



ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS-RELATED DEATHS

HUMBOLDT COUNTY 2017

William F. Honsal, Sheriff

Ernest D. Stewart, Chief Deputy Coroner/Public Administrator

METHODS

Overview:

The purpose of this report is to describe trends in the number of alcohol and other drugs-related deaths occurring in Humboldt County in 2017. Trends are examined by age at time of death, gender and substances related to death.

Deaths represented in this report include only those in which the Humboldt County Coroner's Office was called to respond. Deaths of persons in the care of doctors are not represented in this report.

While most deaths represented in this report are a result of drug or alcohol toxicity, deaths related to chronic substance abuse were included.

This report was prepared using alcohol and other drugs-related mortality data maintained within the Humboldt County Coroner's Office records.

This report was prepared by Samantha Karges, Humboldt County Sheriff's Office Public Information Specialist and Brent Ferguson, Humboldt County Coroner's Office Legal Office Assistant, and reviewed by the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services.

Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services-Public Health tracks mortality in Humboldt County from all causes, including those alcohol and other drugs-related deaths that are included in this report. For more information on mortality data collected by the Humboldt County DHHS, contact DHHSMEDIA@co.humboldt.ca.us.

Definitions:

Unattended Death: An unattended death is defined in this report as a death in which the Humboldt County Coroner's Office was called to respond and the Coroner determines the cause of death.

Attended Death: An attended death is defined in this report as a death that occurs while under a doctor's care and the doctor is certain regarding the cause of death. The doctor signs off on the death certificate. The services of the Humboldt County Coroner's Office are not requested in these cases.

Cause of Death: Cause of Death is used to indicate the medical cause of death.

Manner of Death: Manner of Death is the category in which the death has been classified, including natural, accidental, motor vehicle, suicide, homicide, sudden infant death syndrome and undetermined. This classification is determined by assessing case related information as well as a post-mortem medical examination.

Intoxication Death: An intoxication death is defined as a death that was the result of recent ingestion or exposure to alcohol or another type of drug, including methamphetamines, prescription opioids, heroin, fentanyl, cocaine and other illicit or over the counter drugs.

Opioid-related deaths: Opioids include heroin and prescription opioid drugs such as tramadol, codeine, morphine, oxycodone and fentanyl.

Methamphetamine/Stimulant-related deaths: Stimulants can be illicit or prescription drugs, including methamphetamine, amphetamine, cocaine and MDMA. In this report, methamphetamine is the most commonly reported stimulant toxicity and so is used as an identifiable category.

Alcohol-related deaths: Deaths included in this report include alcohol intoxication as well as chronic alcohol abuse or alcoholism.

Drug + Alcohol-related deaths: In this report, deaths involving the presence of alcohol and one or more drugs are indicated under this category. These deaths are not further broken down by substance or included in the above drug or alcohol classifications.

Multi-Drug-related deaths: In this report, deaths involving the presence of multiple drugs fall under the multi-drug category. These deaths are not further broken down by substance or included in the above drug classifications.

Drug + Other-related deaths: Included in this report are two deaths in which the subjects had a toxic level of an illicit substance in their system at the time of death but that substance was not the only cause of death reported. In the case of the two deaths, both subjects' causes of death were determined to be drowning and methamphetamine toxicity.

FINDINGS

SECTION 1: Unattended Deaths in Humboldt County (2015-2017)

- In 2017, Humboldt County experienced **272** unattended deaths.
- From 2015-2017, *natural causes* is reported as the most common manner of unattended deaths in Humboldt County.

Figure 1

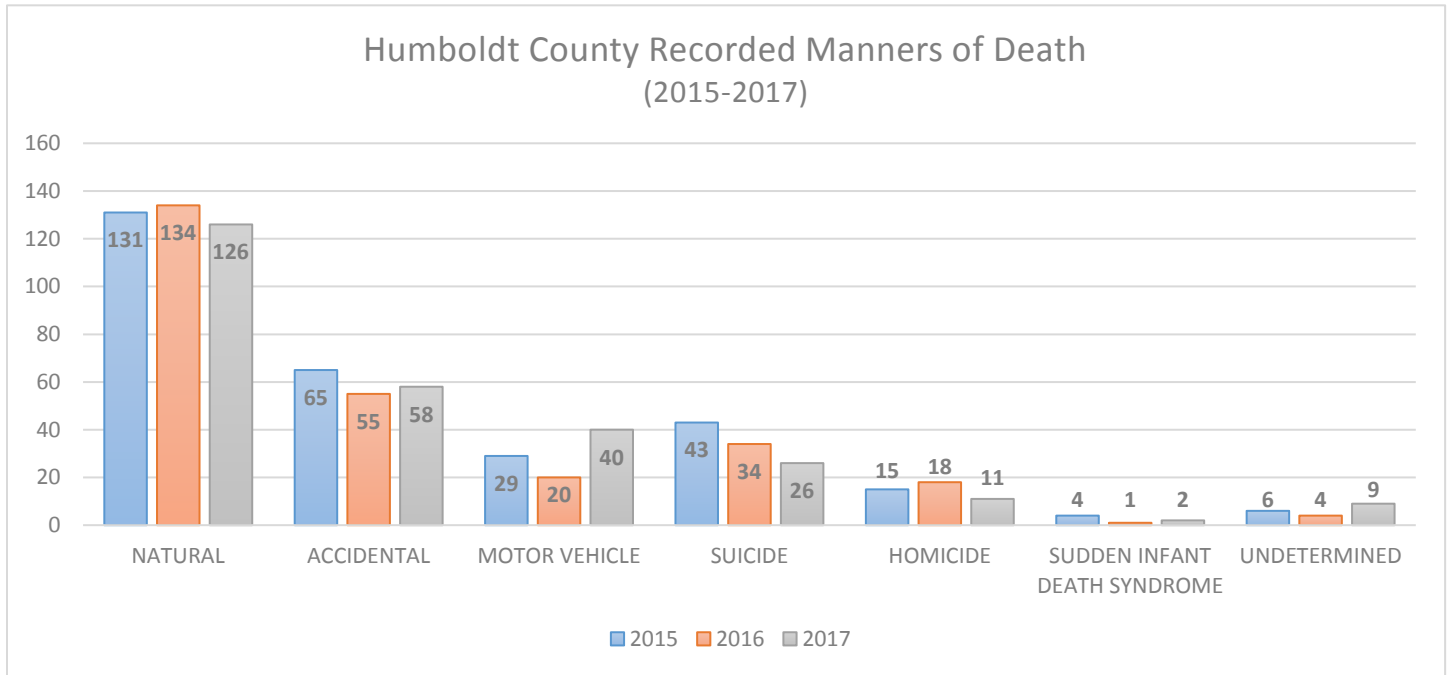
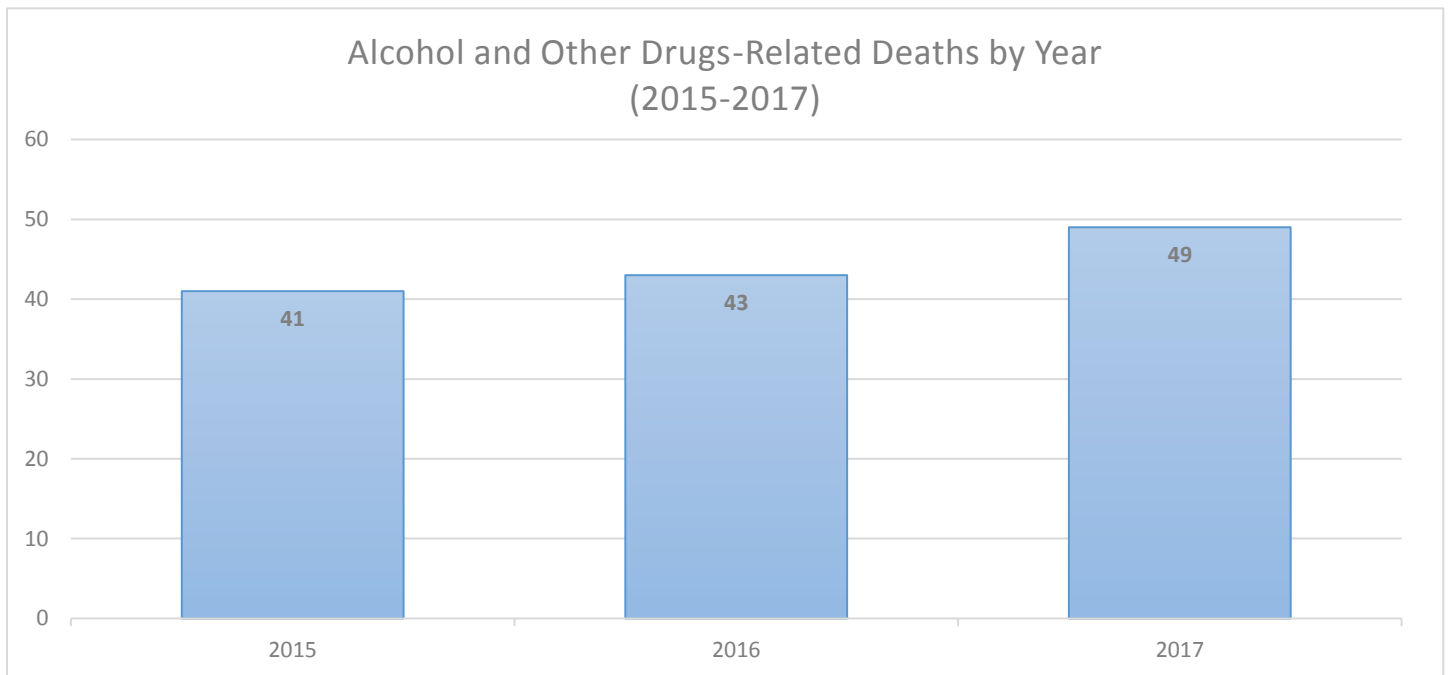


Figure 2



SECTION 2: Alcohol and Other Drugs-Related Deaths

- From 2015-2017, male alcohol and other drugs-related deaths increased, while female alcohol and other drugs-related deaths have decreased.
- Based on the 49 alcohol and other drugs-related deaths in 2017, the median age at death was **46.2 years**.
- Methamphetamine/Stimulant toxicity was the leading cause of alcohol and other drugs-related unattended deaths in 2017.

Figure 3

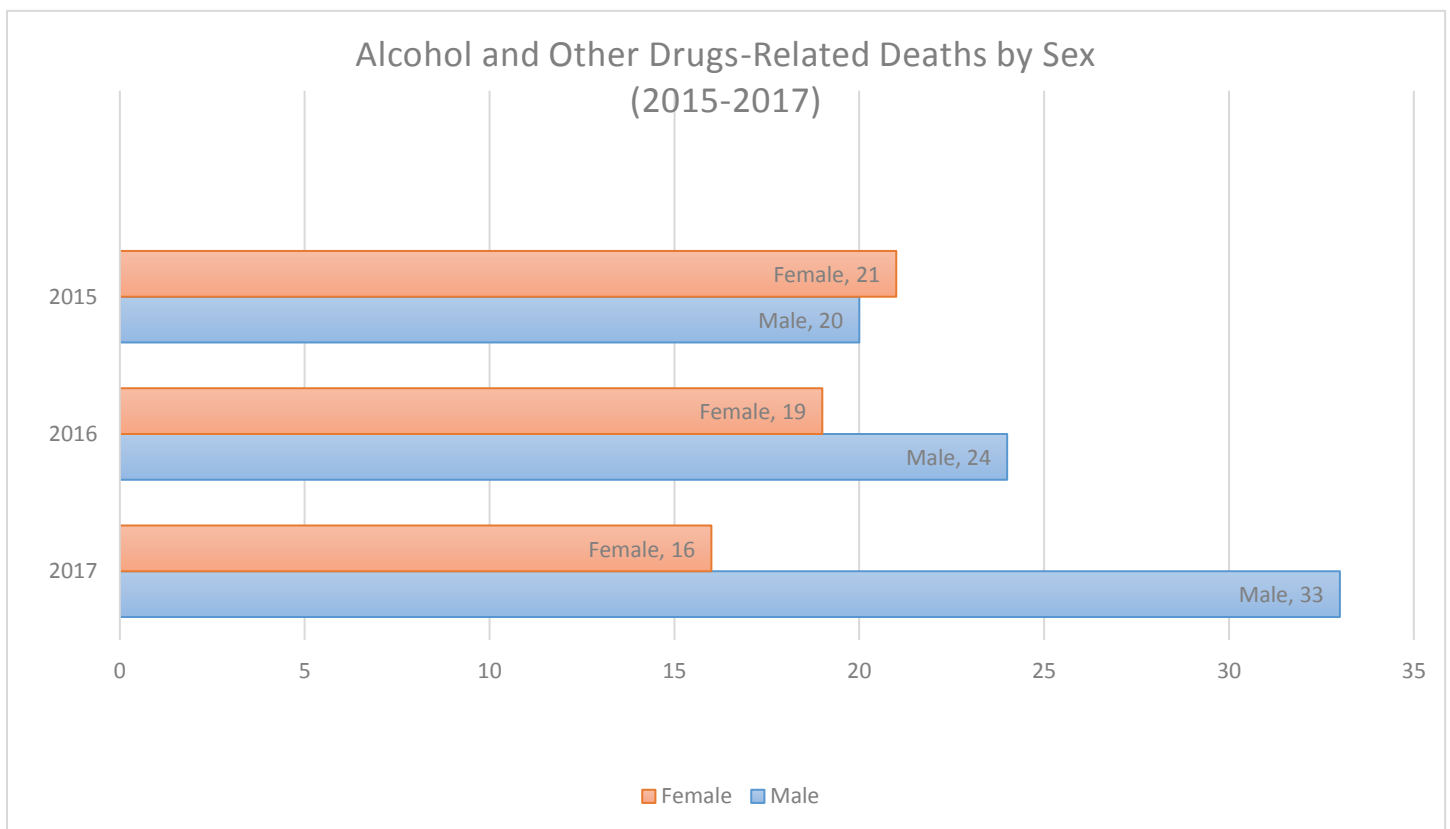


Figure 4

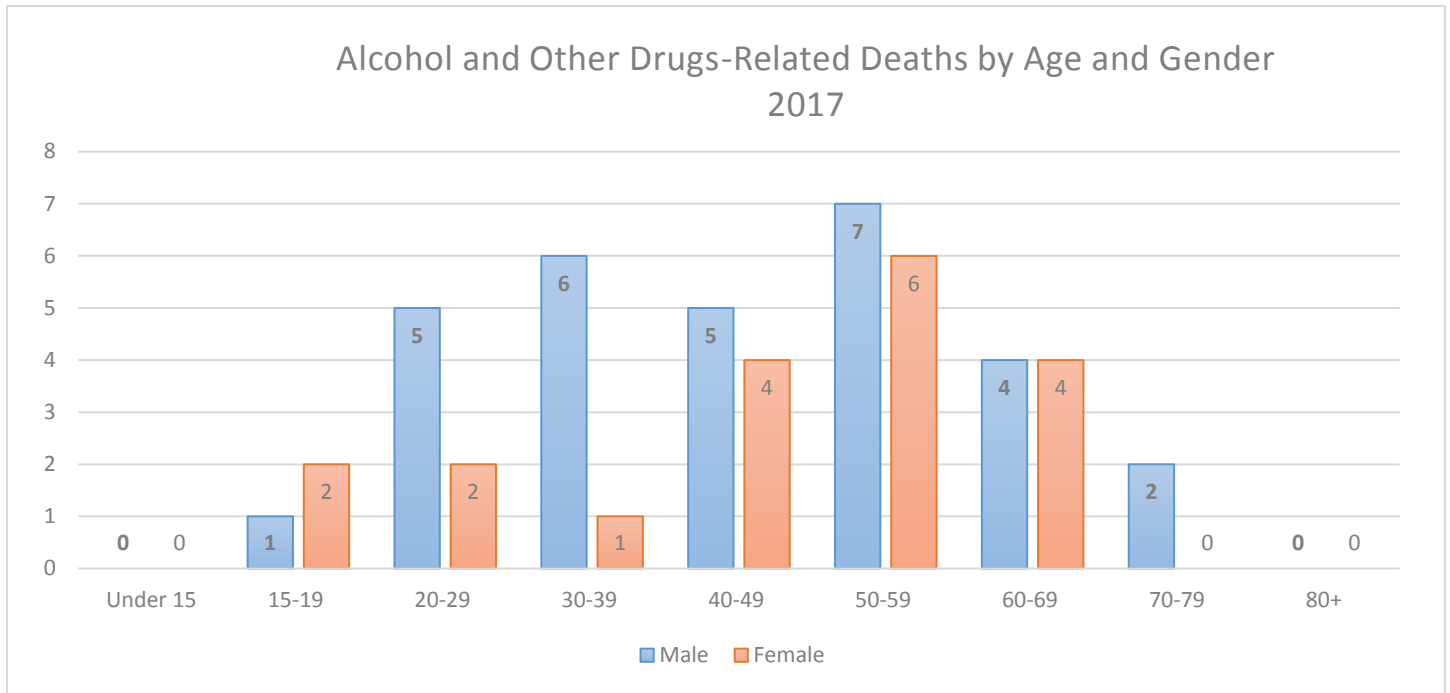


Figure 5

