

Annual Report for FY 2022-2023



Dr. Brian Pierce, DC, D-ABMDI

Coroner Baldwin County, Alabama

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Baldwin County Coroner's Office Annual Report FY 2022-2023

Background:

The Baldwin County Coroner's Office (BCCO) covers over 2000 square miles within Baldwin County, Alabama and serves 246,435 residents and approximately 6 Million Tourists annually. 1216 deaths were reported to the Coroner's Office in FY 2022-23.

Although the Covid Pandemic is over, the caseload has not subsided. The BCCO consistently works >50 cases monthly.

Baldwin County continues to endure the Fentanyl Crisis, with drug overdoses being the primary cause of unnatural death in Baldwin County.

Baldwin County continues its county-wide growth which is predicted to continue at a 2.5% rate annually through 2030.

Even with these challenges, the BCCO has made great strides in improving staffing, equipment to improve capabilities, preparations for a Mass Fatality event, and sharing of information through development of a Case Management System.

The following report includes trends of unattended, unexpected, and unnatural deaths that occurred in Baldwin County from October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023.

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The primary purpose of the Coroner's Office is to investigate unattended, unexplained, violent, and accidental deaths as set forth in the Constitution of Alabama Title 11, Chapter 5.

Mission Statement



Accurately determine the cause and manner of death to provide details for Law Enforcement and Closure for families.



To establish and maintain cooperative, professional relationships with all our community partners.



To assist the bereaved in the loss of a loved one.



To earn and hold the trust and respect of the citizens that we are privileged and honored to serve.

FY 2022-2023 the Office of the Coroner had the following Staffing:

Dr. Brian Pierce DC, D-ABMDI: Coroner

Investigations

Troy Dyess, D-ABMDI: Chief Deputy

Greg Schnupp, MDI-1

Jessica Gammage, MDI- 1

Deputy Coroners

Nick Miller, D-ABMDI

Tim Cooper

Jacob Van Blake

Administration

Brandy Byrd: Executive Coroner Assistant

Shanna Bonner: Admin Support Specialist I

With the addition of 2-fulltime Medical Death Investigators (MDI-I), the BCCO moved from a part-time investigative staff to a blended FT and PT Staff. This allowed for better coverage of on-call time, and a better work-life balance for death investigators.

MDI-1 are full-time county employees with all the rights and privileges such as retirement and Insurance. They provide primary day-time coverage for investigations, back-up coverage for the Deputy Coroners, as well as special duty assignments provided by the Coroner.

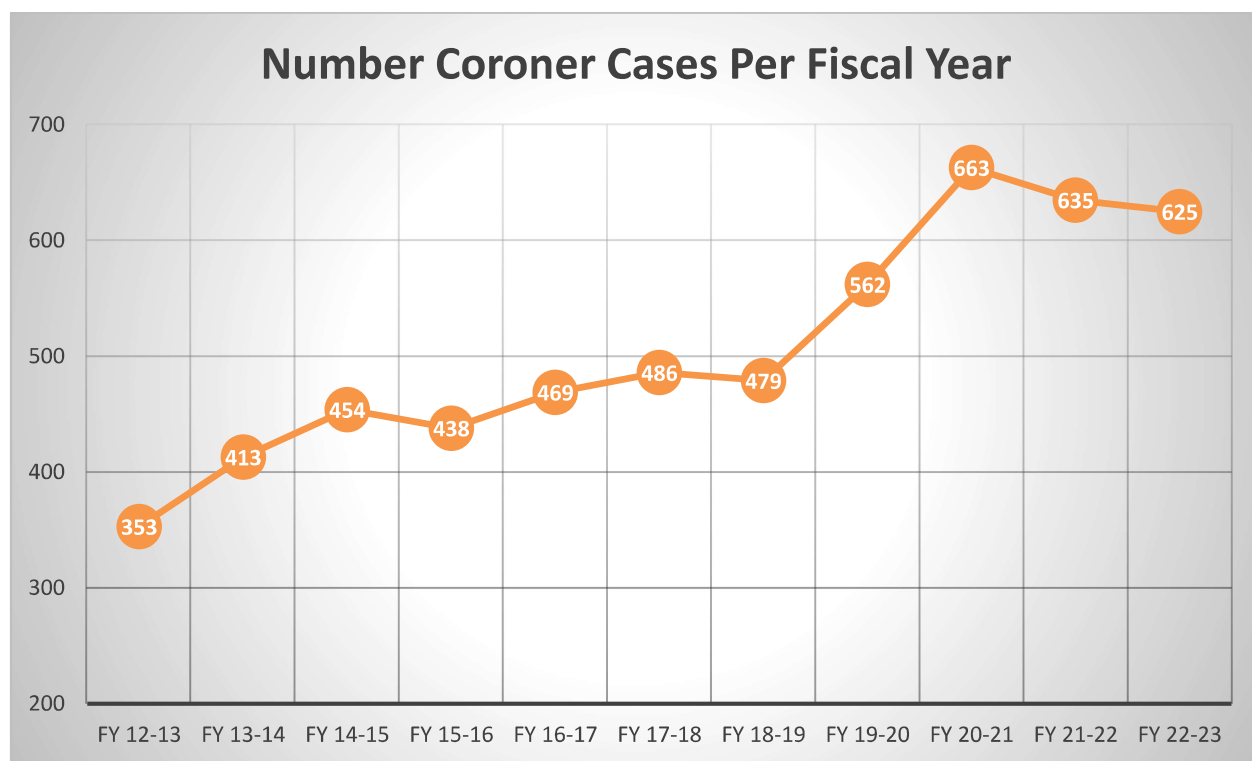
Deputy Coroners currently serve as temporary employees through Blue Harbor. Blue Harbor provides temporary employees Workers Compensation Benefits and some Mental Health Benefits as well. Deputy Coroners provide night-time investigative coverage.

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Baldwin County realized 2,337 deaths in FY 22-23 and 1216 of those deaths were reported to the BCCO. Of the 1216 deaths, 625 met the criteria for further investigation.

1216 deaths were reported to BCCO:

Hospice	555
Non-Coroner	36 *Home death under Doctor's care
Coroner	625



	# of Cases / Total Deaths	% of Deaths
FY 18-19	479/2067	= 24% of all deaths
FY 19-20	562/2235	= 26% of all deaths
FY 20-21	663/2689	= 25% of all deaths
FY 21-22	635/2400	= 27 % of all deaths
FY 22-23	625/2337	= 27% of all deaths

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Breakdown of Coroner Cases

Natural	429		68 %
Drug Deaths	75		12 %
Suicides	50	*6 Overdosed	8 %
Blunt Force	30	*MVA/ Fall from Height	5 %
Homicides	20		3 %
Drownings	8		1 %
Fire Deaths	2		<1 %
Undetermined	6		1 %
TOTAL	<u>625</u>		

Cases Sent for Autopsy: 225 (36 % of Coroner Cases)

Medical Record Review Only: 400 (64 % of Coroner Cases)

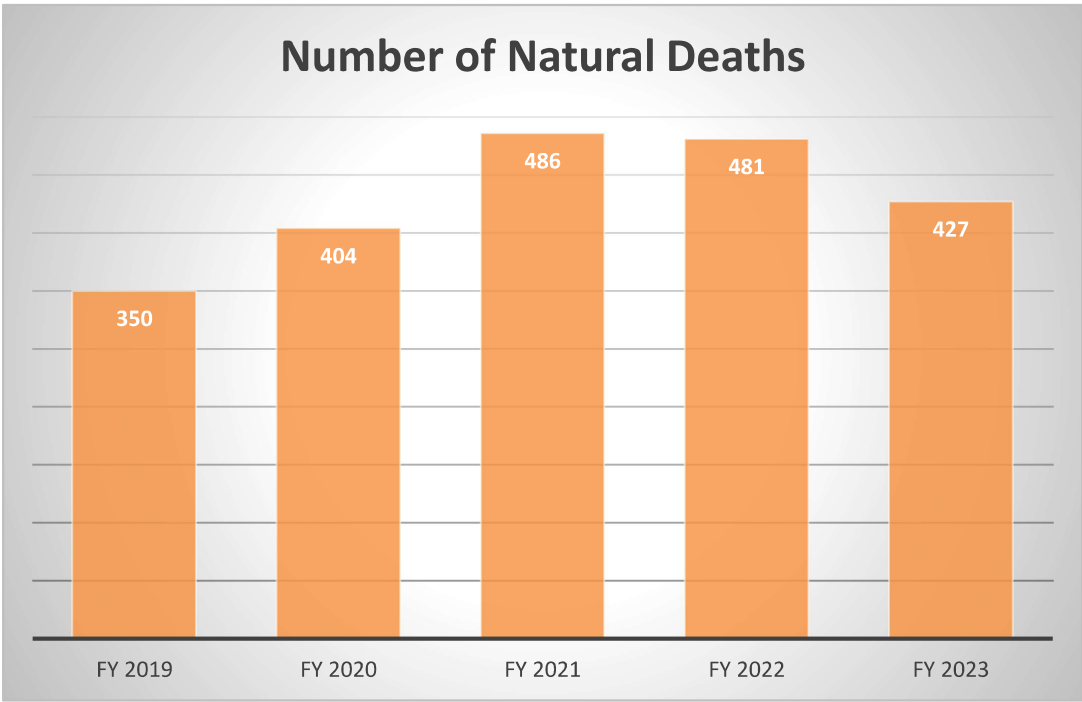
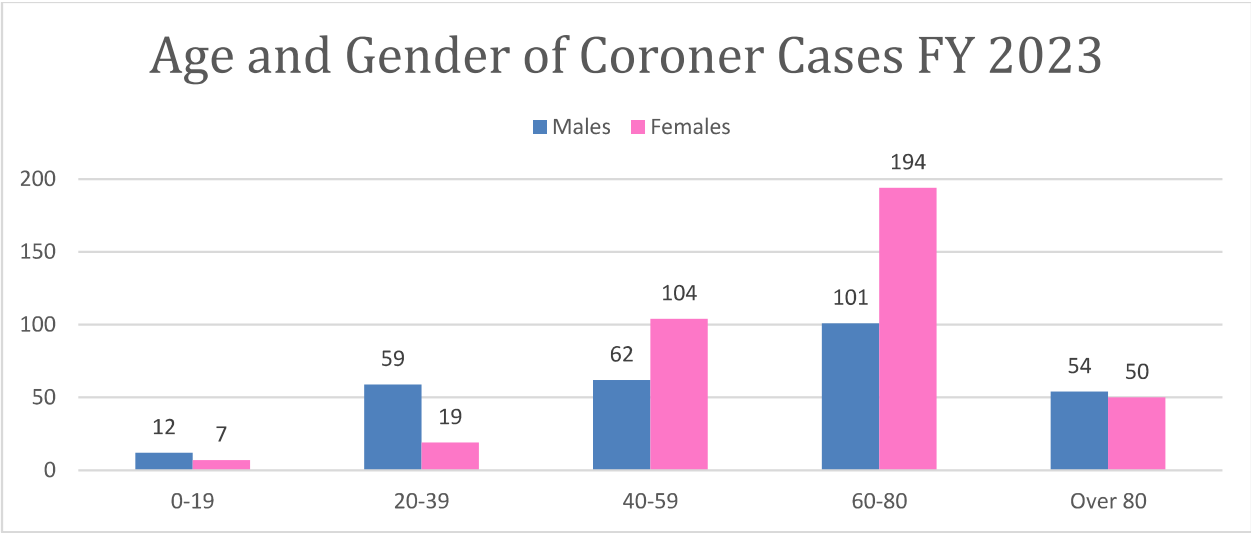
Gender: Males – 406 (64% of Coroner Cases)

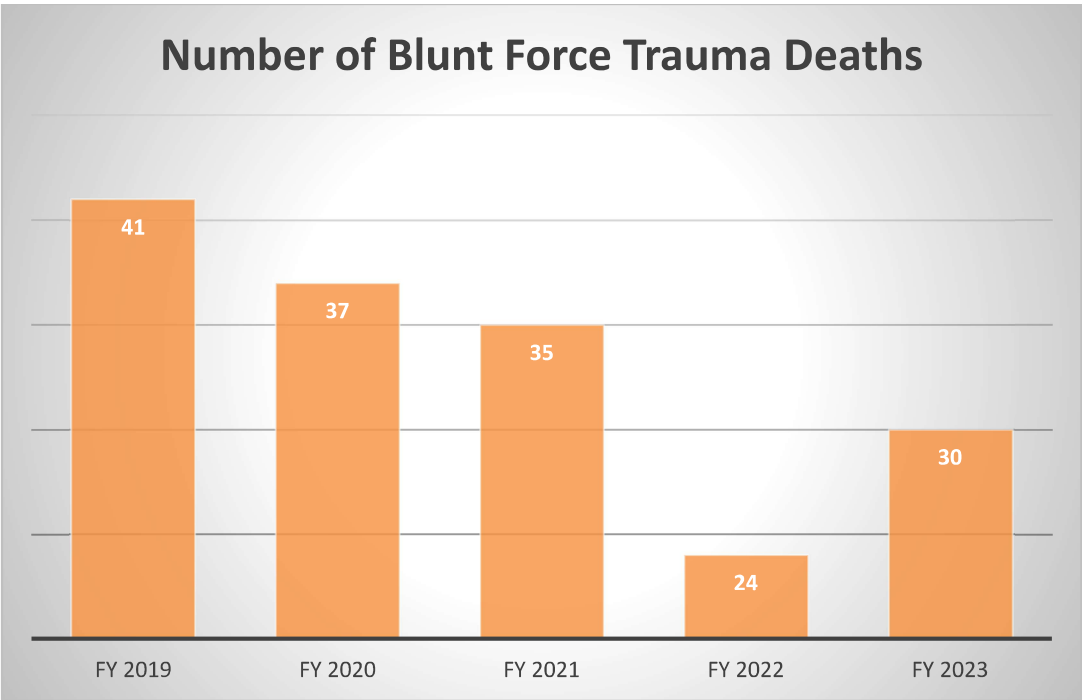
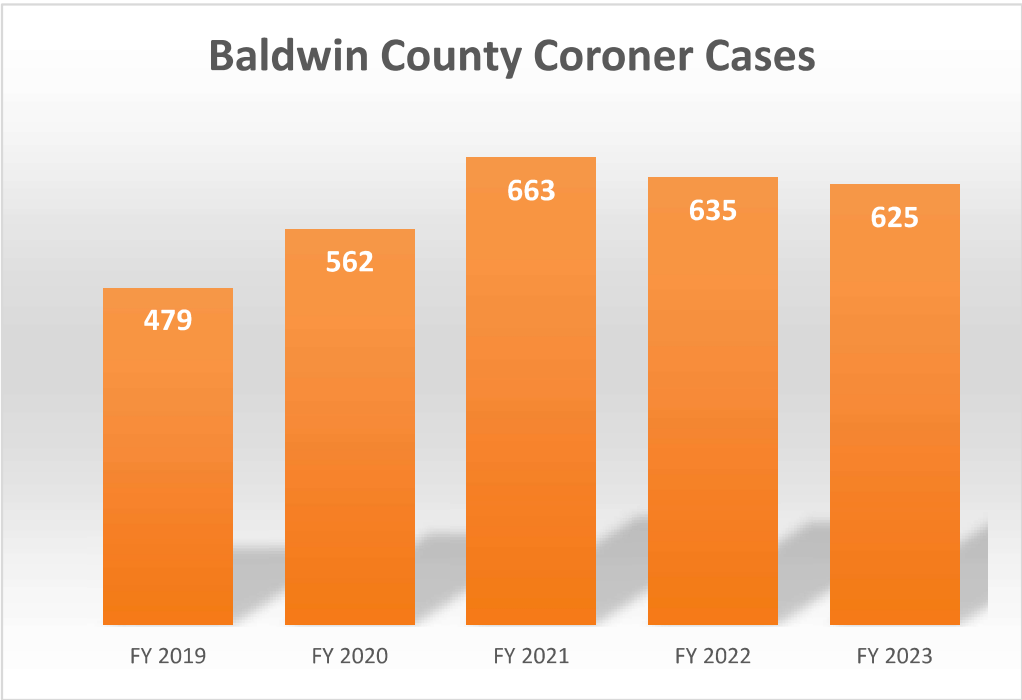
 Females – 229 (36% of Coroner Cases)

Race:

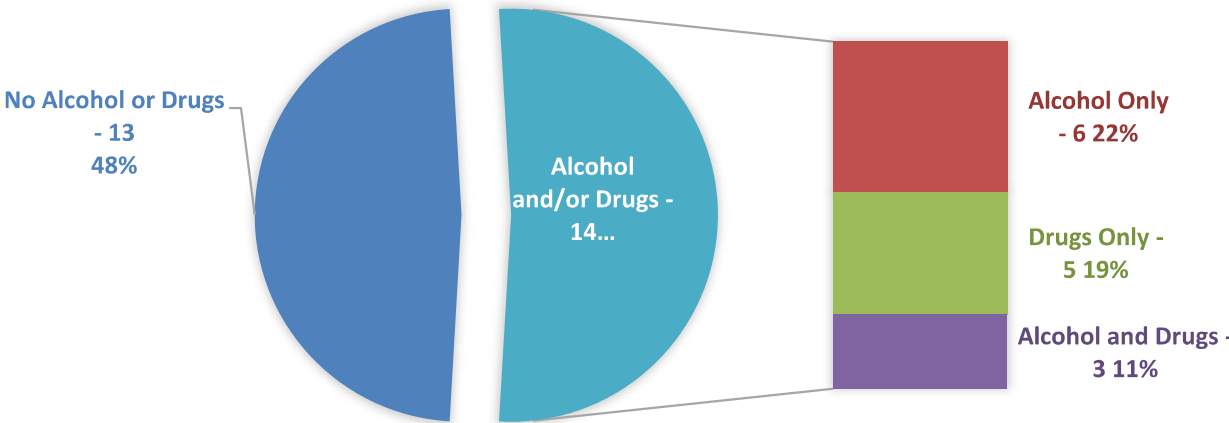
- Caucasian – 537 (85.92% of Coroner Cases)
- Black – 74 (11.84% of Coroner Cases)
- Hispanic – 8 (1.28% of Coroner Cases)
- Other – 6 (0.96% of Coroner Cases)

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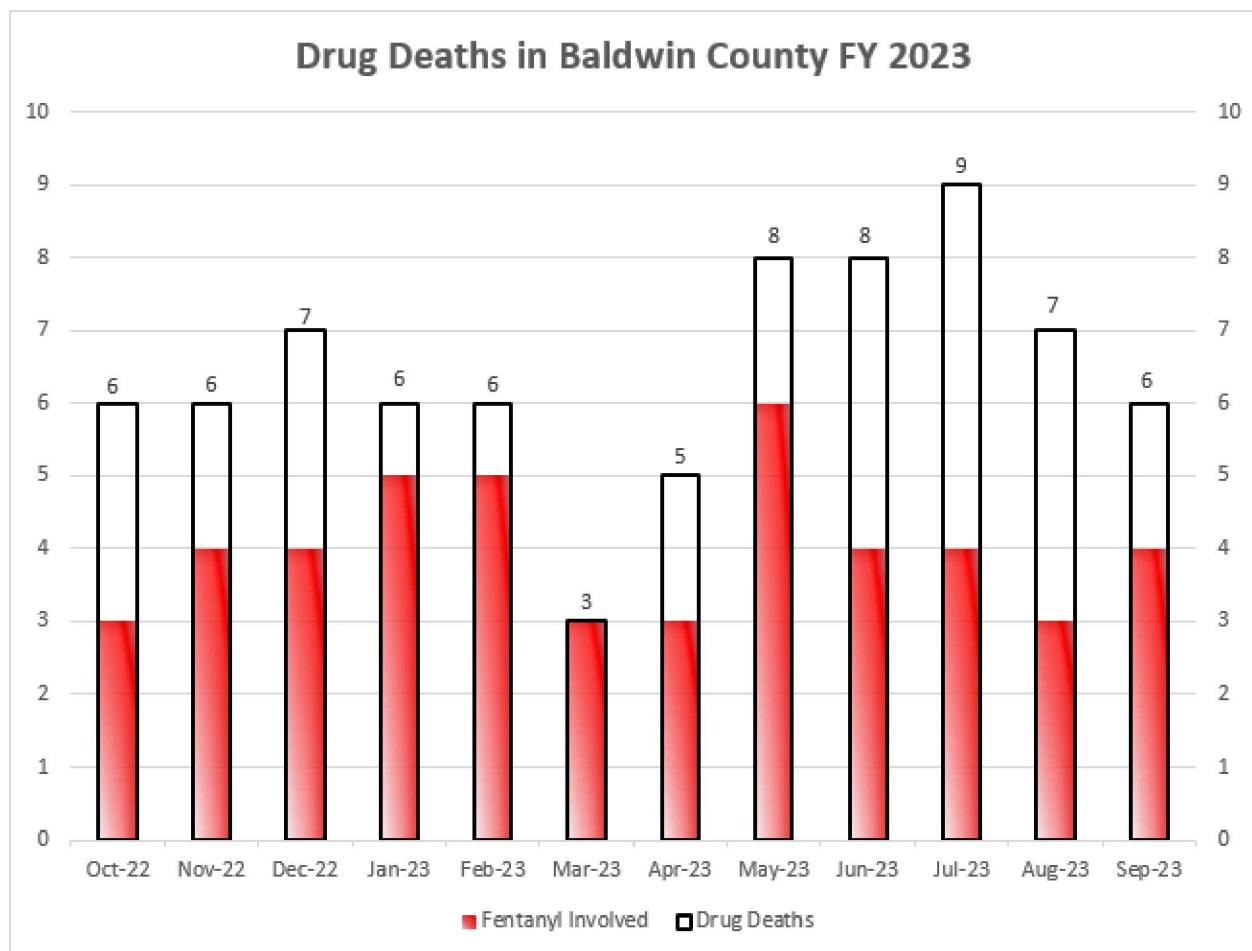
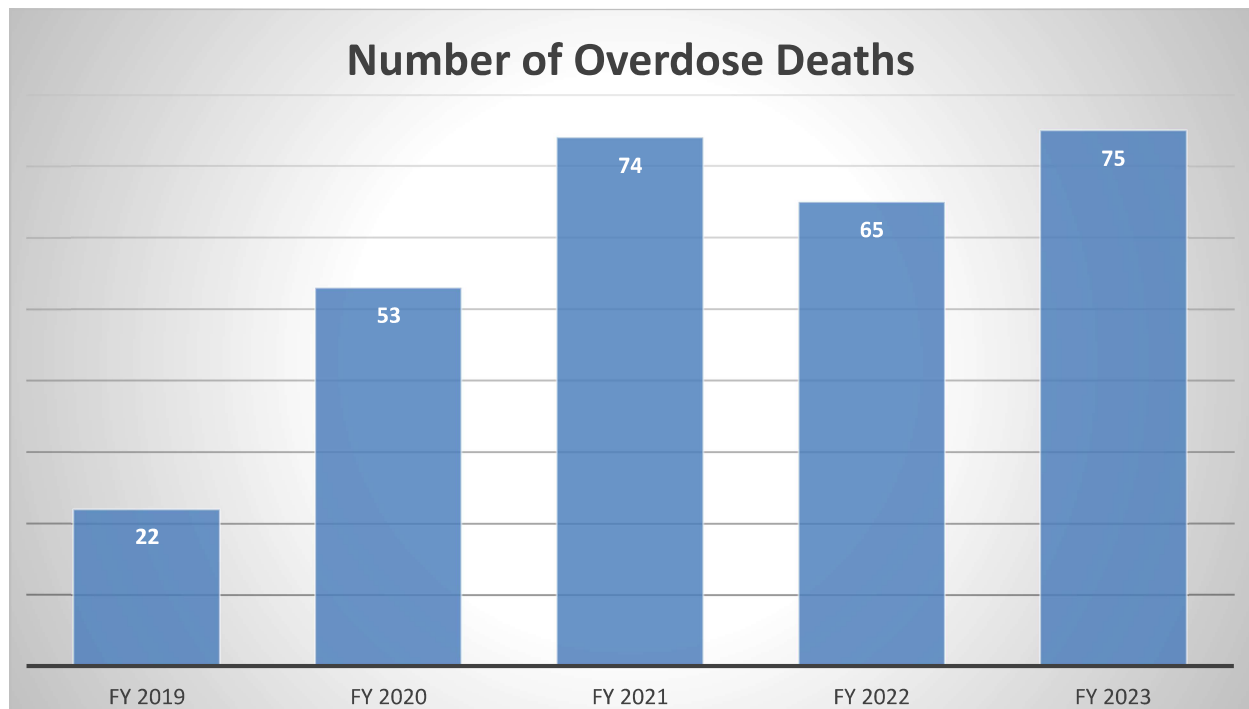




TOXICOLOGY IN TRANSPORTATION FATALITY CASES

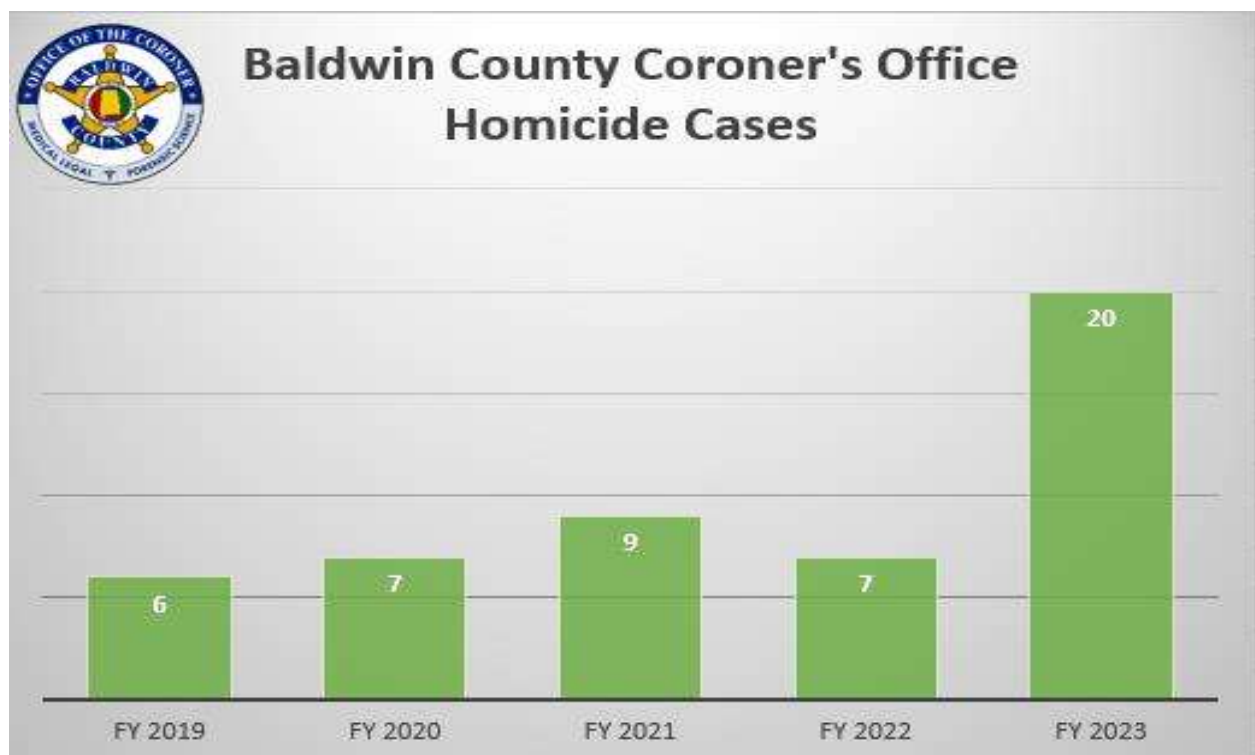
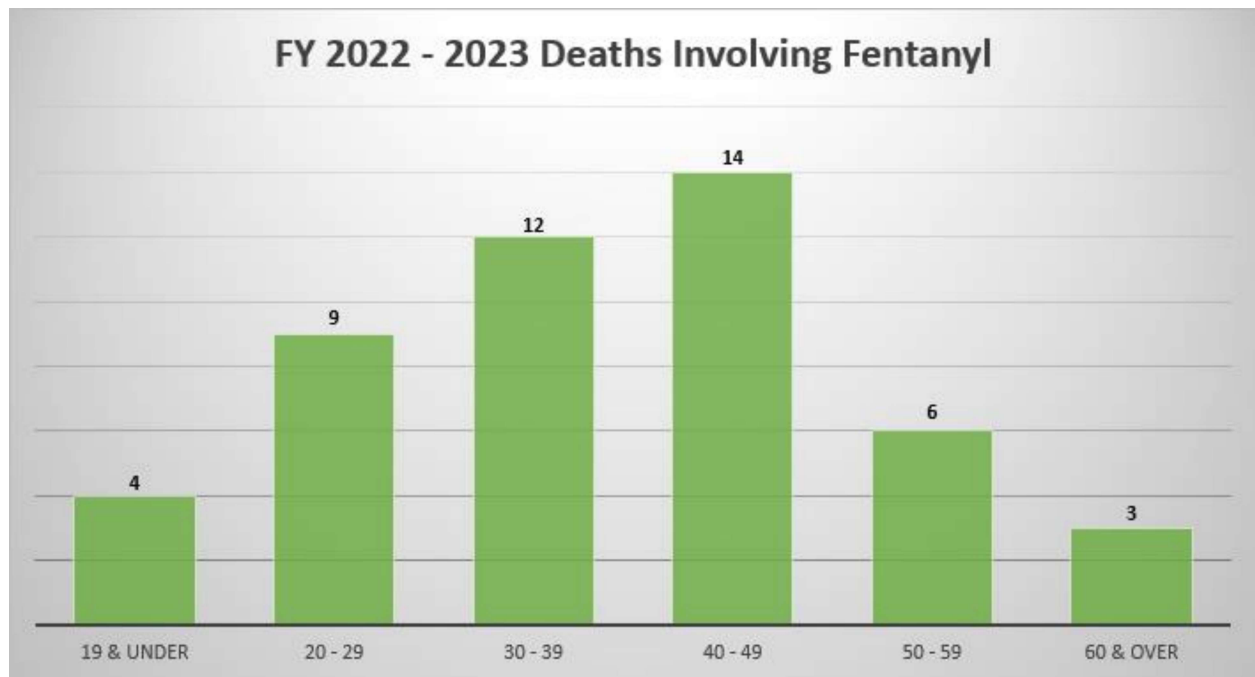


Automobile	23	*seatbelt use	
Other motorized vehicle	3	Used	10
Pedestrian	2	Not used	4
		Unknown	9



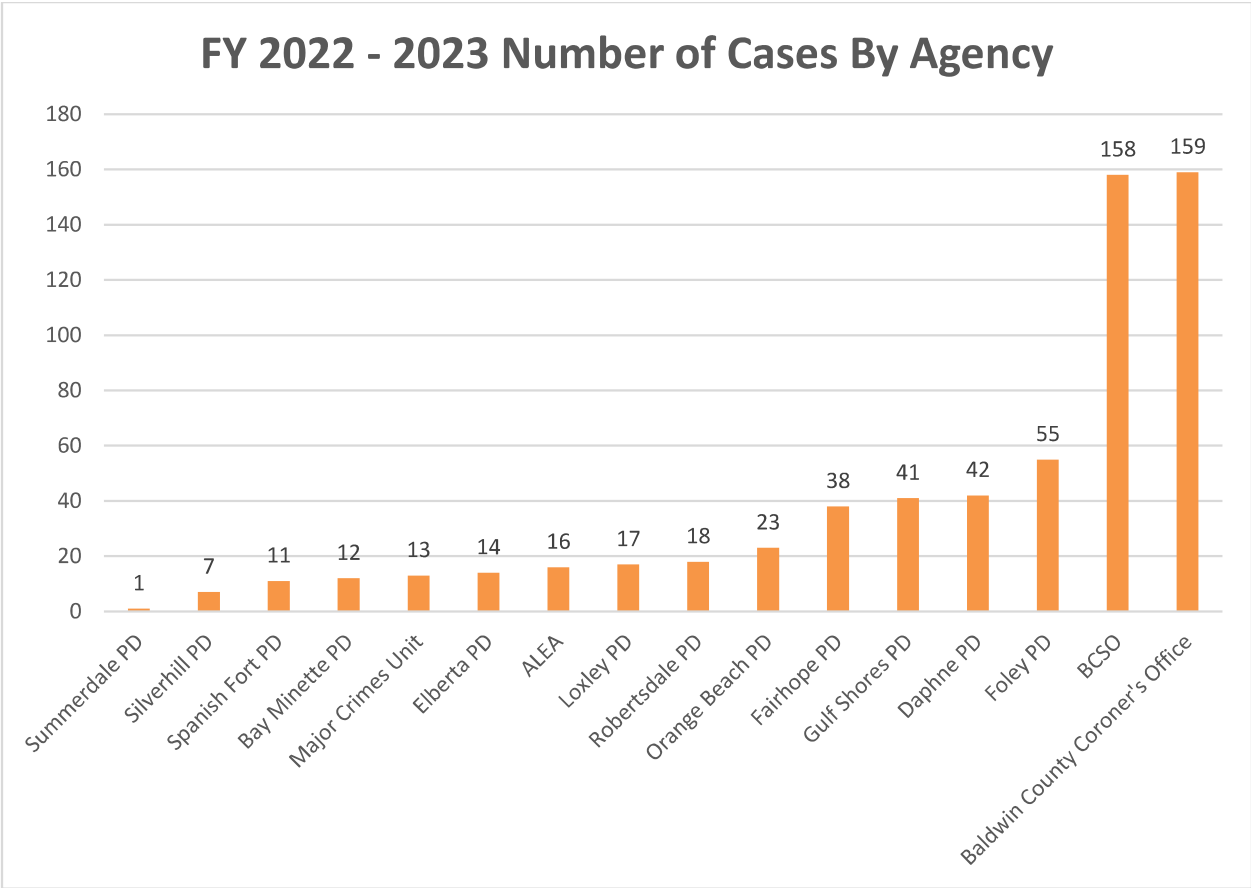
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Age of Fentanyl Deaths



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Death Investigation by Agency



The Baldwin County Coroner’s Office assisted 15 agencies with investigations of death that occurred in Baldwin County. The BCCO also handled 159 death investigations that had no Law Enforcement involvement.

The BCCO continued to maintain a 1-hour response time as well as a timely progression of Death Investigation, resolving most cases in less than 90 days. BCCO will continue to work with ADFS to expand forensic services to reduce the time of case resolution.

Continued assistance with Law Enforcement, the District Attorney, and the Alabama Department of Forensic Science (ADFS) office is essential for these cases to be adjudicated timely, accurately and without bias.

The BCCO was responsible for taking custody of 445 bodies, of which 225 were sent to ADFS, in Mobile, AL, for autopsy then released/returned to a funeral home of the family's choice.

The BCCO transported and housed 220 bodies for families from out of state or for cases needing a medical record review. 64 of the 625 cases were non-residents, approximately 10%.

Transportation costs for the 2022-23 FY was \$183,975.00, up from \$117,475.00 the previous year. The County was reimbursed 47% or \$85,700.00, from Cities and Towns that had deaths requiring transportation to the Morgue and/or to ADFS.

The Coroner's office responded to 244 death scenes for investigative purposes. Typically, when Coroners respond to a scene, an autopsy is warranted. Each case is different but often scene investigation will result in at least an external exam and toxicology.

This past year the Coroner's Office did have one unidentified homicide victim, bringing the total of Baldwin County's UHR's, unidentified human remains, to seven. The Coroner's office assisted the Council on Aging with 19 County Cremations, consisting of indigents and unclaimed individuals.

The BCCO assisted with 198 Tissue harvests in FY 2022-2023. The BCCO assists the organ recovery teams whenever it is feasible to honor the subject's or family wishes. We do, however, guard the public trust and should further investigation be warranted for pending charges, the request to procure may be denied by the Coroner's Office.

As we move into 2024, the BCCO will continue to maintain its response time of 1-hour county wide. Continue to advance the educational status of its investigators as well as the public as to the scope of work performed by the Office of the Coroner. Work closely with our community partners to assist families who are dealing with unexpected deaths and work to prevent common accidental deaths.

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The BCCO is committed to expansion of forensic services along with our state partners, to better serve Baldwin County Citizens. We will continue to assist the Baldwin County Narcotic Homicide unit by providing rapid drug testing for Drug related cases.

We will work diligently toward achieving the Strategic Goal put forth by the County Commission: **“For Baldwin County to experience a Coroner’s Office that is prepared to serve its functional population and is prepared for a Mass Casualty Incident”**.

I respectfully submit this FY 2023 report to the Commission, along with the attached spreadsheet.

In your Service,

Brian E Pierce DC, D-ABMDI

“As Baldwin County grows, so should our ability to serve it.”

Dr. Brian Pierce, DC, D-ABMDI
Coroner of Baldwin County Alabama
1-01-2024

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MONTHLY LOG													
Month/Year	Total Coroner Cases	Natural Deaths	Pending Deaths	Infectious Deaths - Accidents	Drug Deaths - Suicides	Drug Deaths - Accidents	Accidental Death	Violent Deaths - Suicide	Violent Deaths - Blunt Force Injuries	Violent Deaths - Homicide	Violent Deaths - Drownings	Violent Deaths - Fire Deaths	Cases sent for Autopsy
October 2022	56	38	0	0	0	6	1	6	5	0	0	0	23
November 2022	42	28	0	0	1	4	0	4	2	1	0	0	16
December 2022	55	40	0	0	1	6	0	5	3	0	0	0	20
January 2023	55	39	0	0	0	6	1	4	2	2	0	1	18
February 2023	50	36	0	0	0	6	0	2	1	5	0	0	16
March 2023	49	32	0	0	0	3	2	3	3	3	2	0	17
April 2023	36	23	0	0	0	5	0	4	1	1	1	1	16
May 2023	68	52	0	0	1	7	0	5	2	0	0	0	17
June 2023	53	29	0	0	2	6	2	4	4	3	3	0	27
July 2023	50	34	0	0	1	9	0	2	1	2	0	0	19
August 2023	60	44	0	0	0	7	2	3	1	1	1	0	17
September 2023	51	34	3	0	0	3	0	2	5	2	1	0	19
Totals	625	429	3	0	6	68	8	44	30	20	8	2	225