH, at [shawnt@unr.edu](mailto:shawnt@unr.edu).

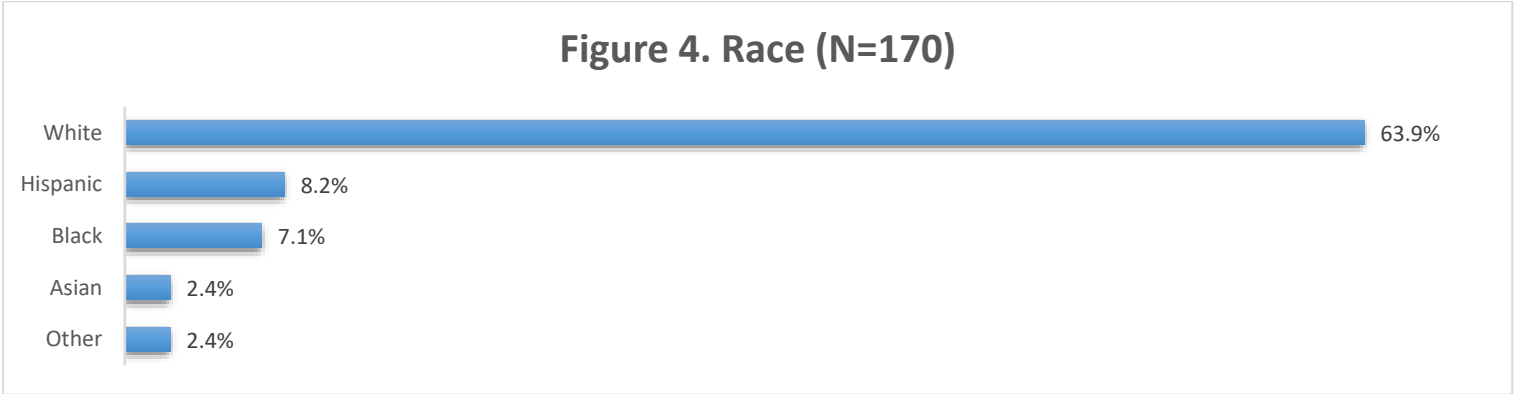
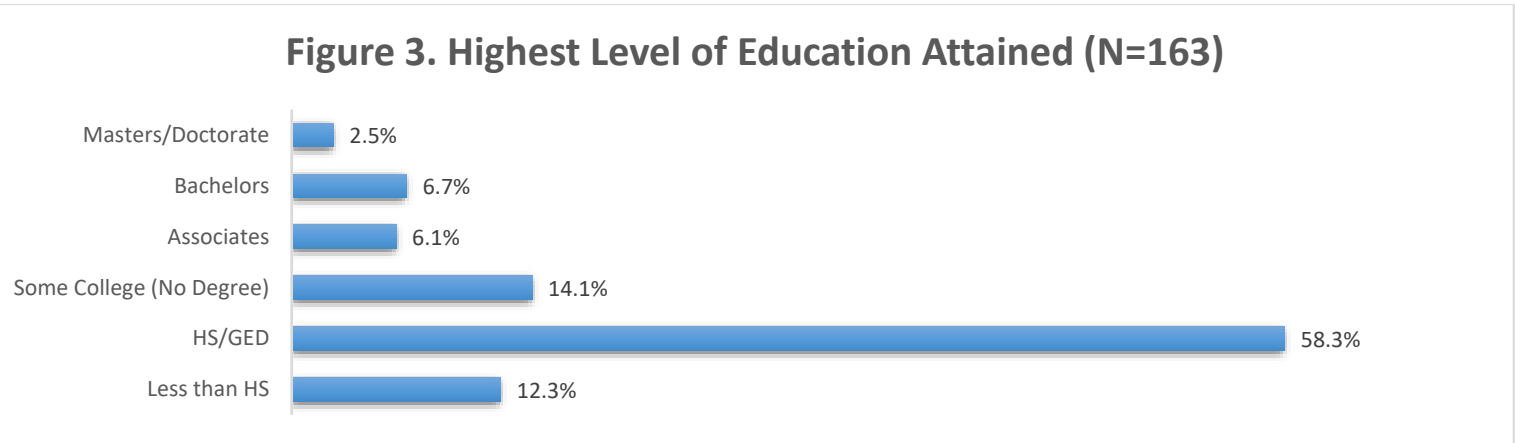
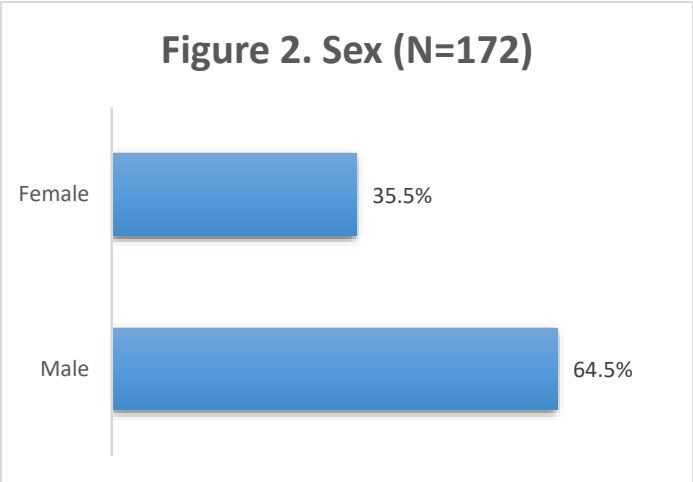
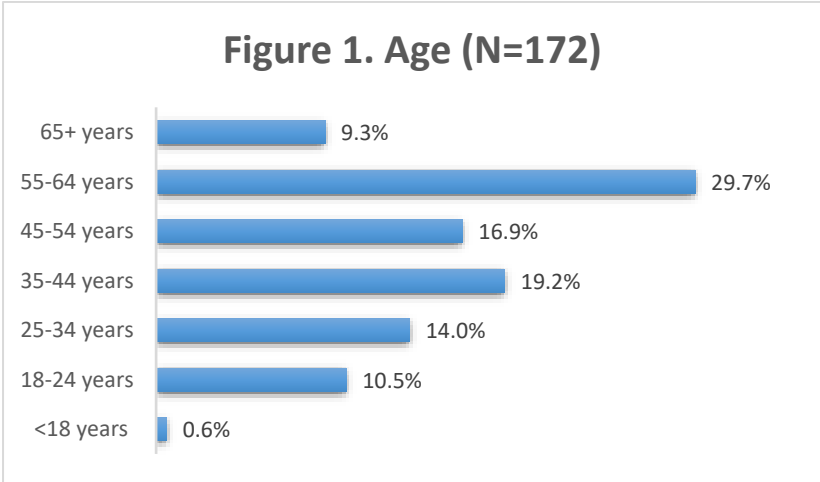


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# Section 1: Demographic Characteristics of Cases



**\*Data not available for all cases in Figures 3-4. Percentages exclude missing data, so these statistics may not represent the true proportion of case characteristics.**

**Summary:** There were 172 drug overdose deaths of unintentional/undetermined intent from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 in the jurisdiction of the Washoe County Medical Examiner among Nevada residents. Overdose deaths occurred most frequently among individuals who were 55-64 years old (29.7%), followed by 35-44 years (19.2%), and 45-54 years (16.9%) (**Figure 1**). Deaths were more common among males (64.5%) (**Figure 2**). Over 70% of decedents possessed either a high school diploma/GED (58.3%) or less than a high school education (12.3%) (**Figure 3**). Cases were mostly White (63.9%), Hispanic (8.2%), and Black (7.1%) (**Figure 4**). In addition, 11.2% of cases were homeless and 9.9% had served in the armed forces (**Appendix, Table 1**).

## Section 2: Breakdown of Top Substances Listed on the Cause of Death

Figure 5. Opioids Listed in the Cause of Death (N=172)

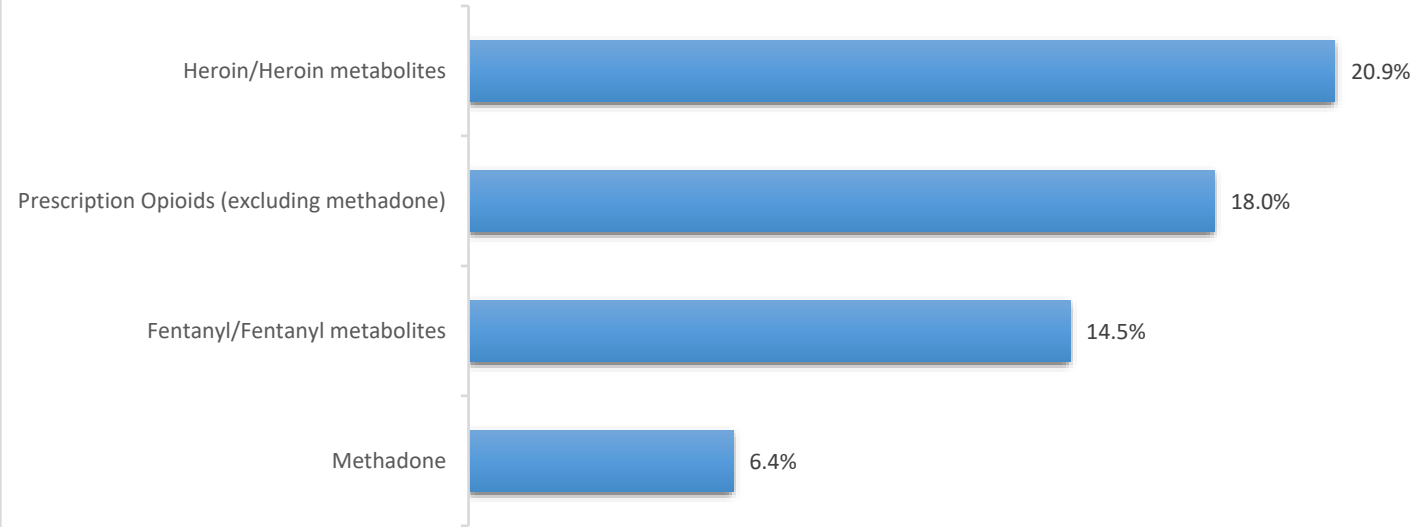
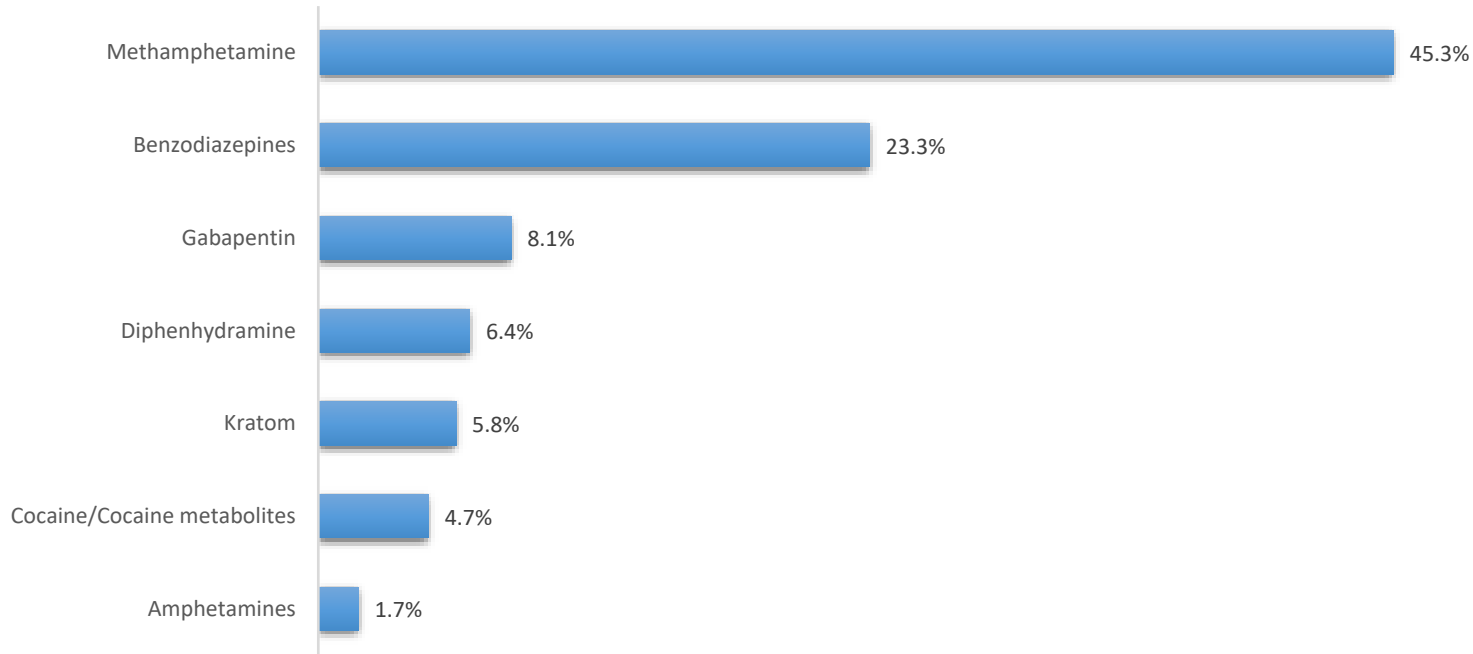


Figure 6. Non-opioids Listed in the Cause of Death (N=172)

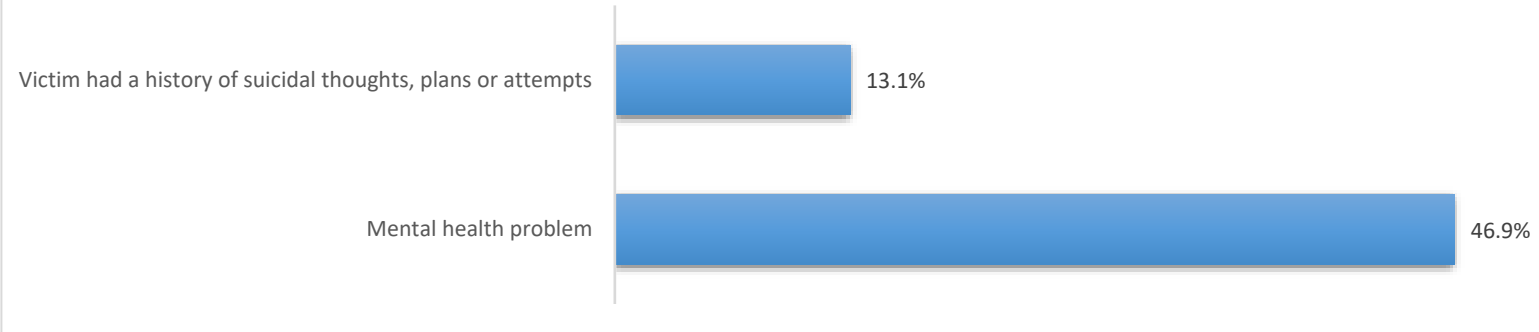


**Note:** Substances listed in Figures 5 and 6 are not mutually exclusive, and decedents may have had multiple substances listed in the cause of death.

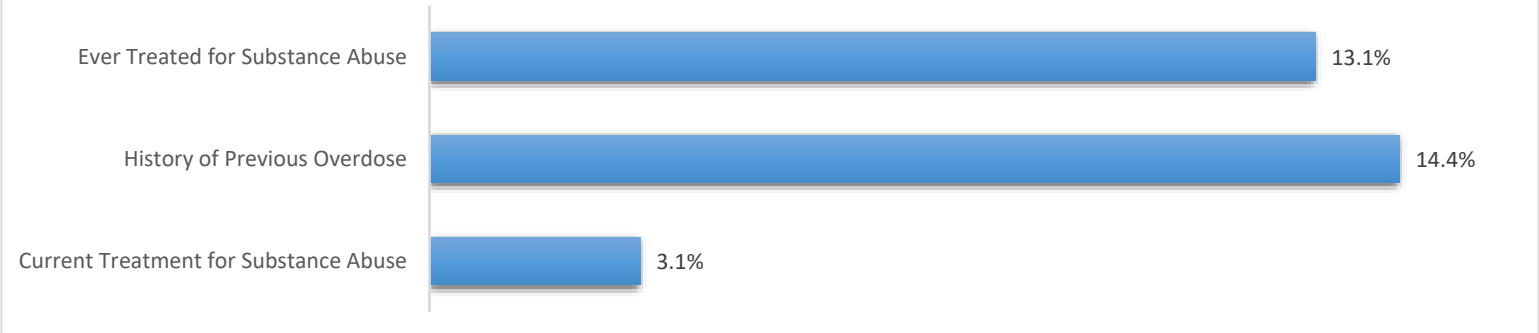
**Summary:** The top three opioids listed in the cause of death were heroin and heroin metabolites (20.9%), prescription opioids excluding methadone (18.0%), and fentanyl and fentanyl metabolites (14.5%). (Figure 5). The top three non-opioids listed in the cause of death were methamphetamine (45.3%), benzodiazepines (23.3%), and gabapentin (8.1%) (Figure 6).

### Section 3: Mental Health, Substance Use, and Institutionalization Prior to Death

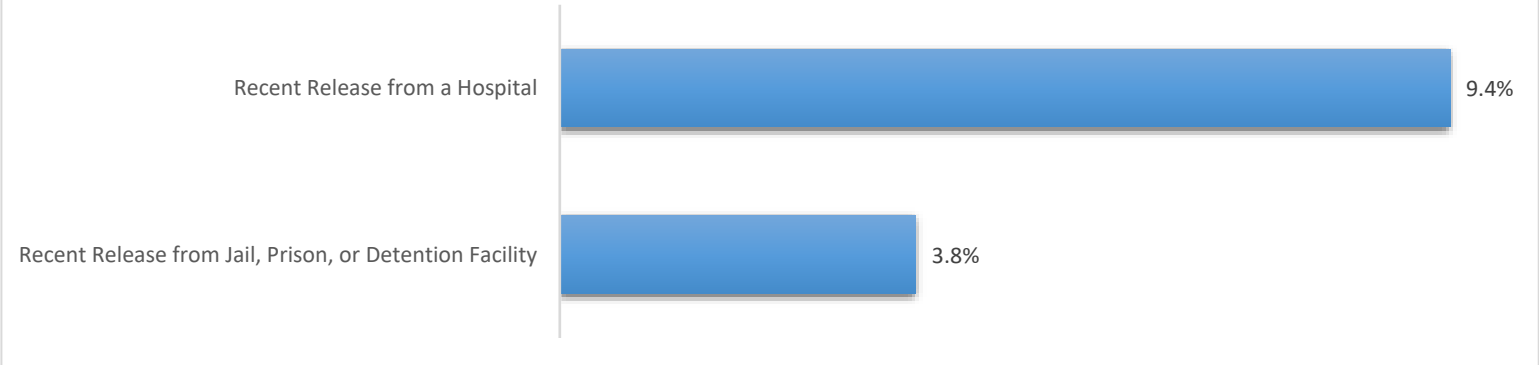
**Figure 7. Mental Health History (N=160)**



**Figure 8. Substance Use History (N=160)**



**Figure 9. Incarceration History (N=160)**



\*Circumstances prior to death were not available for all cases in Figure 7-9. Percentages exclude missing data and likely underestimate the true proportion of case characteristics.

**Summary:** Among those with known circumstances prior to death, almost half of decedents had a mental health problem, and 13.1% had a history of thoughts, plans, or attempts of suicide (Figure 7). About 13.1% of decedents were ever treated for substance abuse, 3.1% were currently being treated for substance abuse prior to death, and 14.4% had a previous overdose (Figure 8). About 9.4% of decedents were recently released from the hospital and 3.8% were released from jail, prison, or other detention facility prior to death (Figure 9).

## Section 4: Appendix

**Table 1. Demographic characteristics of unintentional or undetermined overdose related deaths in the jurisdiction of the Washoe County ME in Nevada from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019.**

Characteristic	N=172	%
<b>Age</b>		
<18 years	1	0.6%
18-24 years	18	10.5%
25-34 years	24	14.0%
35-44 years	33	19.2%
45-54 years	29	16.9%
55-64 years	51	29.7%
65+ years	16	9.3%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	111	64.5%
Female	61	35.5%
<b>Education Level</b>		
Less than HS	20	12.3%
HS/GED	95	58.3%
Some College	23	14.1%
Associates	10	6.1%
Bachelors	11	6.7%
Masters/Doctorate	4	2.5%
<b>Race</b>		
Asian	4	2.4%
Black	12	7.1%
Hispanic	14	8.2%
Other	4	2.4%
White	136	80.0%
<b>Homeless</b>		
Yes	19	11.2%
<b>Military</b>		
Yes	17	9.9%

Note: Missing data excluded.

**Table 2. Top substances listed in the cause of death of unintentional or undetermined overdose related deaths in the jurisdiction of the Washoe County ME in Nevada from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019**

Type of Substance	N=172	%
<b>Opioids</b>	104	60.5%
Prescription Opioids (excluding methadone)	31	18.0%
Heroin/Heroin metabolites	36	20.9%
Fentanyl/Fentanyl metabolites	25	14.5%
Methadone	11	6.4%
<b>Non-opioids</b>		
Methamphetamine	78	45.3%
Benzodiazepines	40	23.3%
Gabapentin	14	8.1%
Diphenhydramine	11	6.4%
Kratom	10	5.8%
Cocaine/Cocaine metabolites	8	4.7%
Amphetamines	3	1.7%

Note: Substances are not mutually exclusive.

**Table 3. Mental health, substance use, and institutionalization history preceding death for unintentional or undetermined overdose related deaths in the jurisdiction of the Washoe County ME in Nevada from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019.**

Characteristic	N=160	%
<b>Mental health</b>		
Mental health problem	75	46.9%
Victim had a history of suicidal thoughts, plans or attempts	21	13.1%
<b>Substance abuse</b>		
Ever treated for substance abuse	21	13.1%
Current treatment for substance abuse	5	3.1%
History of previous overdose	23	14.4%
<b>Institutionalized</b>		
Recent Release from Jail, Prison, or Detention Facility	6	3.8%
Recent Release from Hospital	15	9.4%

Note: Missing data excluded. Circumstances prior to death were not available for all cases. These findings likely underestimate the true proportion of case characteristics.