

# **Sacramento County 2022 Homeless Deaths Report**

January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022

203 homeless deaths

1,709 homeless deaths from 1/1/2002 – 12/31/2022

or 1 person every 5 days for the past 20 years

& 1 person every 2 days in 2022



***Día de Los Muertos - "Day of the Dead" - Altar, Loaves & Fishes, 2013***

***December, 2023***



# Dedication

*In memory of all our unhoused neighbors  
who have died in our community*



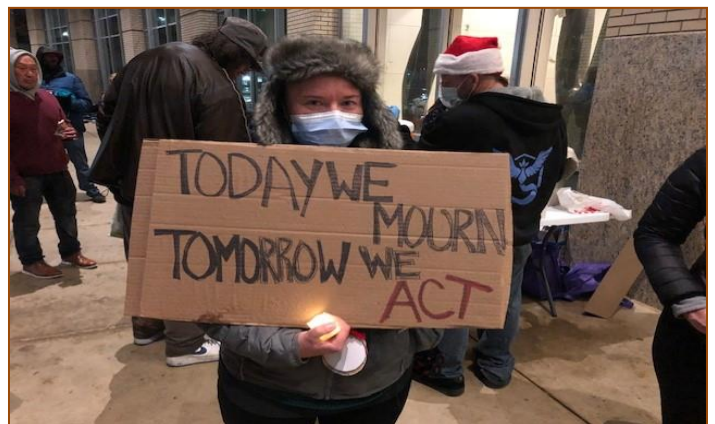
The Coroner documented 203 deaths of people experiencing homelessness in 2022

We continue to hope that this publication not only provides a proper and dignified memorial to their death, most in an untimely manner, but provides a catalyst for change and move away from criminalizing our unhoused neighbors and instead fuel the political and community will to find comprehensive solutions to end homelessness in our community and prevent the tragic deaths of our unhoused neighbors.

SRCEH will hold our 10th Annual Interfaith Homeless Memorial Candlelight Vigil at City Hall  
December 21, 2023 - 7 pm to 8 pm

*National Homeless Memorial Day – on or around December 21 annually - sponsored by the National Coalition for the Homeless, National Health Care for the Homeless Council and the National Consumer Advisory Board*

*December 21 is the longest and darkest night of the year. December 22 begins the march towards a new year, spring and the hope that we can take action to end the senseless and untimely deaths of our unhoused neighbors*

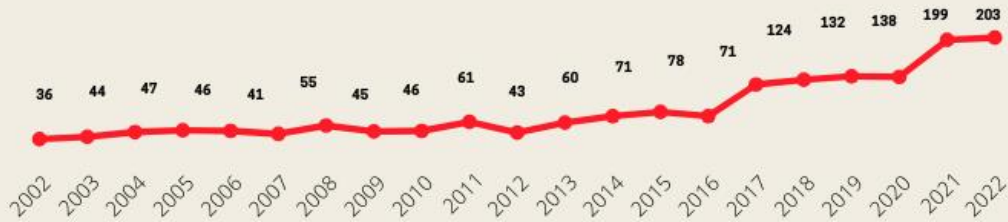




# SACRAMENTO REGIONAL COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS

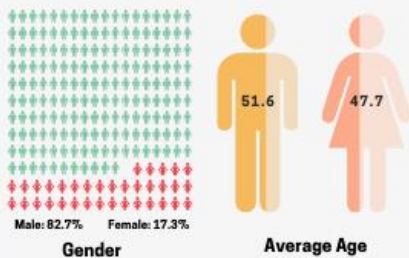
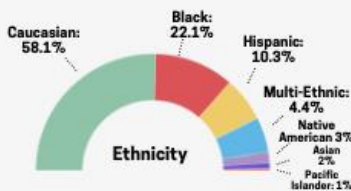
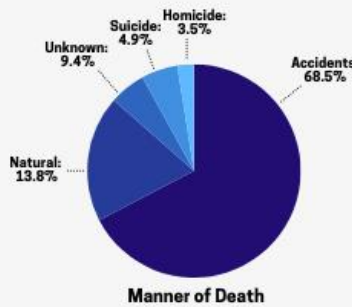
## 2022 Homeless Deaths Report

January 1, 2002 - December 31, 2022



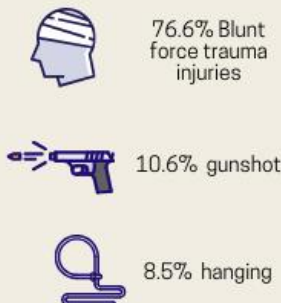
1,709 Homeless Deaths from 2002-2022

### Key Findings: 203 deaths in 2022



### Violence Against Homeless People

#### Of All Violent Deaths



#### Seasonal Distribution of Deaths

Winter is the deadliest season: 32% of homeless, with 1 death from Hypothermia

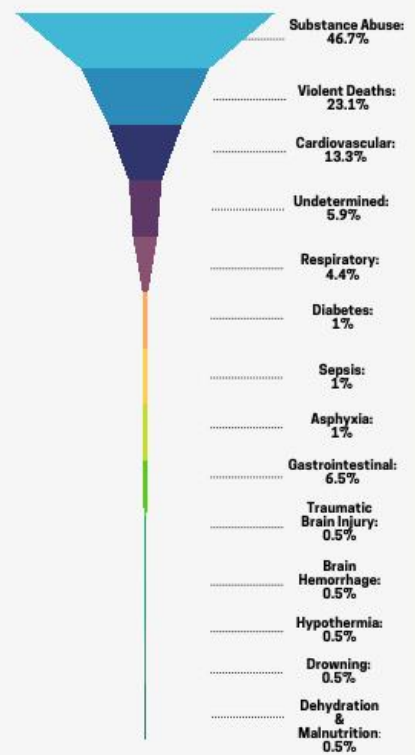
#### Methamphetamines

46.7% of all deaths were substance use, of which 22.6% were by Meth

#### Systemic Racism

Homeless people of color comprised 48.3% of homeless deaths

### Leading Causes of Death



## II. FINDINGS

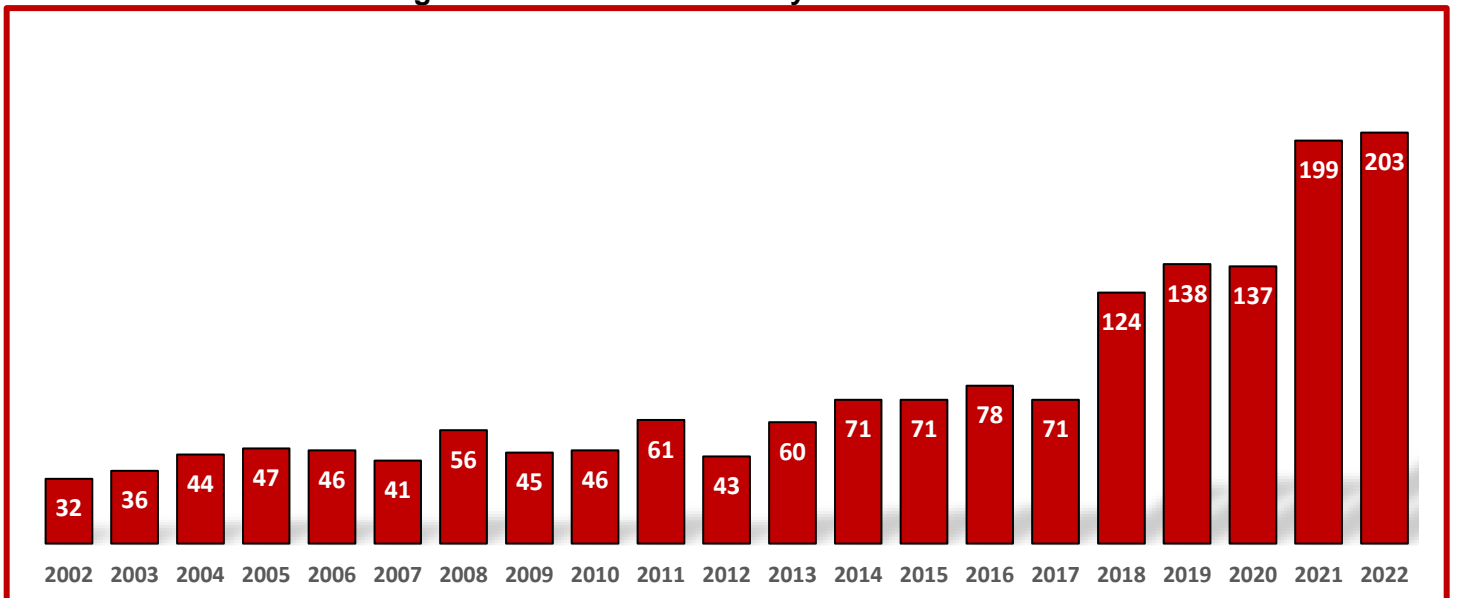
**203 Homeless Deaths in 2023**  
**1 death every 5 days for 20 years and**  
**1 death every 2 days in 2022**

There were **203** Coroner reported deaths of homeless people [closed cases] in 2022. See Table 1 below for the number of deaths by year and Figure 1 for a year-by-year graph.

**Table 1: Number of Homeless Deaths by Year: 2002 - 2022**

Year	Number of Deaths	Year	Number of Deaths
2002	32	2013	60
2003	36	2014	71
2004	44	2015	78
2005	47	2016	71
2006	46	2017	124
2007	41	2018	132
2008	55	2019	138
2009	45	2020	137
2010	46	2021	199
2011	61	2022	203
2012	43		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1,709</b>

**Figure 1: Homeless Deaths by Year: 2002 - 2022**

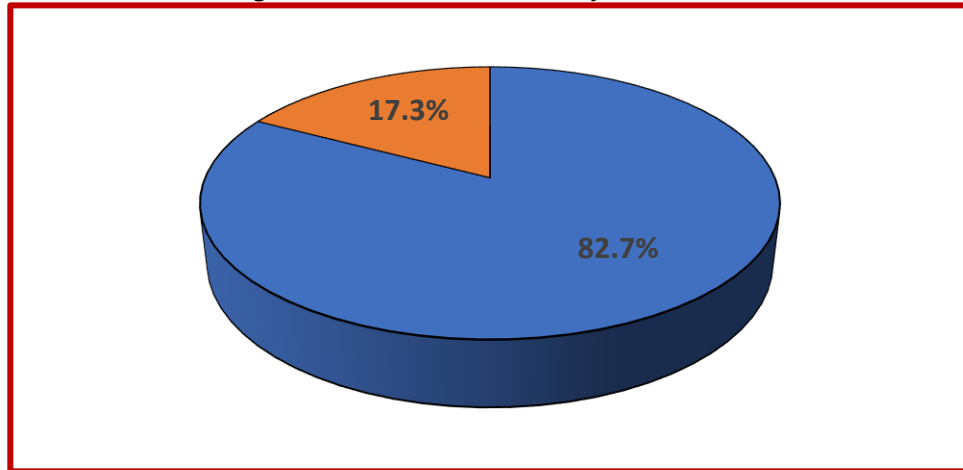


## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Gender

Overwhelmingly the percentage of homeless deaths were male, 168 homeless men, or 82.7%, while there were 35 homeless female deaths, or 17.3% [Figure 2]. These percentages are consistent with past homeless deaths reports.

Figure 2: Homeless Deaths by Gender: 2022



### Age

Figure 3 shows the age range of the homeless deaths by age category by gender. Overall, homeless women died at an earlier age than homeless men, with about 40% dying between the ages of 30-39. 65.8% of homeless men died age 50 or older compared to only 42.9% of homeless women.

Figure 3: Homeless Deaths by Age Category and Gender: 2022

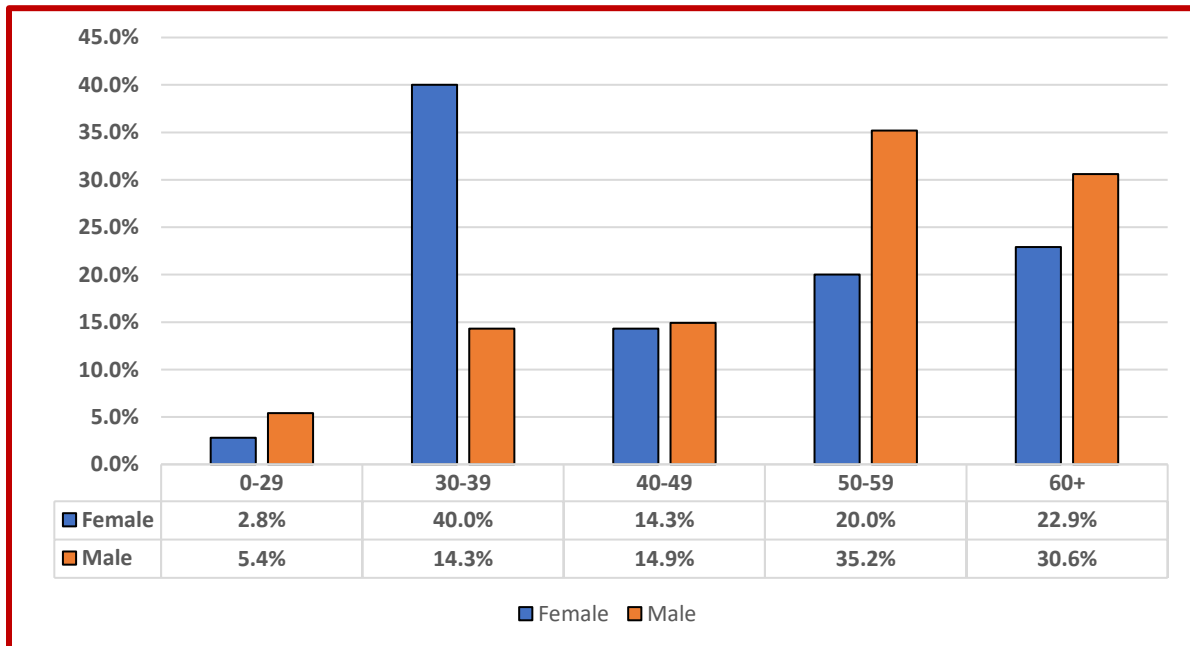


Table 2 indicates the average age of homeless deaths by gender. In 2022 the average age of homeless women was 47.7 years while for homeless was 51.6 years old.

**Table 2: Average age of deaths by gender: 2022**

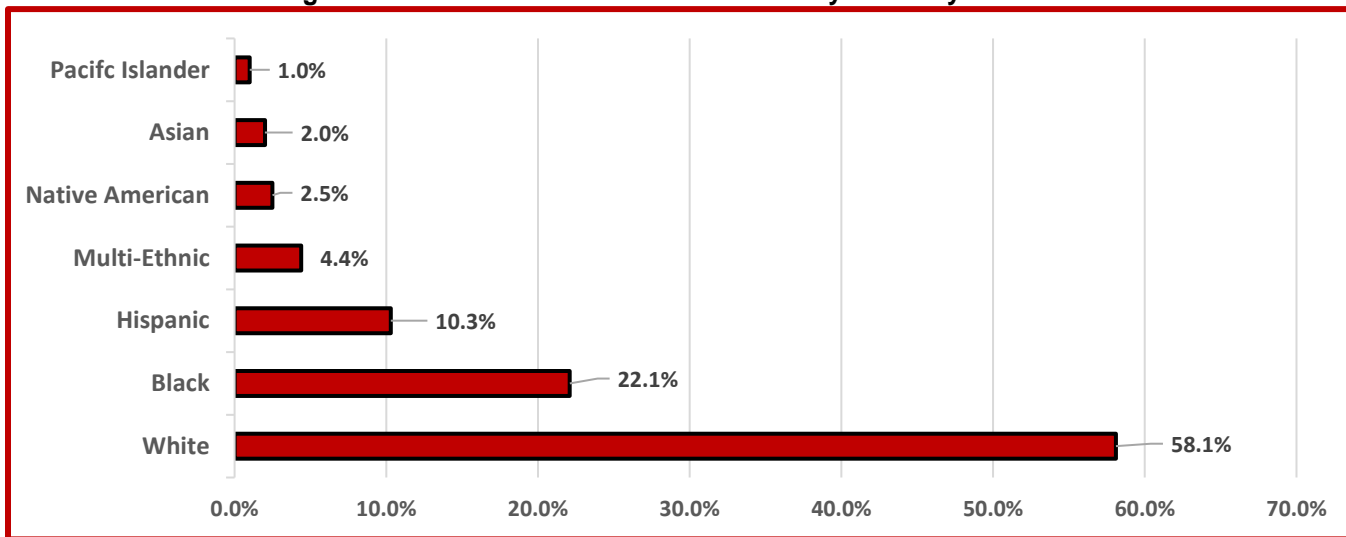
GENDER	AGE			
	Minimum	Maximum	Average	N
Female	28	73	47.7	35
Male	18	81	51.6	168

**Homeless Life Expectancy: Life cut short by an average 37%**  
 Using the 2022 national life expectancy average of 79 years old [77 for men and 81 for women], homeless people's lives in Sacramento are cut short by an average of 37% - 33% for homeless men and 41% for homeless women

**Ethnicity**

Figure 4 shows the ethnic distribution of homeless deaths 2022. 58.1% were Caucasian; and 41.9% were people of color – 22.1% Black; 10.3% Hispanic; 4.4% multi-ethnic; 2.5% Native American; 2% Asian and 1% Pacific Islander. Table 3 below indicates the ethnic distribution of homeless deaths in 2022.

**Figure 4: Distribution of Homeless Deaths by Ethnicity: 2022**



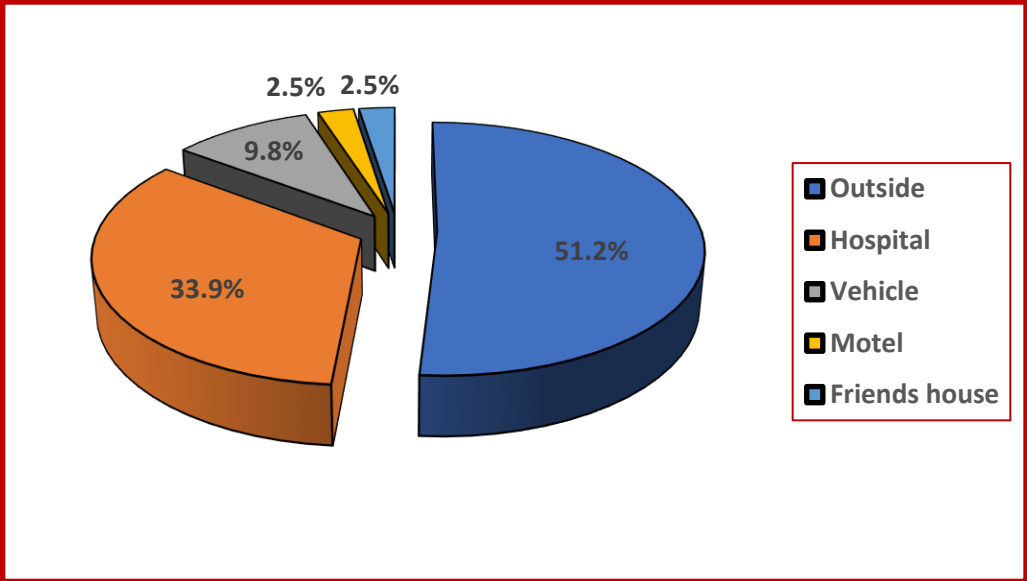
**Key findings:**

- In 2022, consistent with past years reports: 41.9% of people experiencing homelessness are people of color with Black, and Native American people experiencing homelessness being over-represented in the deaths of people experiencing homelessness compared to the general population in the County and City

## Location of Homeless Deaths

As Figure 5 below indicates, more than half of people experiencing homelessness died outdoors [51.2% – on the sidewalk, in a field etc.]. A third [33.9%] passed away in a local hospital; while 9.8% died in a vehicle; 2.5% passed away in a motel; 2.5% died at a friend’s home.

**Figure 5: Location of Homeless Deaths: 2022**



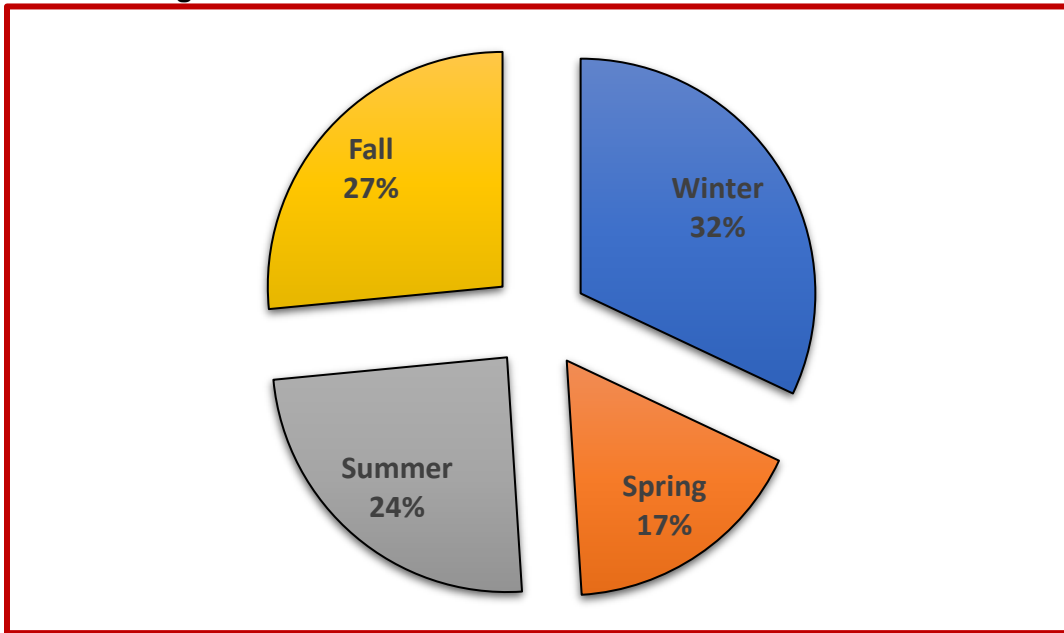
## Season of Year: Homeless Deaths

Table 3 below indicates the number of homeless deaths by month in 2022 while Figure 2 show the seasonal distribution of homeless deaths in 2022

**Table 3: Deaths by Month: 2022**

Month	Number of Deaths	% Total
January	15	7.4%
February	19	9.3%
March	11	5.4%
April	16	7.8%
May	7	3.4%
June	17	8.4%
July	8	3.9%
August	24	11.8%
September	14	6.9%
October	25	12.3%
November	17	8.4%
December	30	14.8%

**Figure 6: Seasonal Distribution of Homeless Deaths: 2022**



**Key point:**

Winter is the deadliest month with 32% of the deaths, followed by Fall with 27% of the deaths – thus the coldest months accounted for 59% of the 203 deaths of people experiencing homelessness in 2022



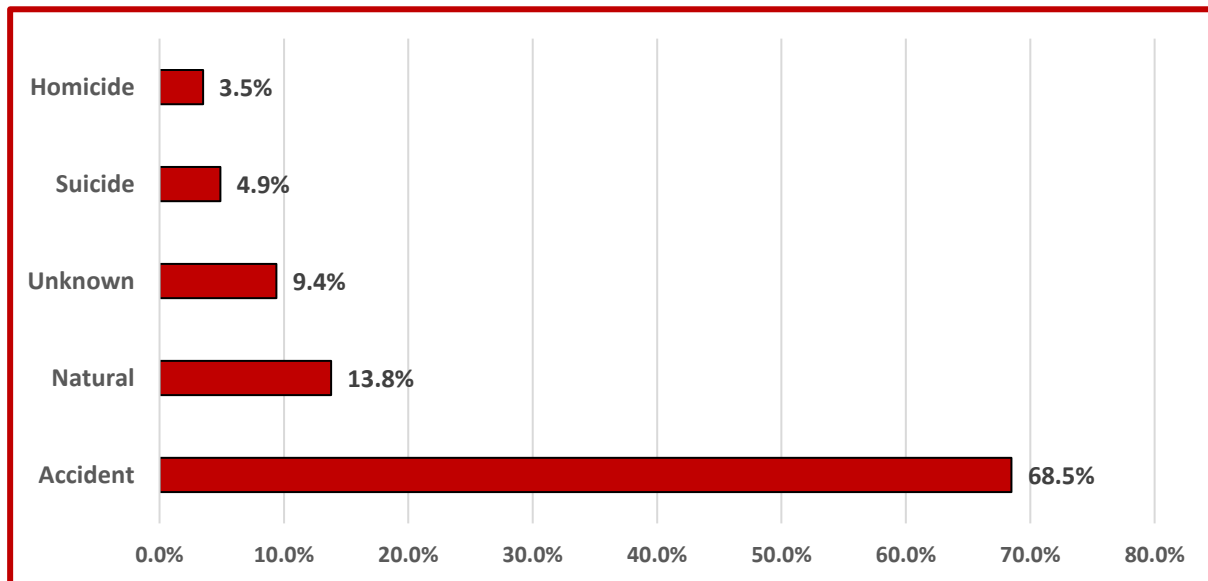
## MANNER AND CAUSES OF DEATH

### MANNER OF DEATH

The manner of death is the category of death indicated on the death certificate, which includes the following five categories: *Natural, Accident [which include substance use disorders deaths/overdose], Suicide, Homicide, and Unknown.*

As Figure 7 shows, only 13.8% of the homeless deaths are natural, with 9.4% undetermined, leaving 76.8% of the deaths to Accidents [68.5%], Suicides [4.9%] and Homicides [3.5%].

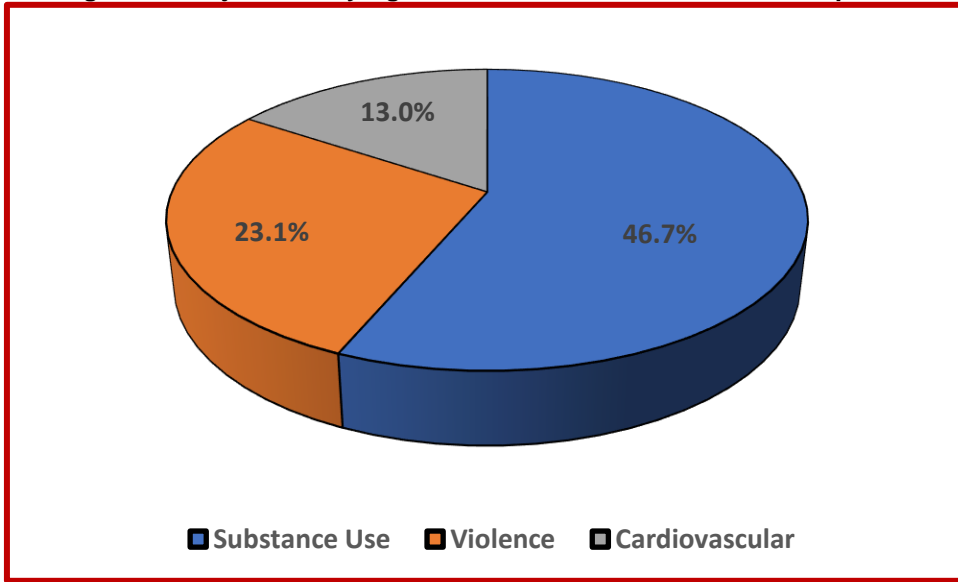
**Figure 7: Manner of Death: 2022**



## MAJOR UNDERLYING CAUSES OF DEATH

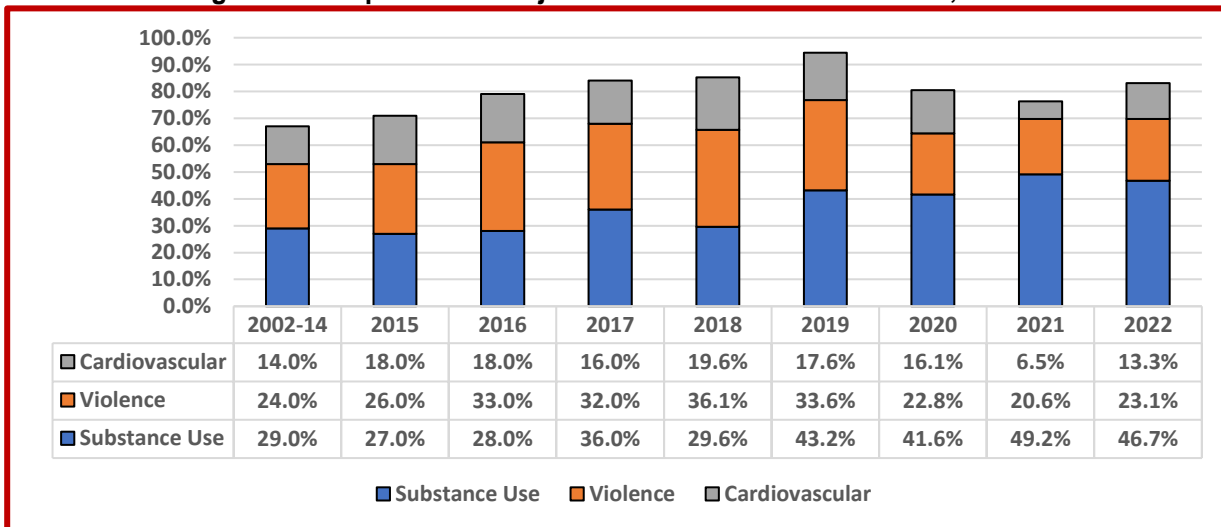
Figure 8 details the 3 major underlying causes of death of people experiencing homelessness in 2022. Substance use disorder was the leading cause [46.7%], followed by violent deaths at 23.1% [blunt force head injury; stabbings gunshots and hangings] followed by cardiovascular disease at 13%. These three major causes accounted for 82.8% of all the deaths of people experiencing homelessness in 2022. Figure 8 compares the top three causes of death in 2022 to previous years.

**Figure 8: Major Underlying Causes of Death of Homeless People: 2022**



9

**Figure 8: Comparison of major causes of death from 2002-14; 2015 – 2022**



**Key Points:**

- In 2022, substance use disorder deaths remained the number one cause of death accounting for 46.7% of all homeless deaths;
- Violent deaths increased slightly in 2022 to 23.1% of all homeless deaths and remains the 2<sup>nd</sup> major cause of death for people experiencing homelessness
- Cardiovascular deaths declined from 2018-2021 to only 6.5% in 2021, and then increased dramatically to 13.3% in 2022

## All Causes of Death in 2022

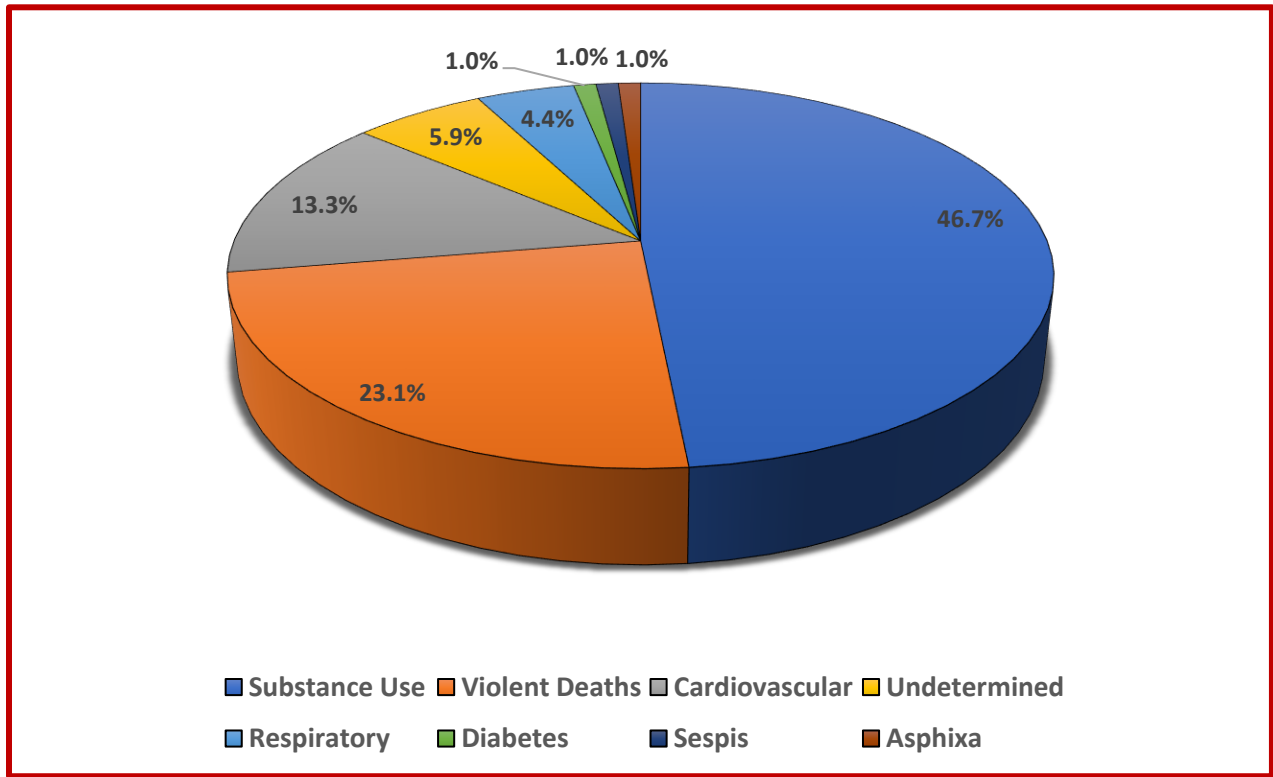
Table 4 below shows all causes of death for people experiencing homelessness in 2022.

**Table 4: All Causes of homeless deaths in 2022**

Causes of Death	# of Homeless Number of Deaths in 2022	% of Total Homeless Deaths in 2022
<b><i>Substance use disorders: Total 95</i></b>		<b>46.7%</b>
Meth	46	22.6%
Mixed Drugs	26	12.8%
Meth & Fentanyl	15	7.4%
Alcohol	4	1.9%
Fentanyl	4	1.9%
<b><i>Violent Deaths: Total 47</i></b>		<b>23.1%</b>
Blunt Force Head Injuries	36	17.7%
Gunshots	5	2.7%
Hangings	4	1.9%
Stabbings	2	1%
Cardiovascular	27	13.3%
Undetermined	12	5.9%
Respiratory – including 3 from COVID 9	9	4.4%
Diabetes	2	1%
Sepsis	2	1%
Asphyxia	2	1%
Gastrointestinal	2	.5%
Traumatic Brain Injury [TBI]	1	.5%
Brain hemorrhage	1	.5%
Hypothermia	1	.5%
Drowning	1	.5%
Dehydration & Malnutrition	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 9 below shows all the causes of death of people experiencing homelessness in 2022 at 1% of the total or greater. [Note: the remaining causes of death, TBI, brain hemorrhage, hypothermia, drowning and dehydration combined with malnutrition each accounted for .5% of the total deaths].

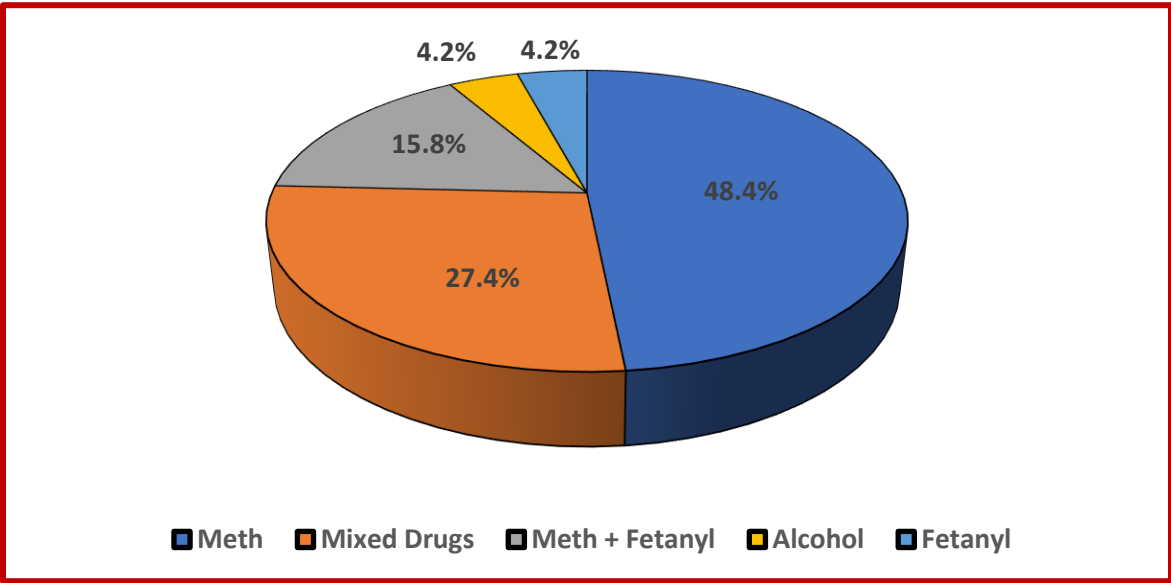
**Figure 9: All Causes of Homeless Deaths 1% or Greater: 2022**



## Substance Use Disorder Deaths

Figure 10 shows the types of substances that caused the deaths of homeless women and men with methamphetamines [meth] being the leading drug, causing 44.6% of the substance use disorder related deaths in mid- 2022.

**Figure 10: Substance use disorder deaths: 2022**



### Rise & Slight Decline of Methamphetamines in Homeless Deaths

Table 5 documents the dramatic rise in homeless deaths due to methamphetamine [Meth] intoxication from 2002-2012 with a slight decline to 46.7% from 49.2% of the percentage of meth deaths of all alcohol and other drugs deaths [AOD].

**Table 5: Continued Rise of Meth in Homeless Deaths: 2002 – Mid-2022**

	# of homeless deaths	# and % of AOD Homeless deaths #      %	# of Meth-involved deaths	% of Meth Deaths of all AOD deaths	% Meth-involved deaths of total deaths
2002 -2014	627	175      28%	25	14.3%	4%
2015	78	21      27%	11	52%	14%
2016	71	20      28%	8	40%	11%
2017	124	45      36%	27	60%	21.8%
2018	132	32      24%	28	87.5%	21.2%
2019	138	54      34%	43	79.6%	31.2%
2020	137	57      41.6%	30	52.6%	21.9%
2021	199	98      49.2%	75	76.5%	37.7%
2022	203	95      46.7%	46	48.4%	37.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,709</b>	<b>597      34.9%</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>49.1%</b>	<b>17.2%</b>

**Key Points:**

- Homeless deaths by Alcohol and Drugs [AOD] showed a slight decline in 2022 to 46.7% –a slight decrease of 2.5%, but still 1.7 times higher than the 2021– 2014 period
- While the percentage of Meth deaths of all AOD deaths was 48.4%, this is a significant decline of 28.1% from 2021. Hopefully this is a sign that the “Let’s Talk Meth” campaign launched in 2020 and the Safer Sacramento launched in 2023 are reaching people experiencing homelessness

**Violent Causes of Death**

Figure 11 indicates that of the 47 violent deaths of homeless people in 2022, 76.6% were blunt force injuries [hit over the head; hit by a train or automobile]; while 10.6% of the deaths were gunshot wounds; 8.5% hangings and 4.2% stabbings.

**Figure 11: Violent Causes of Death: 2022**

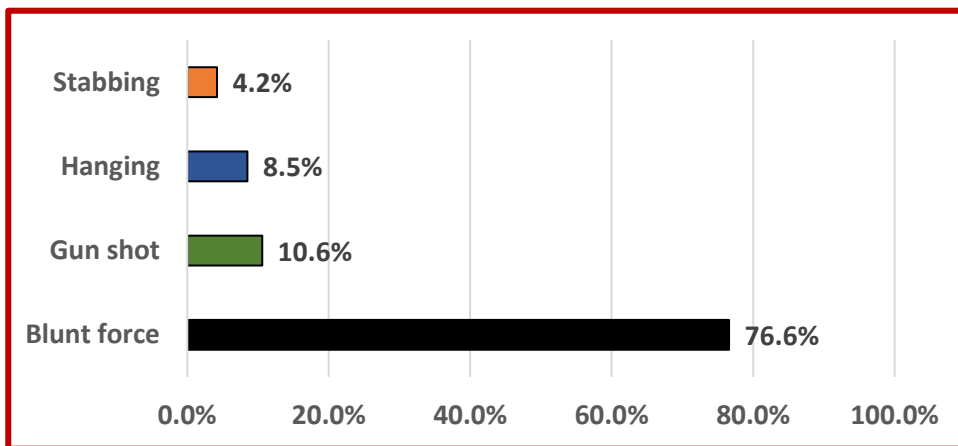
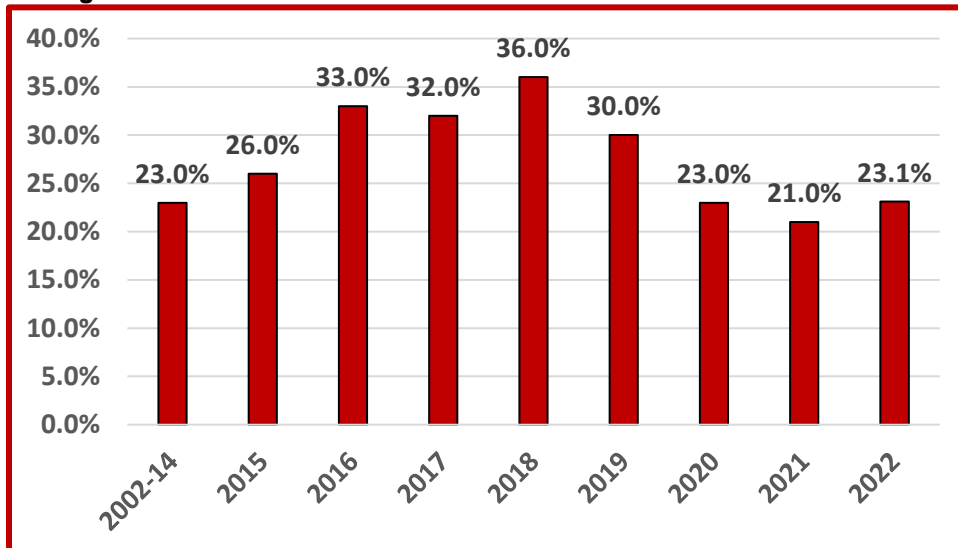


Figure 12 indicates the increase from 2002 – 2014 of violent homeless deaths from 23% to a four-year average [2016 – 2019] of 33% and declining to 23% in 2020 and declined slightly in 2021 to 21% of all homeless deaths, the lowest percentage in 20 years and increased slightly to 23.1% in 2022.

**Figure 12: Percent Violent homeless deaths of Total Deaths 2002 to 2022**



### III. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	FINDINGS
	<p>City, County and surrounding cities along with a diverse set of stakeholders in the community create a comprehensive regional plan to end and prevent homelessness in 2023</p>	<p>1,709 homeless deaths over 20 years</p> <p>70%+ of people experiencing homelessness are outside due to lack of shelter and affordable housing</p>
	<p>The City &amp; County need to declare that Housing is A Human Right</p> <p>The City &amp; County budgets reflect that affordable housing is a top priority in their 2023 – 24 budgets including increasing their respective affordable housing trust fund budgets to \$100 million each on an annual basis</p>	<p>72% of our unhoused neighbors are outside due to lack of affordable housing and emergency shelter</p>
		
	<p>Implement Sacramento Steps Forward Racial Equity Committee's recommendations in <i>Action Plan: Findings and Recommendations from the CoC Racial Equity Committee, Summer 2021</i></p>	<p>Disproportionately 41.9% of the homeless people who died in 2022 were people of color</p>
	<p>Significantly expand the number of 24/7 Respite Centers – warming; cooling and clean air centers without weather activation criteria</p>	<p>In 2022, 59% of homeless deaths were in the winter and fall months of January and February</p>
	<p>Support Treatment on Demand</p> <p>Fund mental health/harm reduction outreach team to do street outreach to encampments</p>	<p>Of all alcohol and other drugs [AOD] deaths of homeless people in 2022 – 48% involved Meth</p>
	<p>The City &amp; County adopt a Trauma-Informed Approach to outreach and engagement efforts</p>	
	<p>The City &amp; County stop the continued criminalization of our unhoused neighbors through the passage of punitive ordinances in an effort to circumvent the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals ruling in <i>Martin v Boise</i> that ruled that efforts to criminalize people experiencing homelessness violates the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution</p>	<p>According to the 2022 Sacramento Point-In-Time Count, 40% of all unsheltered adults reported having to relocate their tents or vehicles due to requests from law enforcement.</p>

## METHODOLOGY & CREDITS

### Methodology:

This report is based on the report of deaths of people experiencing homelessness, closed cases only, between January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022 as reported by the Sacramento County Coroner's office.

The data in the Coroner's report included: Name; Date of death; Age; Ethnicity; Causes[s] of death [A,B,C,D]; Manner of death and location

Death Investigation is pursuant to the California Government Code Section 27491 for all deaths meeting the jurisdictional requirements (of Ca Gov. Code Sec 27491) occurring within Sacramento County. Death investigation included the following: Death Scene Investigation (when possible); Forensic Examination of remains (autopsy, external examination and or medical record review); Forensic Toxicology analysis when warranted/possible; Decedent Identification Confirmation; Follow-up investigation/Interviews with all relevant investigative parties/stakeholders (law enforcement, EMS, hospitals, reporting party, service providers, families, friends, coworkers, etc.); Decedent Record review (medical records, criminal records, work history records, military records, local/state/federal personal information database records all inclusive)

As part of the overall investigation the Coroner's office determines the decedent's address. The components included in this determination include the reporting party's information, death scene investigation, interviews of friends and family and witnesses, evidence found at autopsy that may confirm a homeless lifestyle and record checks.

### Data analysis:

Data analysis was performed by Bob Erlenbusch, Executive Director, SRCEH.

### Report and recommendations:

The report was written by Bob Erlenbusch, Executive Director, Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness [SRCEH].

Recommendations were made by the SRCEH Board of Directors.

### Credits

**Photo Credit:** The cover photo of the "Day of the Dead" Altar, Loaves & Fishes, 2013 was taken by Paula Lomazzi, Executive Director, Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee [SHOC]

**Database:** Thank you to Rosa Vega, Sacramento County Coroner, for providing SRCEH the database used for this analysis.

**Infographic Credit:** Infographic provided by Kai Erlenbusch.



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