

HENNEPIN COUNTY
MEDICAL EXAMINER
2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office

Proudly Serving Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties



Location and Hours

Main Office:

530 Chicago Avenue
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415
Phone: (612) 215-6300

Hours:

The Medical Examiner's Office operates 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
The business office is open to the public: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday
except for official Hennepin County holidays.

Body and Evidence Release Hours:

Evidence is released to the investigating law enforcement agency upon appointment.
Bodies may be released 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
Preferred body release times: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

www.hennepin.us/me

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LETTER FROM THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

Welcome to the 2016 Hennepin County Medical Examiner’s Office annual report. This report reflects a statistical breakdown of the total caseload of the three counties—Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott—which the Hennepin County Medical Examiner provides with forensic death investigation and autopsy services. The Hennepin County Medical Examiner also provides forensic autopsy services on a referral basis to counties throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin.

All physicians at the Hennepin County Medical Examiner’s Office are certified by the American Board of Pathology in Anatomical and Forensic Pathology. Other board certifications — Neuropathology and Clinical Pathology — are also represented among the physician staff. Death investigators are certified by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators.

The Hennepin County Medical Examiner’s Office is accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners and administers an American College of Graduate Medical Education approved fellowship in forensic pathology.

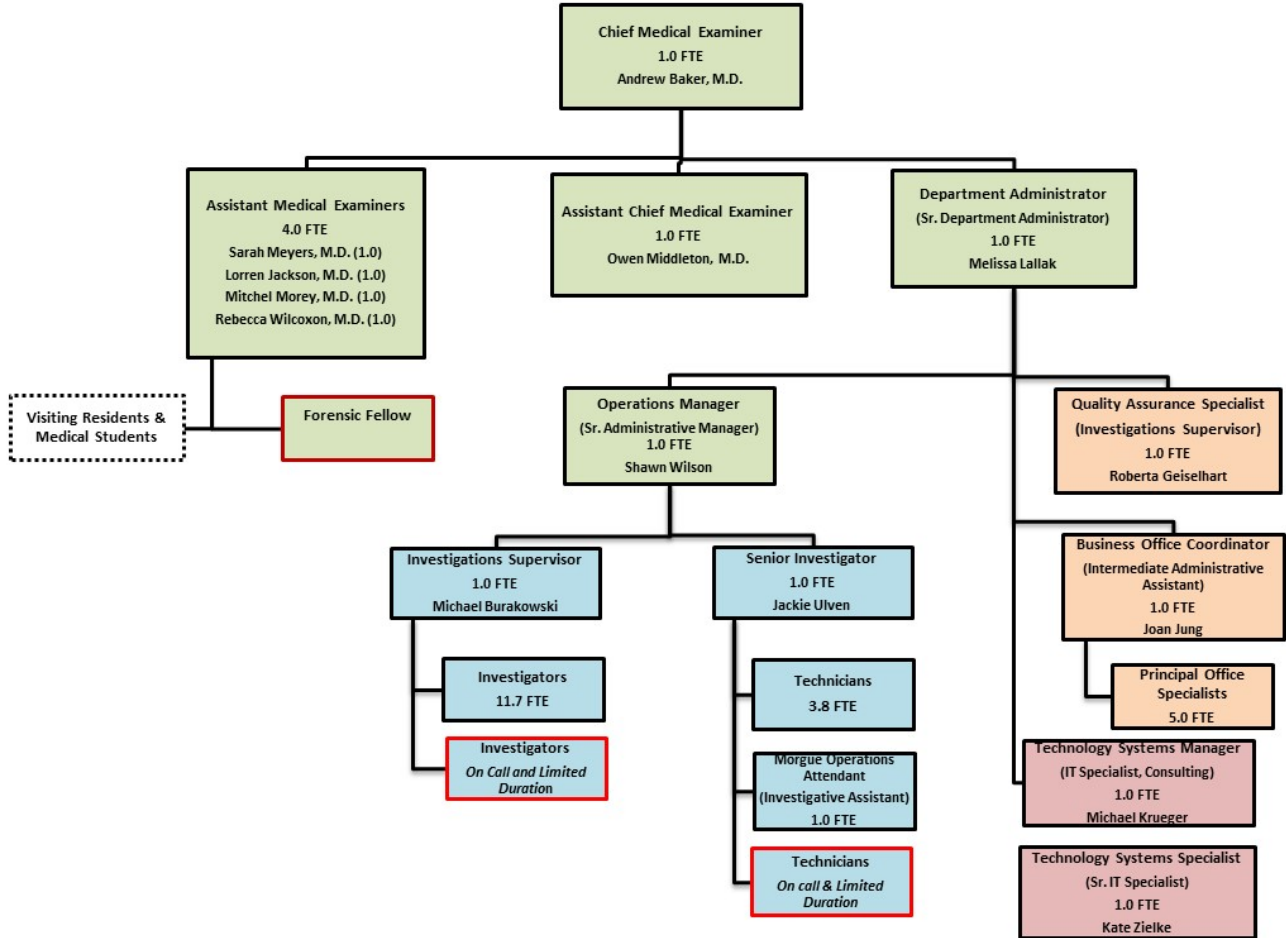
The year 2016 was a year of preparation for great things to come. Strategic planning was completed for the office with an updated mission and vision for 2017-2021. We received \$2.68 million in Minnesota state bonding funds for planning documents for a new Regional Medical Examiner’s Facility with our partners, Dakota and Scott Counties. Finally, we completed the pre-design planning process to prepare us for the next steps in our facility planning journey.

Our statistics are brought forth in this report for 2016. Respectfully,

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

Andrew Baker, MD
Chief Medical Examiner

2016 Organizational Chart and Mission Vision Values



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.

Hennepin County

Medical Examiner
Health

2016 BUDGET
Adopted

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 professional and partnering agencies through training and education to improve health, safety, and quality of life.

Department Description:

The Medical Examiner is responsible for investigation of all known or suspected homicides, suicides, accidental deaths, drug related deaths, medically unattended deaths, and deaths which might constitute a threat to public health and safety that occur under the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's jurisdiction. This jurisdiction includes the counties of Hennepin, Dakota and Scott. The office is also required to investigate all deaths under this jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner who are to be cremated. In addition, the Medical Examiner assists families, law enforcement agencies, and the legal system by determining a scientifically unbiased and logical cause and manner of death. Furthermore, the Medical Examiner's Office provides autopsy and consultation services to several Minnesota and Wisconsin counties on a referral basis.

| Budget Summary: | 2014 Actual | 2015 Budget | 2016 Budget |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Budgeted Property Tax Requirement* | \$3,376,570 | \$3,609,678 | \$3,720,150 |
| Other Taxes | | | |
| Federal | | | |
| State | | | |
| Local | 1,482,386 | 1,512,034 | 1,542,276 |
| Investment Earnings | | | |
| Fees for Services | 152,469 | 121,975 | 121,975 |
| Fines and Forfeitures | | | |
| Licenses and Permits | 244,930 | 249,529 | 259,000 |
| Bond Proceeds | | | |
| Other Revenue | 230,108 | 228,000 | 235,000 |
| Total Revenues | \$5,486,463 | \$5,721,216 | \$5,878,401 |
| Personal Services | \$4,242,348 | \$4,346,693 | \$4,594,488 |
| Commodities | 83,203 | 101,001 | 100,433 |
| Services | 884,192 | 1,162,322 | 1,093,280 |
| Public Aid | | | |
| Capital Outlay | 27,131 | | |
| Other Charges | 74,651 | 111,200 | 90,200 |
| Total Expenditures | \$5,311,525 | \$5,721,216 | \$5,878,401 |

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

| | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Budgeted Positions (Full-time Equivalents) | 34.0 | 33.0 | 34.9 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|

History of the Medical Examiner's Office

In 1963, the Office of the Hennepin County Medical Examiner was established to replace the Coroner's Office, under the leadership of Dr. John Coe (1963-2003). Since then, the department has been directed by forensic pathologists Dr. Garry Peterson (1983-2004) and Dr. Andrew Baker (2004-present).

The Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office was first accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners in 1978, and has maintained full accreditation status for the past 38 years. The department was most recently inspected in 2014. This accreditation represents the highest standards of medicolegal death investigation.

The department has occupied several spaces in its history, including Hennepin County General Hospital, Hennepin County Medical Center, and its current location in the Forensic Sciences Building in downtown Minneapolis.

In 2013, the office partnered with the former Minnesota Regional Medical Examiner's Office (Hastings, MN) to provide medical examiner services to Hennepin, Dakota and Scott counties. Hennepin County is now home to the largest medical examiner's office in Minnesota, serving roughly one-third of the population of the state.

Hennepin County Medical Examiner has a close relationship with the University of Minnesota, providing training for medical students and residents. The department has an accredited fellowship program in forensic pathology. Past fellows hold positions in medical examiner offices across the state, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Jurisdiction

The current law outlining the duties of the office, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 390, states:

"All sudden or unexpected deaths, and all deaths that may be due entirely, or in part, to any factor other than natural disease processes must be promptly reported to the coroner or medical examiner for evaluation. ... No person, other than the county coroner or medical examiner ... shall file or amend the cause or manner of death information with the state registrar in cases of likely or suspected accidental, suicidal, homicidal, violent, or mysterious deaths occurring in the county."

Functions of the Medical Examiner

Death Reports

When a reportable death occurs, the physician, law enforcement officer, mortician, or other individual connected with the case makes a report to the Medical Examiner's Office. That report includes the decedent's name, address, age, sex, race, marital status, next of kin, a summary of medical history, physical findings, name of last attending physician, and other pertinent data.

Preserving Evidence

At the location of the death, the Medical Examiner Investigator provides direction for the removal or alteration of the body, personal property and associated evidence. Interference with the body or scene of death with intent to mislead the Medical Examiner or conceal evidence, including clothing, effects or any part of the scene, including moving weapons or items near the body, is a gross misdemeanor (Minnesota Statute §609.502).

Investigation

The Medical Examiner is an independent entity and does not work for the County Attorney's Office or any law enforcement agency. After completing a preliminary investigation, the Medical Examiner's Investigator decides who has jurisdiction of the case.

The Medical Examiner reserves the right to accept or decline jurisdiction. If an attending physician has seen the decedent within 120 days and the manner of death is natural, jurisdiction is usually declined. Any death in which there is uncertainty as to whether it is a Medical Examiner's case should be reported and discussed with the Medical Examiner's Investigator.

If jurisdiction is assumed or the death is due in part to any injury, the death certificate may only be signed by the Medical Examiner.

Tissue, Eye and Organ Donation

In all instances of organ donation, the Medical Examiner must be notified by the responsible agency prior to arrangements being made for the recovery of any organ. Authorization for tissue and eye donation must be approved by the Medical Examiner before procurement.

Autopsy

Autopsies are done to answer medical and legal questions in the "public interest," to protect public health, or to address a question of law. The Medical Examiner determines whether a compelling state interest requires an autopsy to be performed. Autopsies are performed at the Hennepin County Morgue. In some cases, an autopsy may be performed by the hospital pathologist if he or she has a valid autopsy permit.

As of July 1, 2015, Minnesota law recognizes an individual's religious right to object to an autopsy under some circumstances.

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 instances, families can provide information that may be helpful in the case. Families also can benefit from the investigation process because even in straightforward natural deaths, information from the death investigation or autopsy may help surviving family members protect their own health.

Body Release

Final disposition of the body is the responsibility of the family, or other person(s) as designated by Minnesota Statute §149A.80. The authorized party should contact the funeral home of their choice for assistance in removing the body from the Medical Examiner's Office.

Cremation Approval

When the deceased is to be cremated, the funeral director is responsible for obtaining approval from the Medical Examiner's Office prior to cremation of the body. This process is completed electronically in the Minnesota Registration and Certification system.

Death Certificates

In cases where the Medical Examiner assumes jurisdiction, the manner and cause of death will be recorded electronically upon completion of the investigation, autopsy, and ancillary studies. The process is completed in the Minnesota Registration and Certification system. The funeral home is responsible for providing the family with the paper death certificates. They may also be obtained from the local recorder's office or Office of Vital Records.

Autopsy Reports

Immediate family members may submit a written request for an autopsy report to the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office. Autopsies occurring outside of the Medical Examiner's Office will require the family to contact the agency that performed the exam for an autopsy report. A nominal fee is charged for this report.

The decedent's attending physician may obtain a copy of the autopsy report at no charge upon written request.

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 rest of the information that is gathered is confidential and treated similarly to a medical record. This information is available only to immediate next-of-kin, legal representatives of the decedent's estate, and treating physicians.

In cases of homicide, Medical Examiner information and autopsy reports can only be provided to the law enforcement agencies that are investigating the death and to the prosecutor in the county where the homicide occurred.

At a Glance Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties: 2016 Aggregate Data

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <u>Total cases referred</u> | <u>7366</u> |
| Jurisdiction accepted | 2133 |
| Jurisdiction declined | 4836 |
| Referral cases | 55 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <u>Jurisdiction Accepted</u> | <u>2133</u> |
| Natural | 914 |
| Accident (not traffic) | 758 |
| Traffic accident | 102 |
| Suicides | 204 |
| Homicide | 70 |
| Undetermined | 85 |

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| <u>Total Medical Examiner autopsies</u> | <u>1288</u> |
| HCME autopsies (not HCMC) | 1051 |
| Autopsies at other institutions | 4 |
| Partial autopsies | 33 |
| External examinations | 11 |
| Referral autopsies | 54 |
| HCME-HCMC inpatient autopsies | 80 |
| HCME-HCMC ER autopsies | 66 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| <u>Donations (total)</u> | <u>417</u> |
| Eyes | 175 |
| Tissue/bones | 120 |
| Organs | 43 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Scene visits by investigators | 1397 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Cremations approved | 8383 |
|----------------------------|-------------|

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Subpoenas answered | 90 |
|---------------------------|-----------|



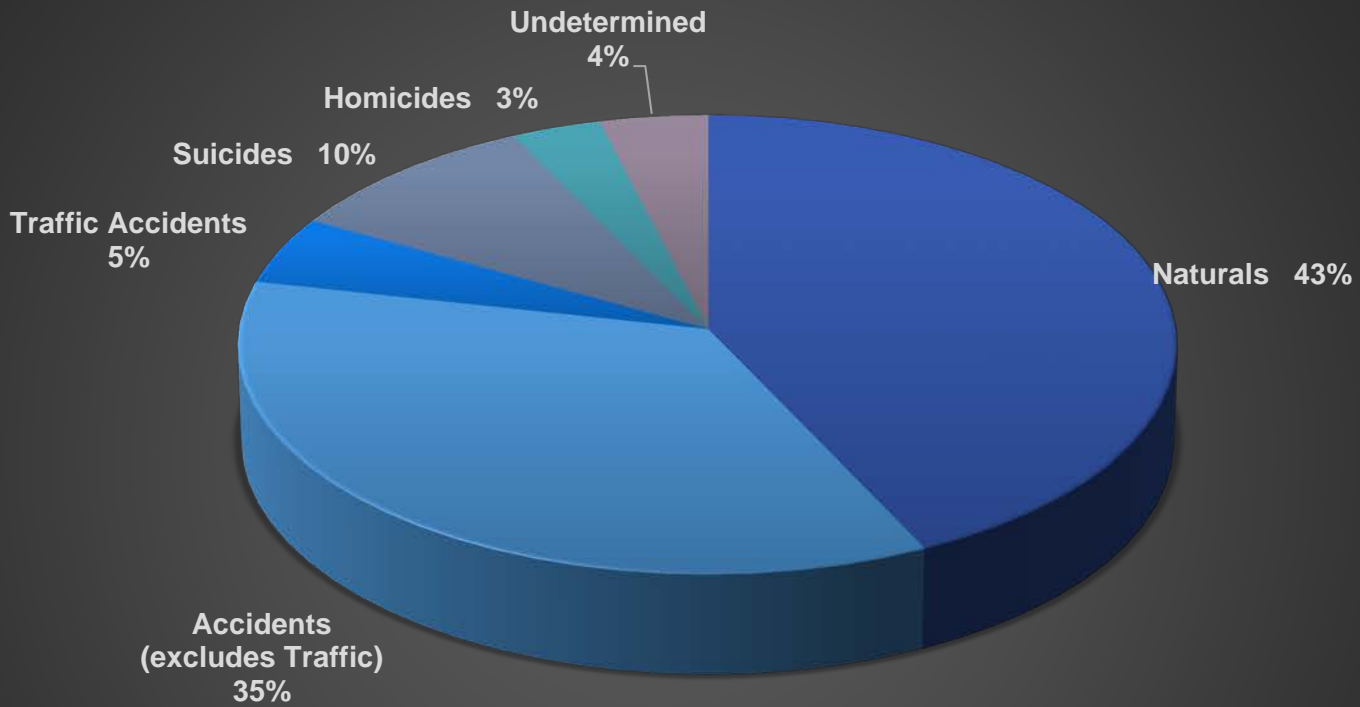
At a Glance

Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties: 2016 Aggregate Data

| | Hennepin | Dakota | Dakota % of total | Scott | Scott % of total |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Total cases referred</u> | <u>5482</u> | <u>1420</u> | 19% | <u>405</u> | 5% |
| Jurisdiction accepted | 1698 | 337 | 16% | 98 | 5% |
| Jurisdiction declined | 3465 | 1069 | 22% | 302 | 6% |
| | | | | | |
| <u>Jurisdiction accepted</u> | <u>1558</u> | <u>285</u> | 13% | <u>88</u> | 4% |
| Natural | 716 | 153 | 17% | 45 | 5% |
| Accident (not traffic) | 629 | 101 | 13% | 28 | 4% |
| Traffic accident | 77 | 18 | 18% | 7 | 7% |
| Suicides | 152 | 41 | 20% | 11 | 5% |
| Homicide | 60 | 7 | 10% | 3 | 4% |
| Undetermined | 64 | 17 | 20% | 4 | 5% |
| | | | | | |
| <u>Total medical examiner autopsies</u> | <u>963</u> | <u>213</u> | 17% | <u>63</u> | 5% |
| | | | | | |
| <u>Donations (total)</u> | <u>311</u> | <u>79</u> | 19% | <u>23</u> | 6% |
| Eyes | 119 | 42 | 24% | 13 | 7% |
| Tissue/bones | 77 | 34 | 28% | 6 | 5% |
| Organs | 43 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | | | | |
| Scene visits by investigators | 1058 | 263 | 19% | 76 | 5% |

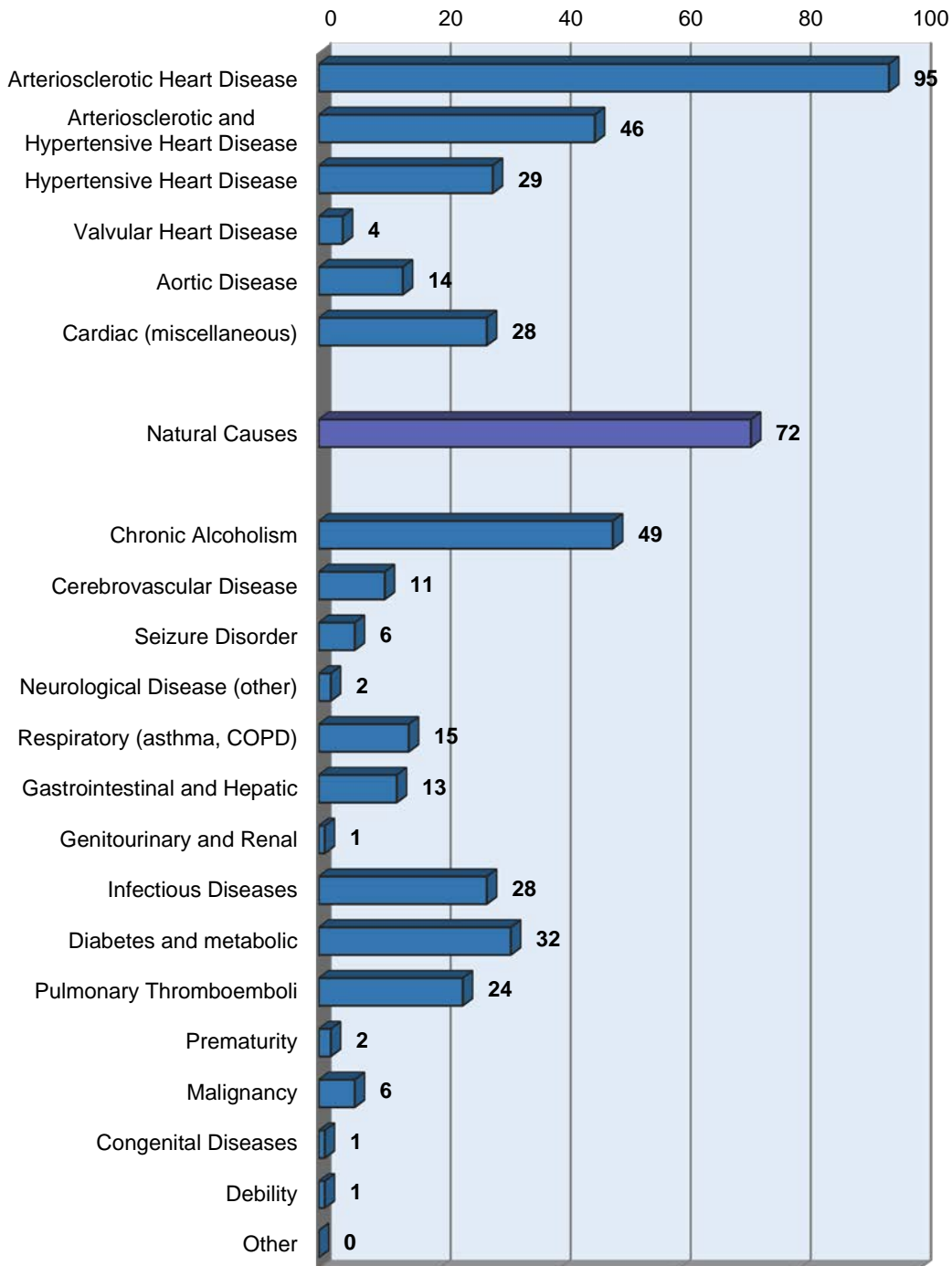


Accepted Cases by Manner Of Death: Hennepin, Dakota and Scott Counties 2016



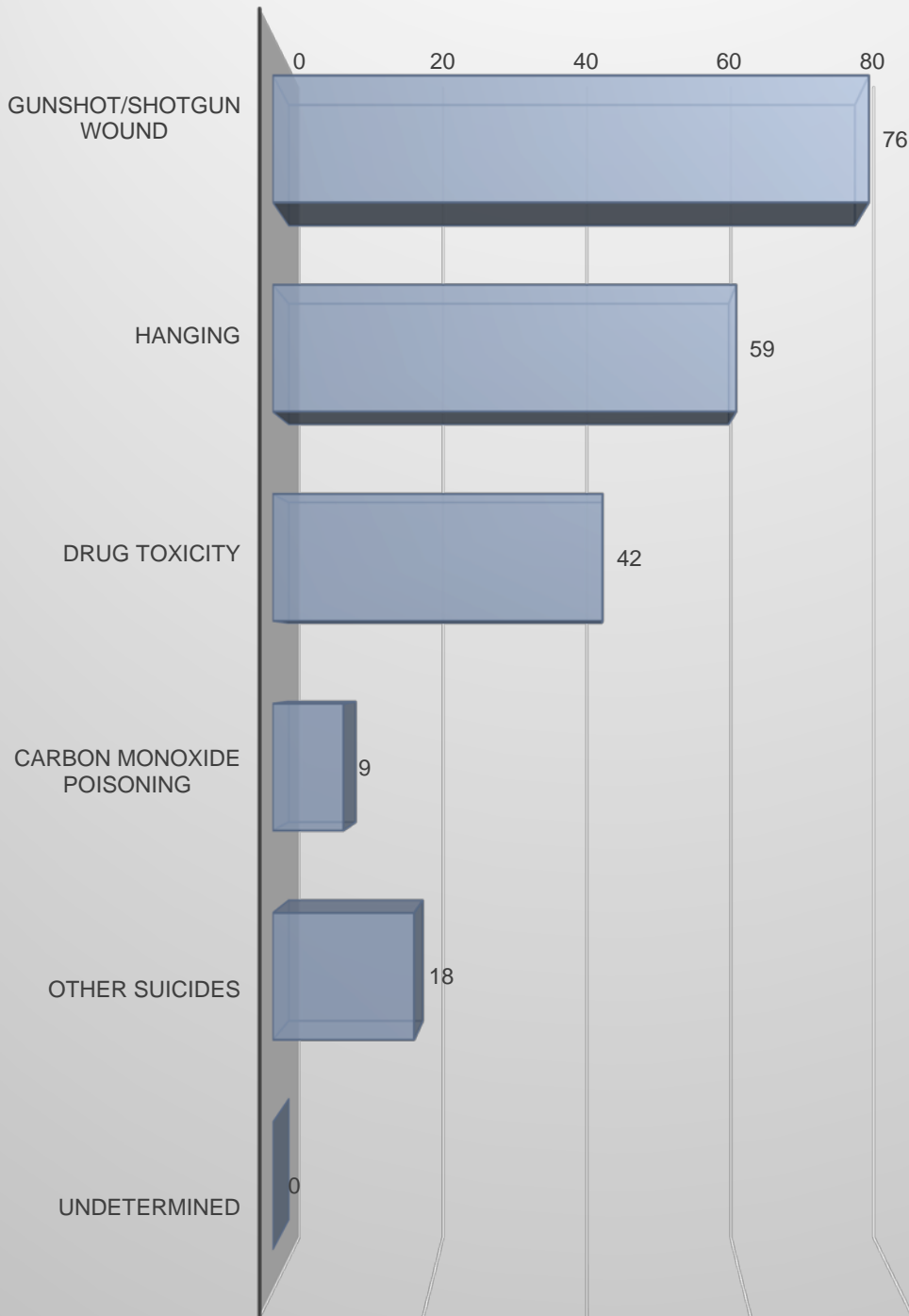
NATURAL DEATHS (AUTOPSIED) : 479

HENNEPIN, DAKOTA AND SCOTT COUNTIES 2016

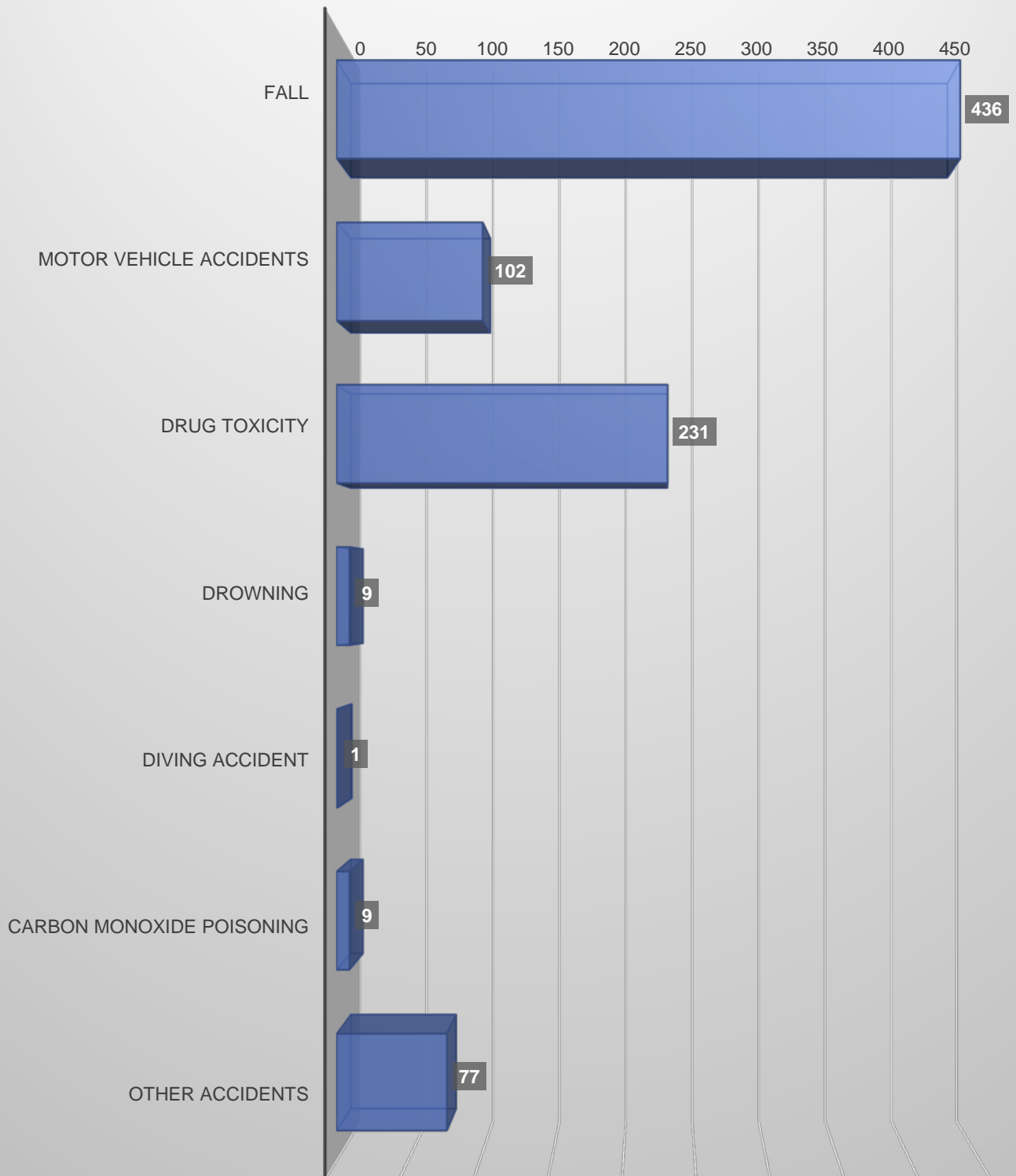


Suicide Deaths : 204

Hennepin, Dakota and Scott Counties 2016

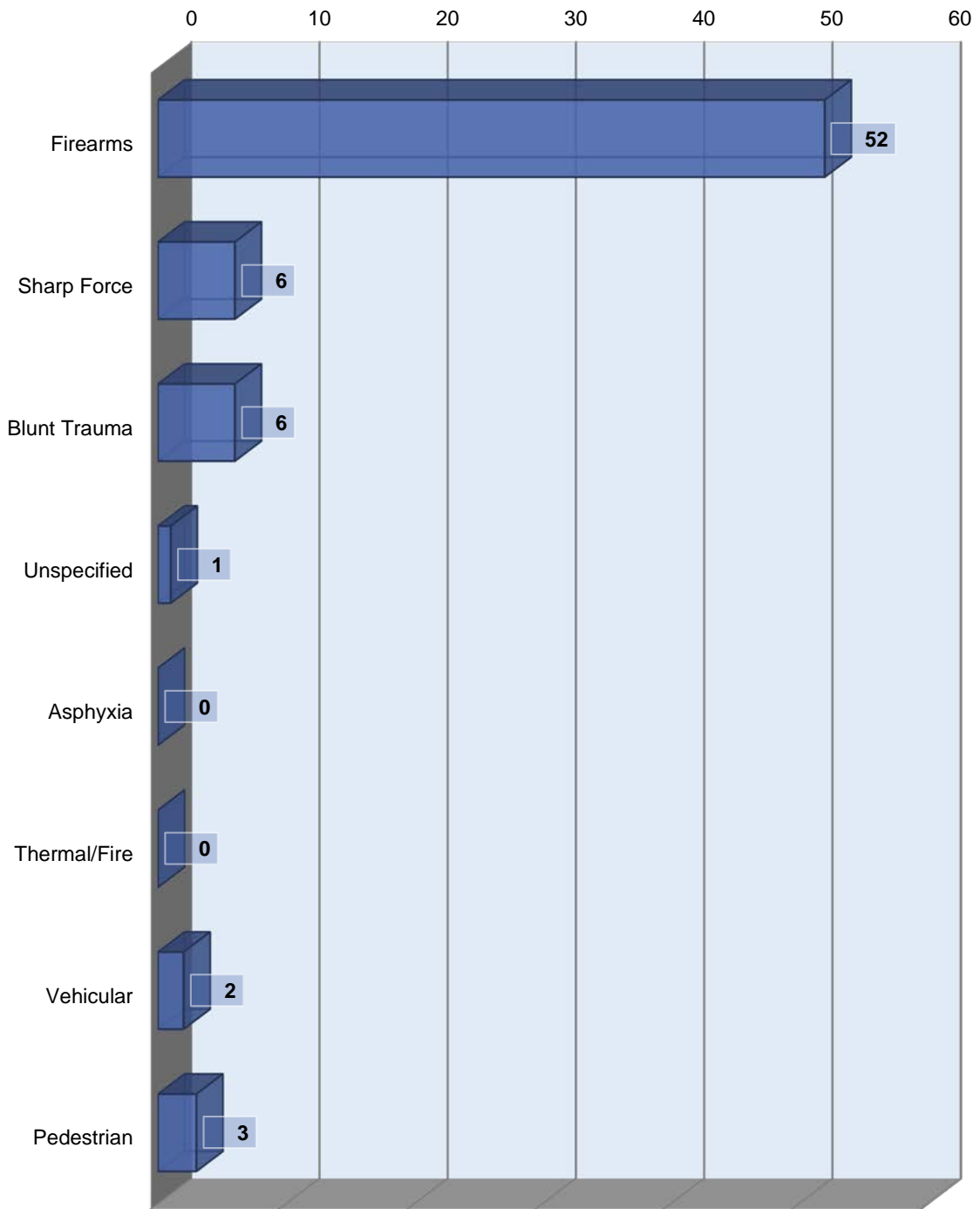


Accident Deaths : 860 Hennepin, Dakota and Scott Counties 2016



HOMICIDE DEATHS : 70

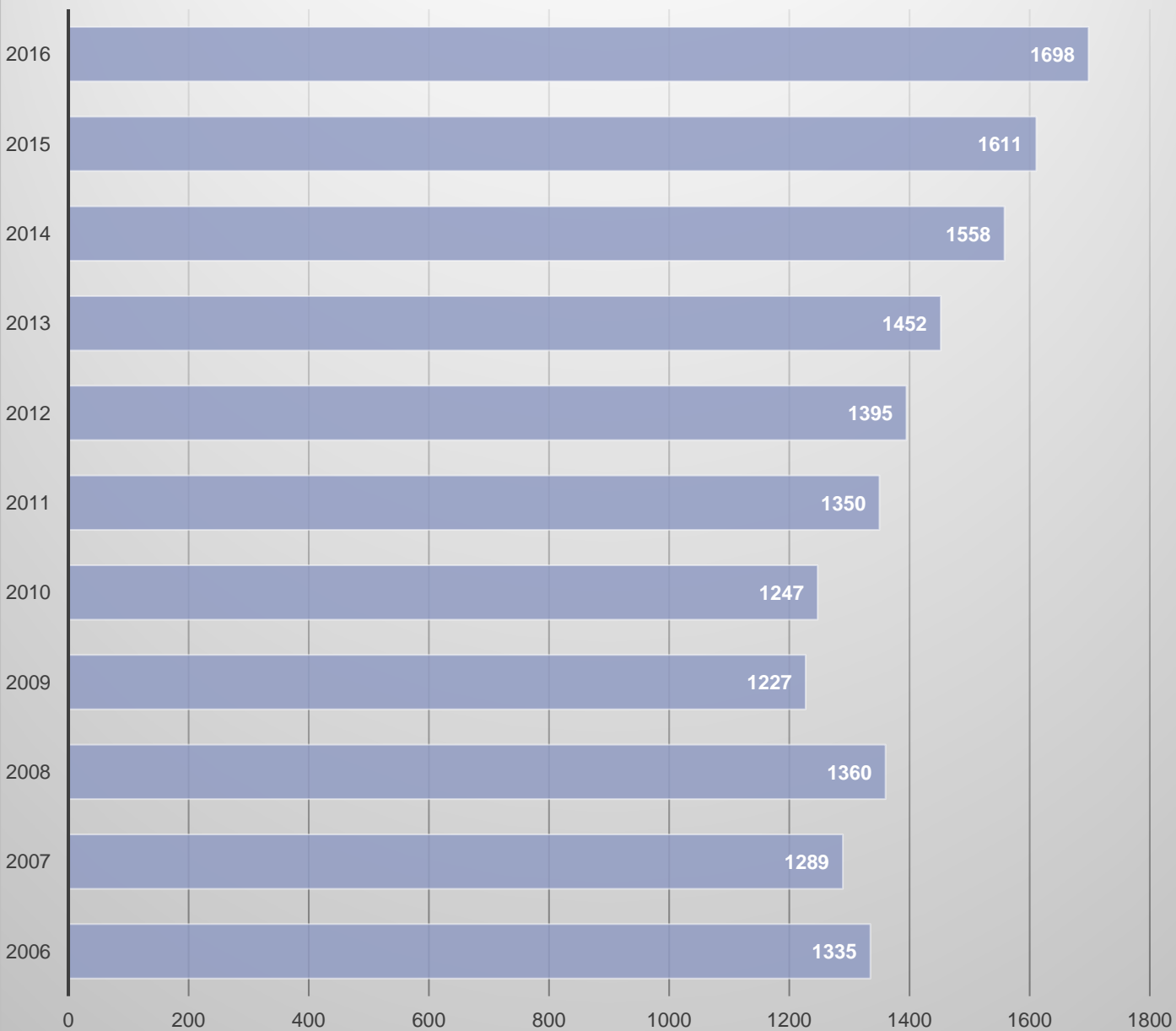
HENNEPIN, DAKOTA AND SCOTT COUNTIES 2016



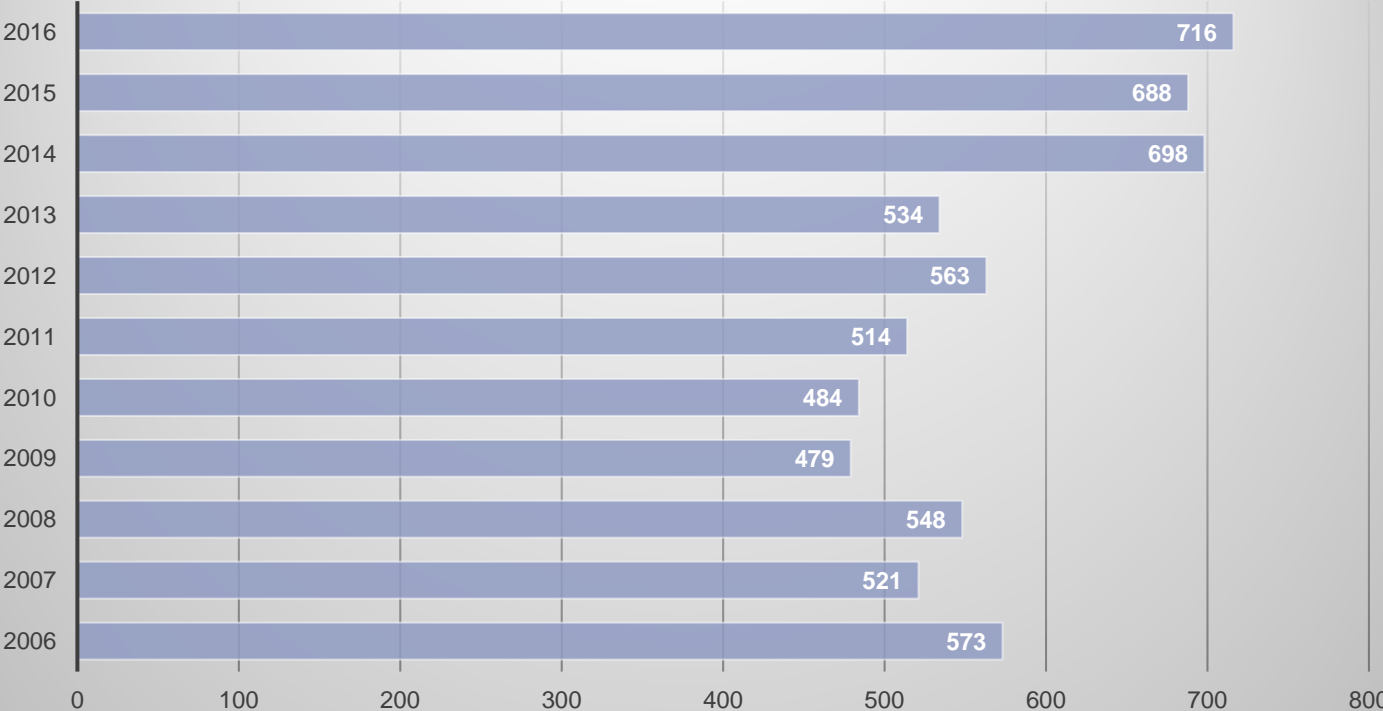
Historical Data- Statistics By County

Hennepin County

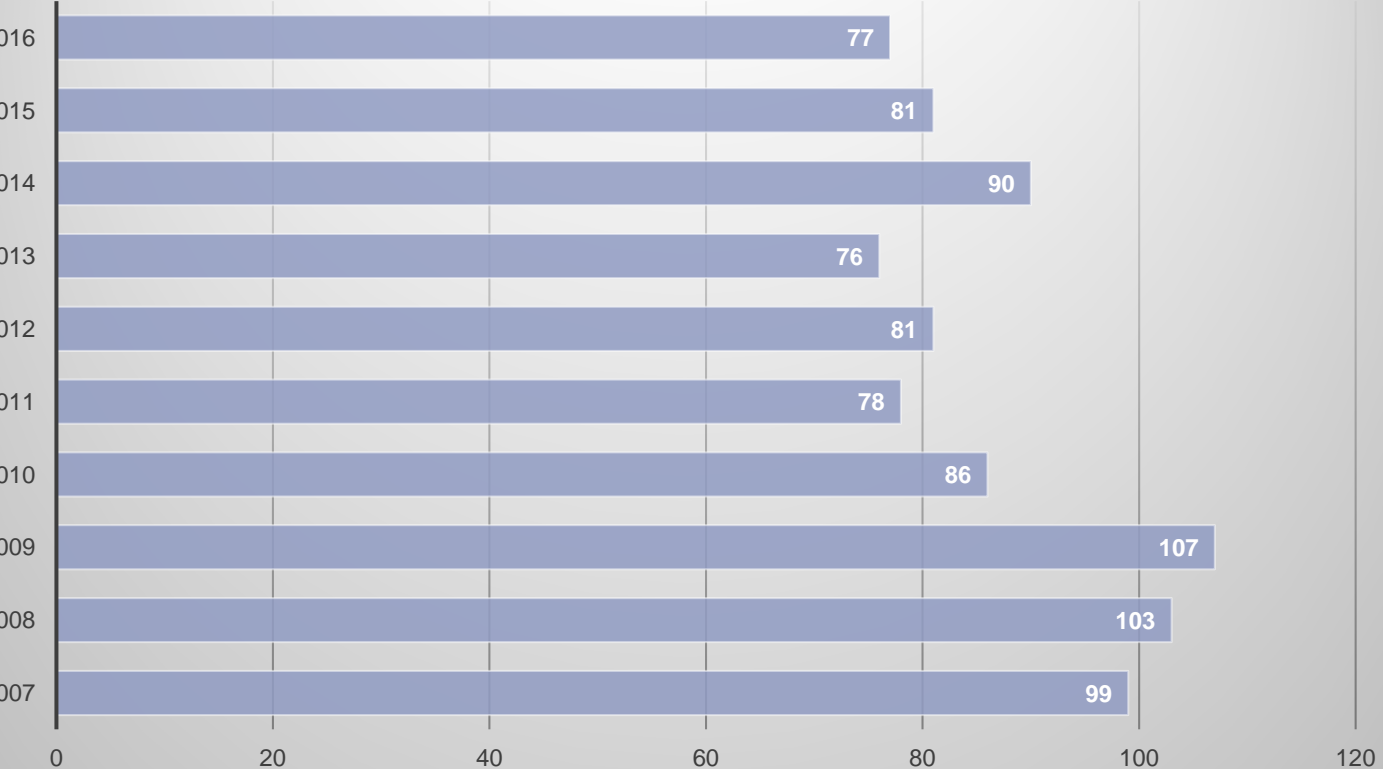
Cases Accepted: Hennepin County, 2006-2016



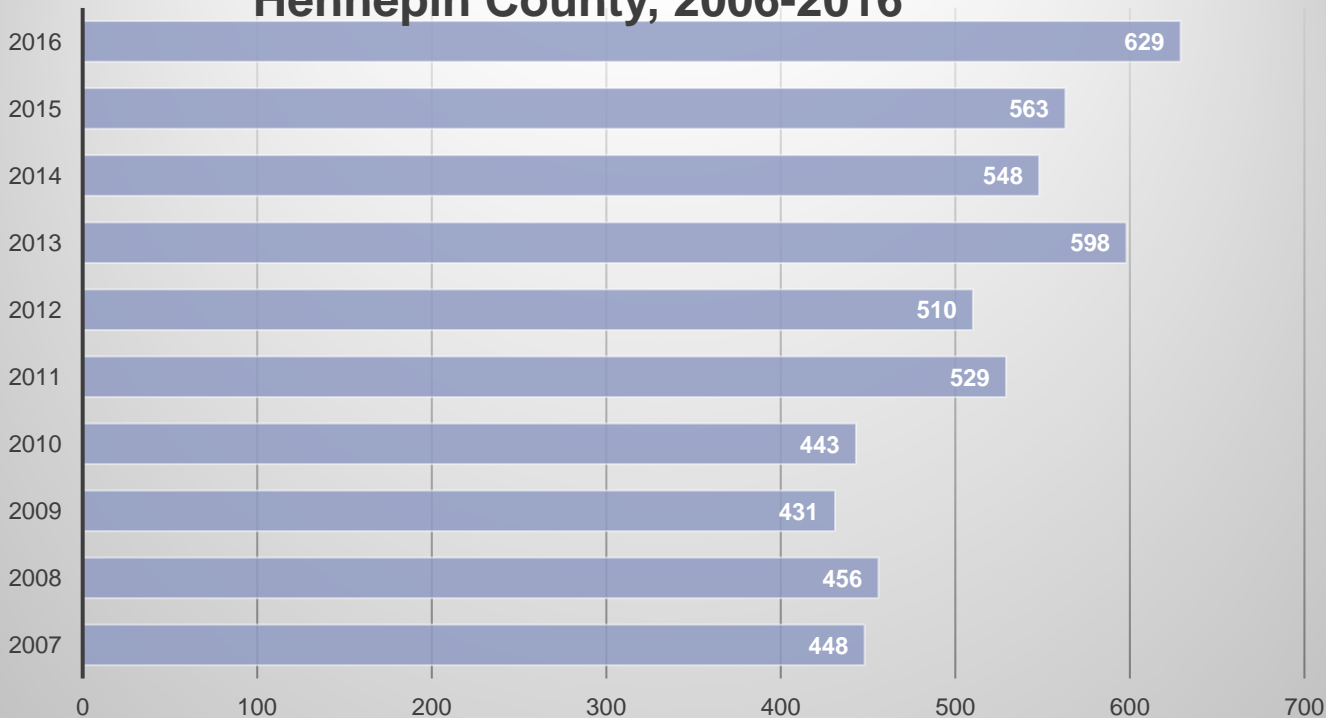
Natural Deaths: Hennepin County, 2006-2016



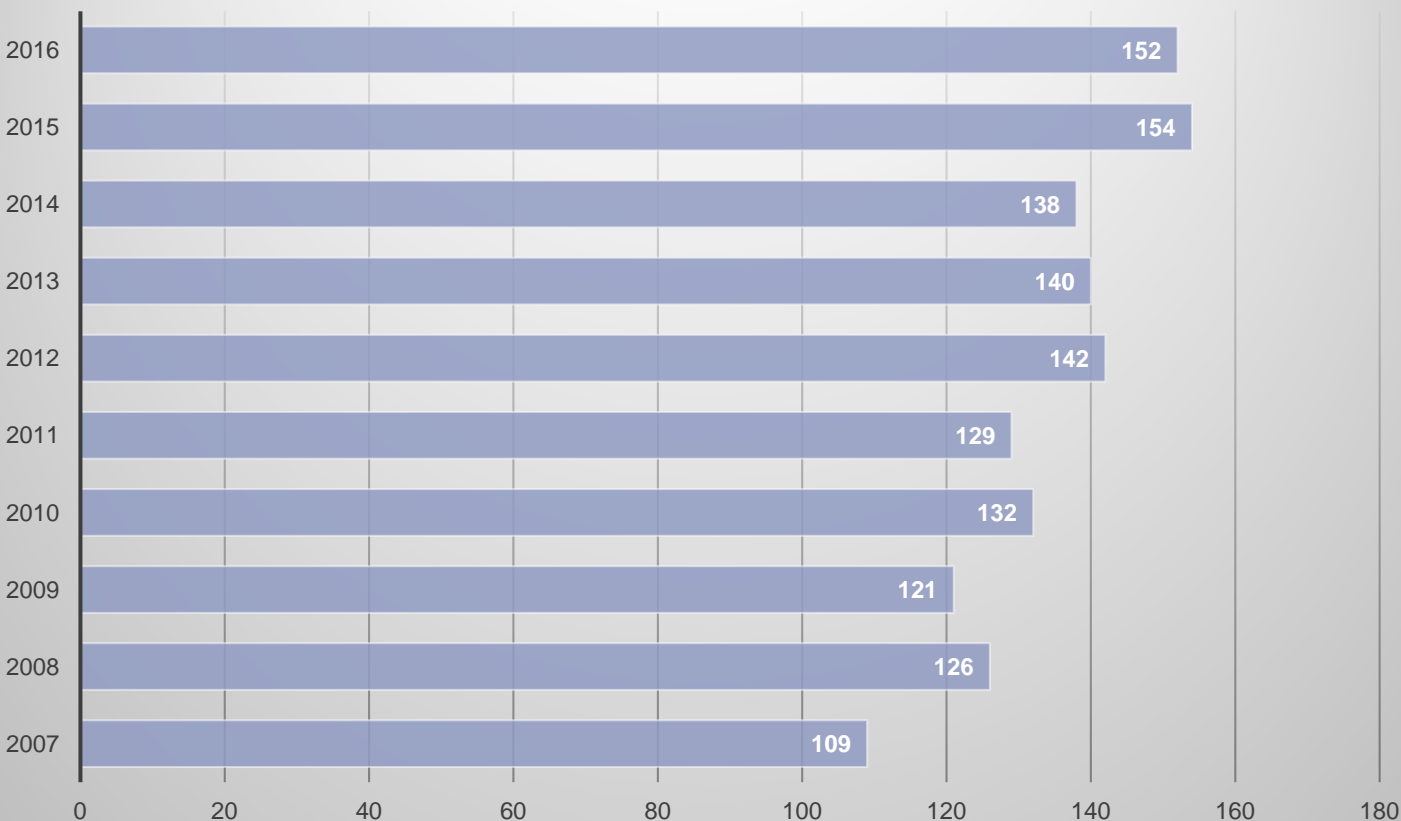
Traffic Accident Deaths: Hennepin County, 2006-2016



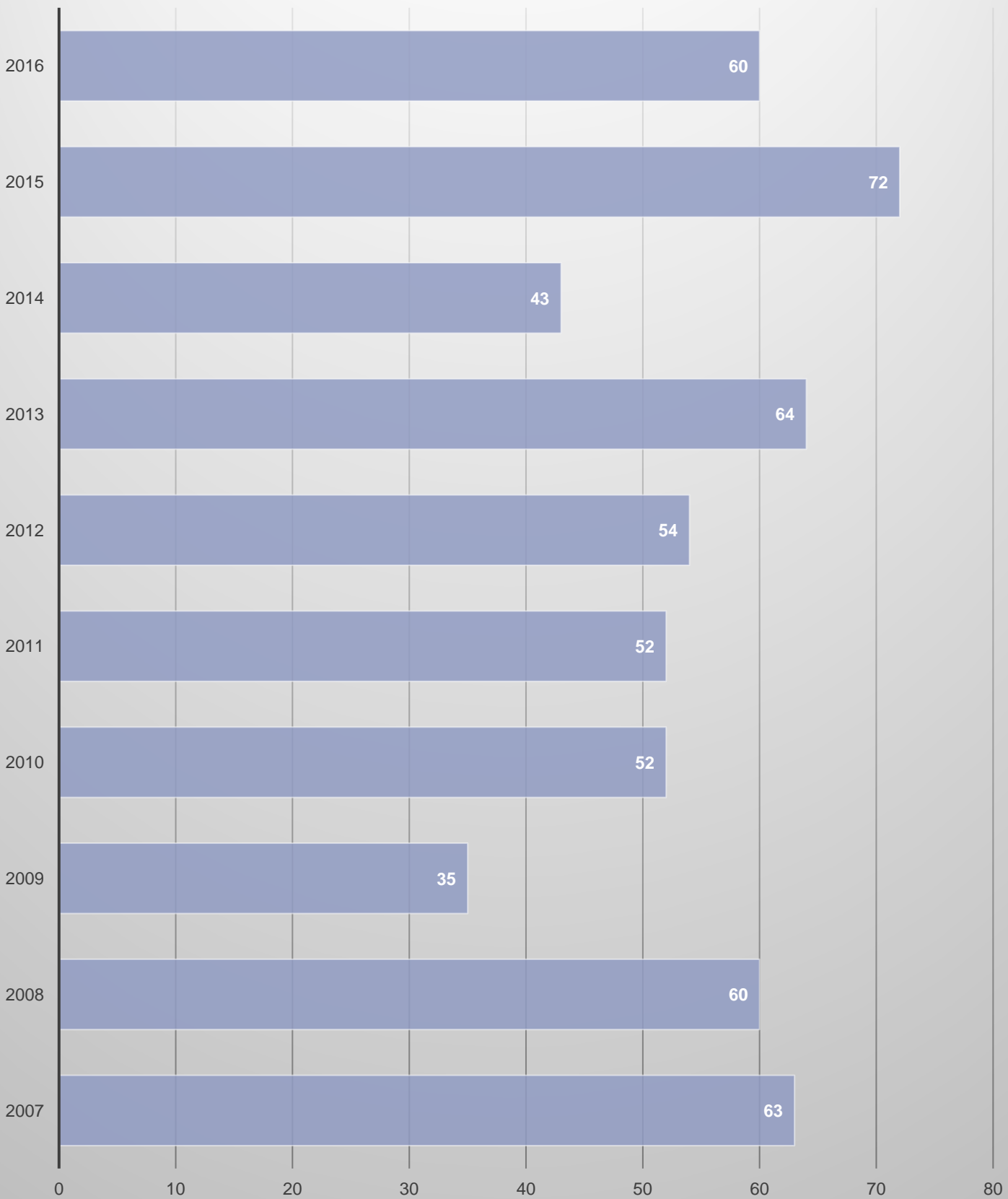
Accident (Non-Traffic) Deaths: Hennepin County, 2006-2016



Suicide Deaths: Hennepin County, 2006-2016

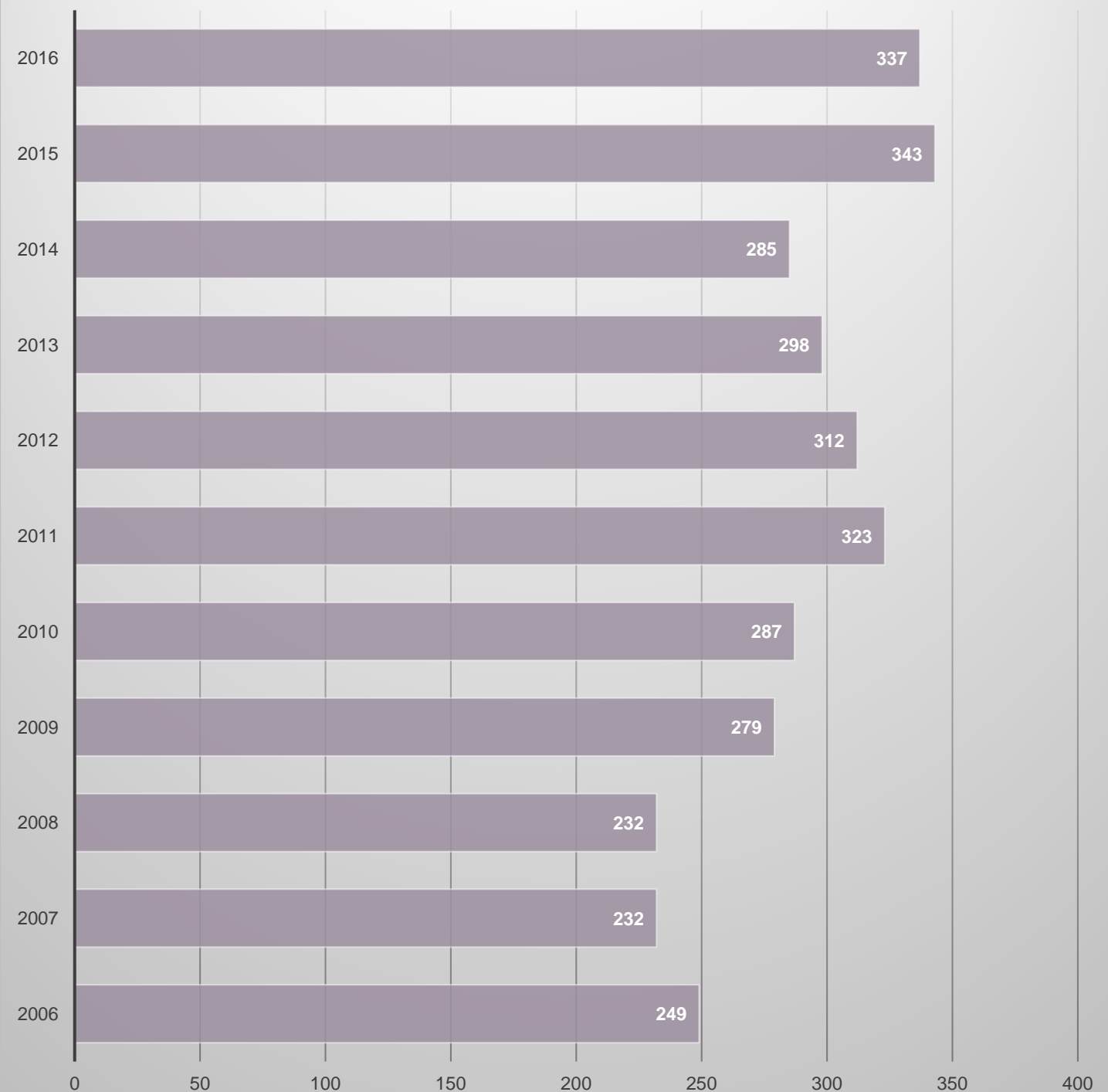


Homicide Deaths: Hennepin County, 2006-2016

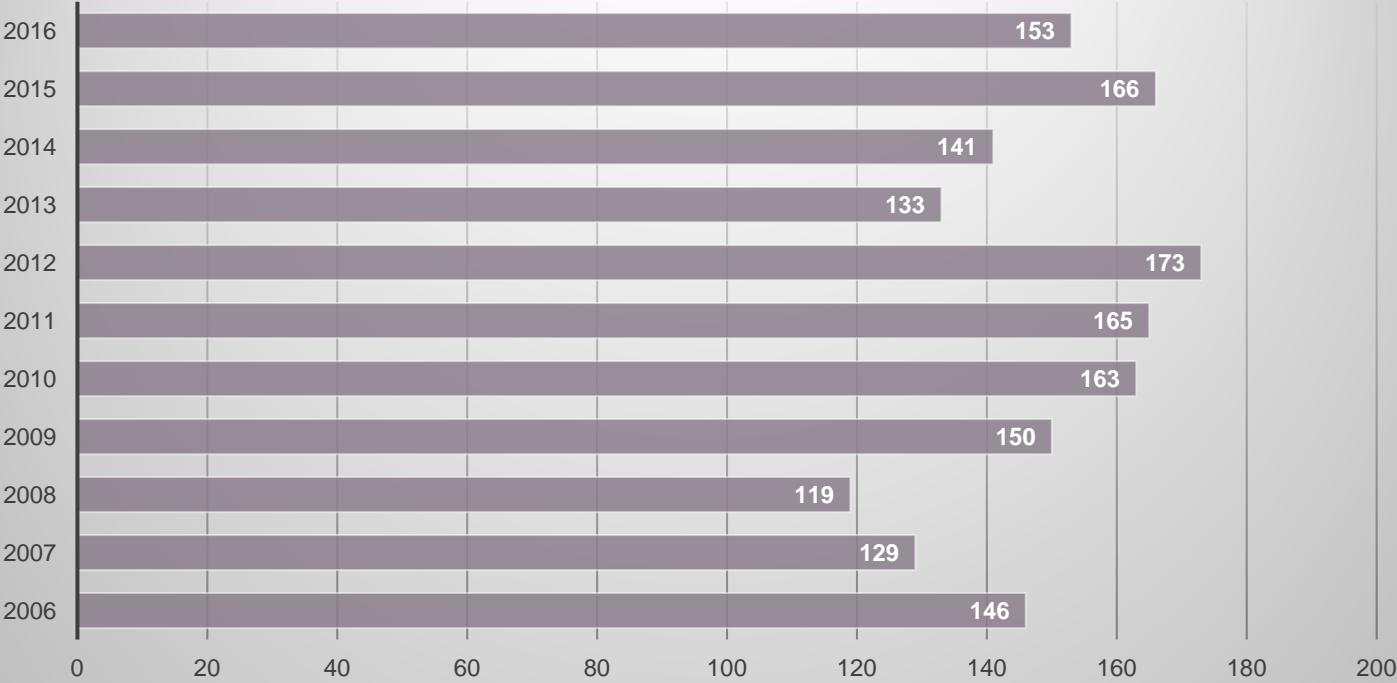


Historical Data- Statistics By County Dakota County

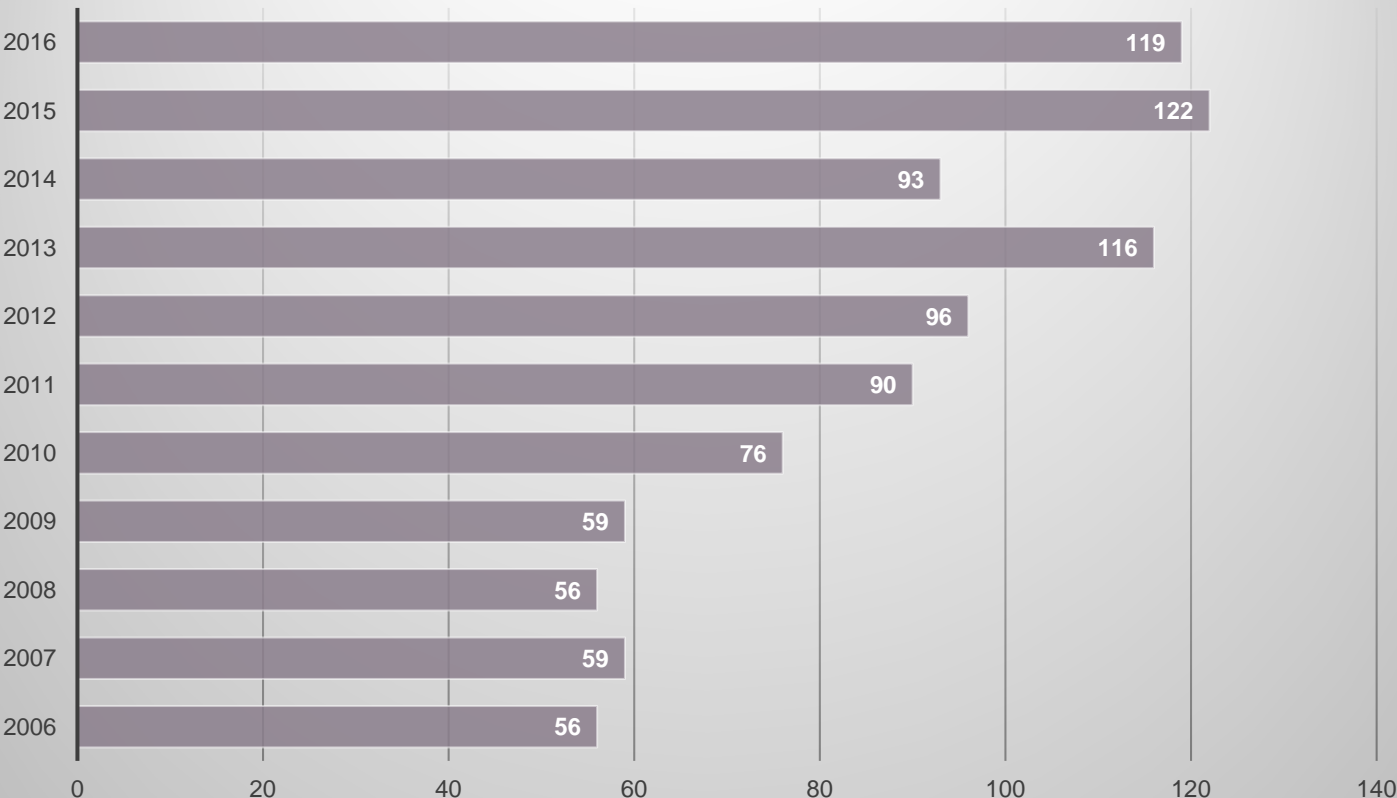
Cases Accepted: Dakota County, 2006-2016



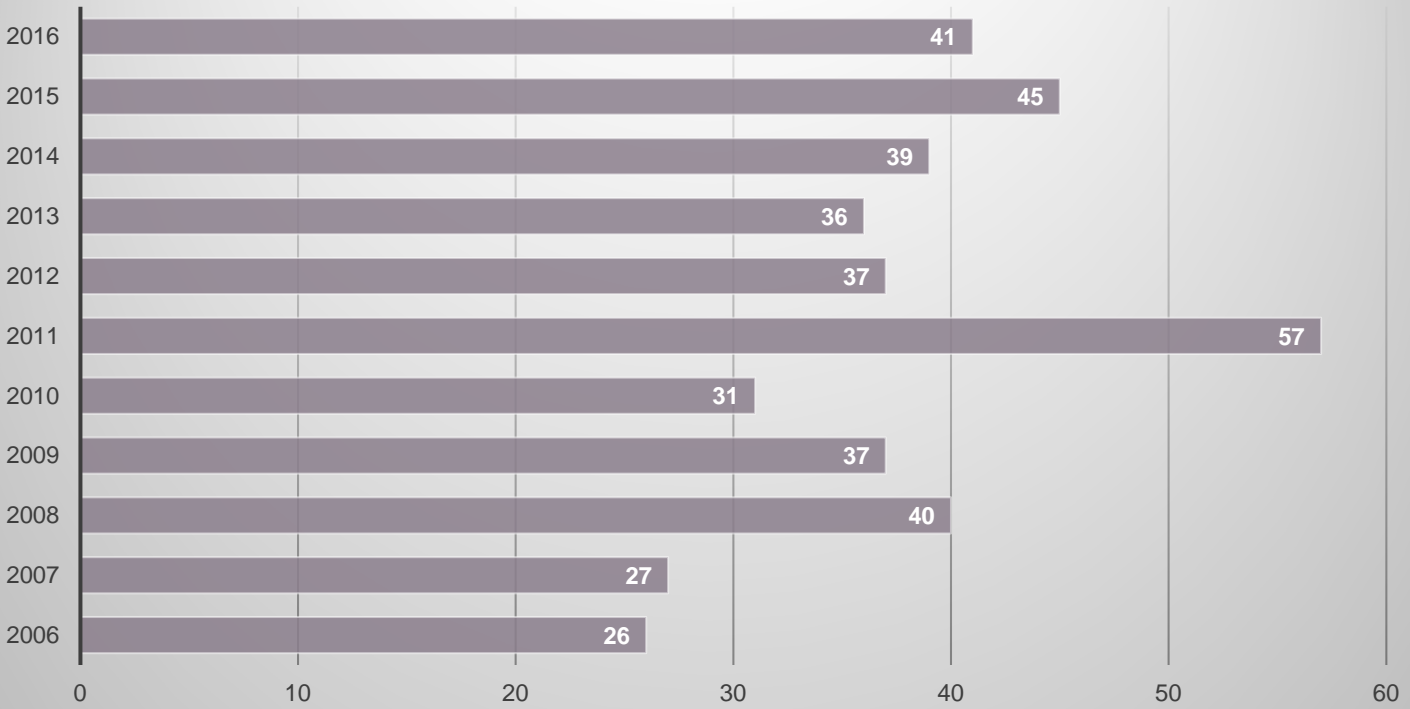
Natural Deaths: Dakota County, 2006-2016



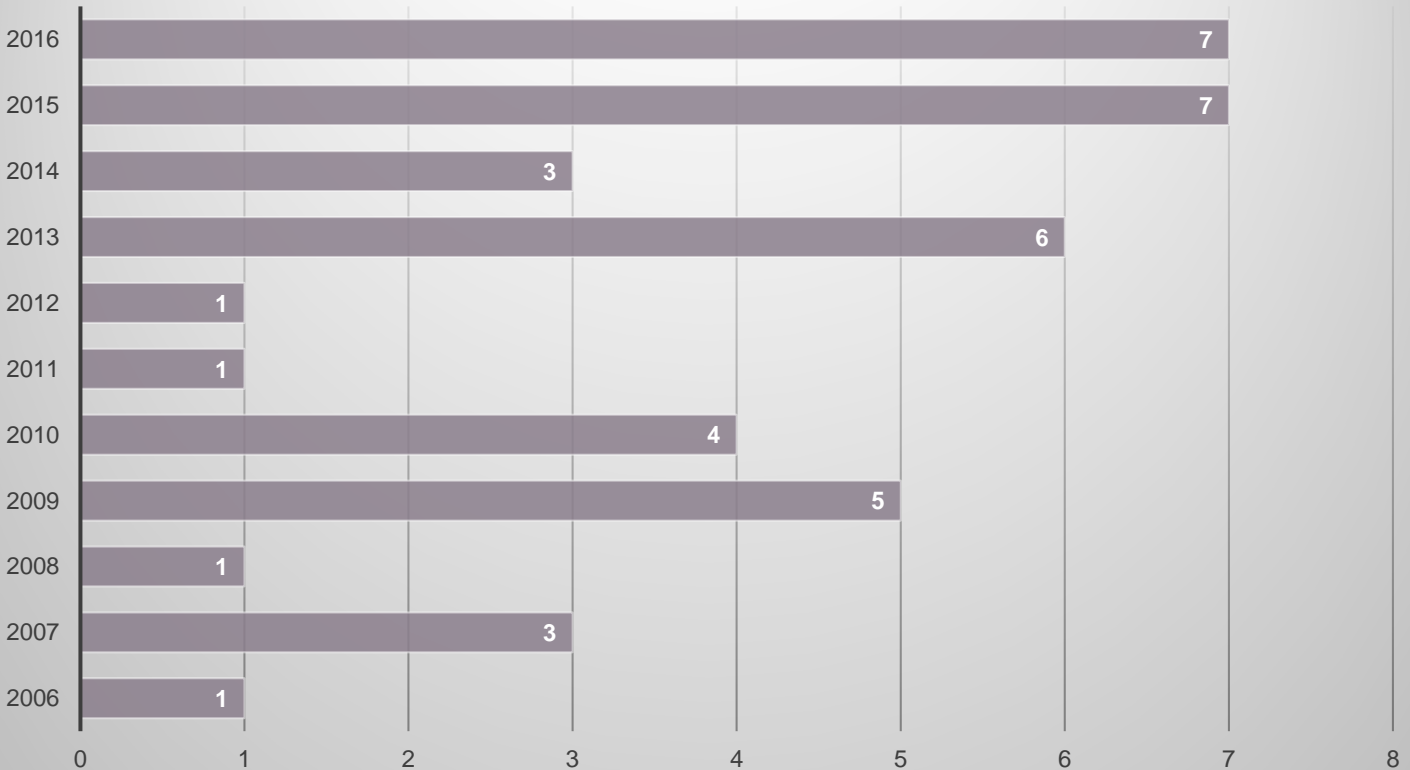
Accident Deaths: Dakota County, 2006-2016



Suicide Deaths: Dakota County, 2006-2016



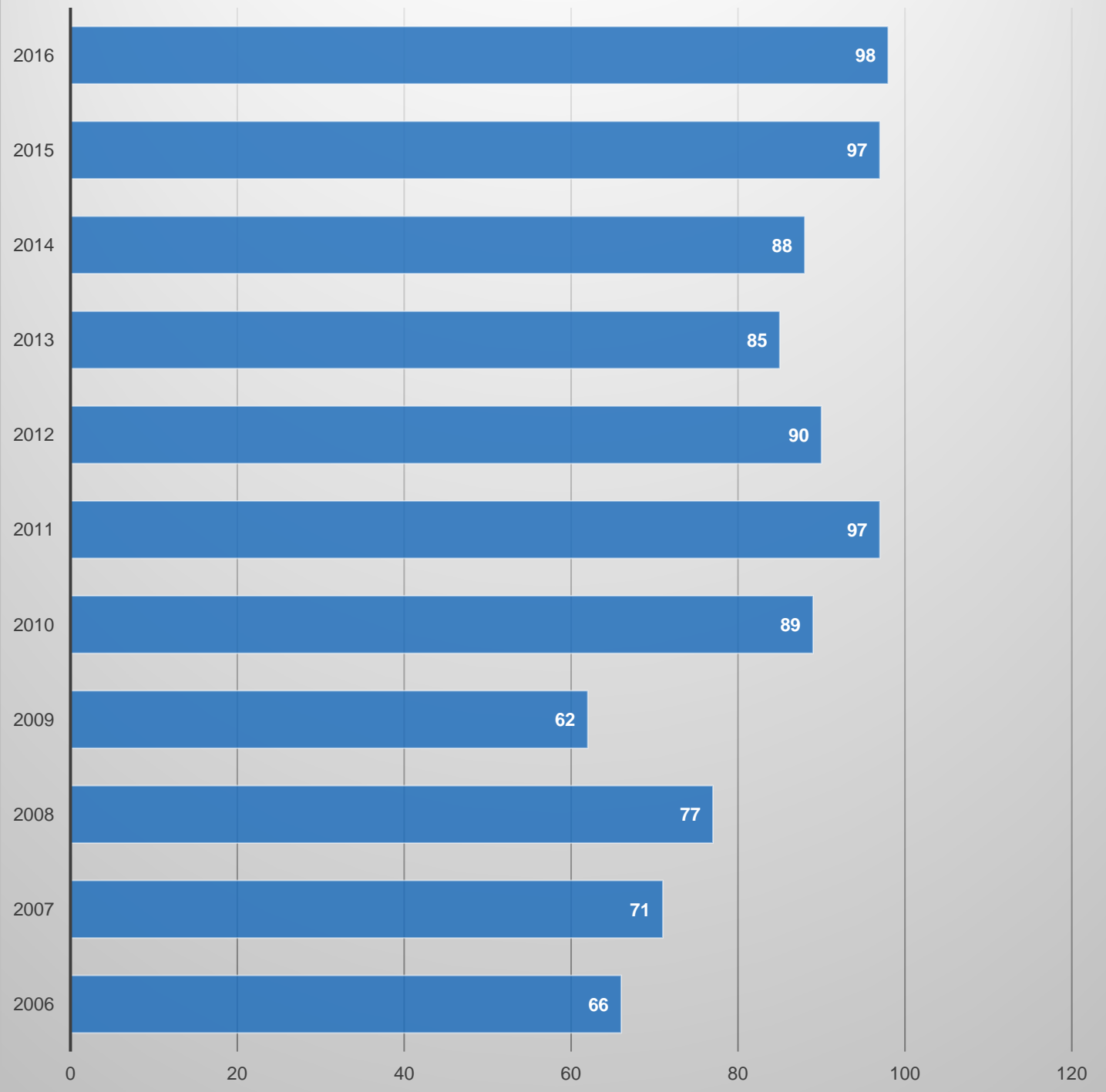
Homicide Deaths: Dakota County, 2006-2016



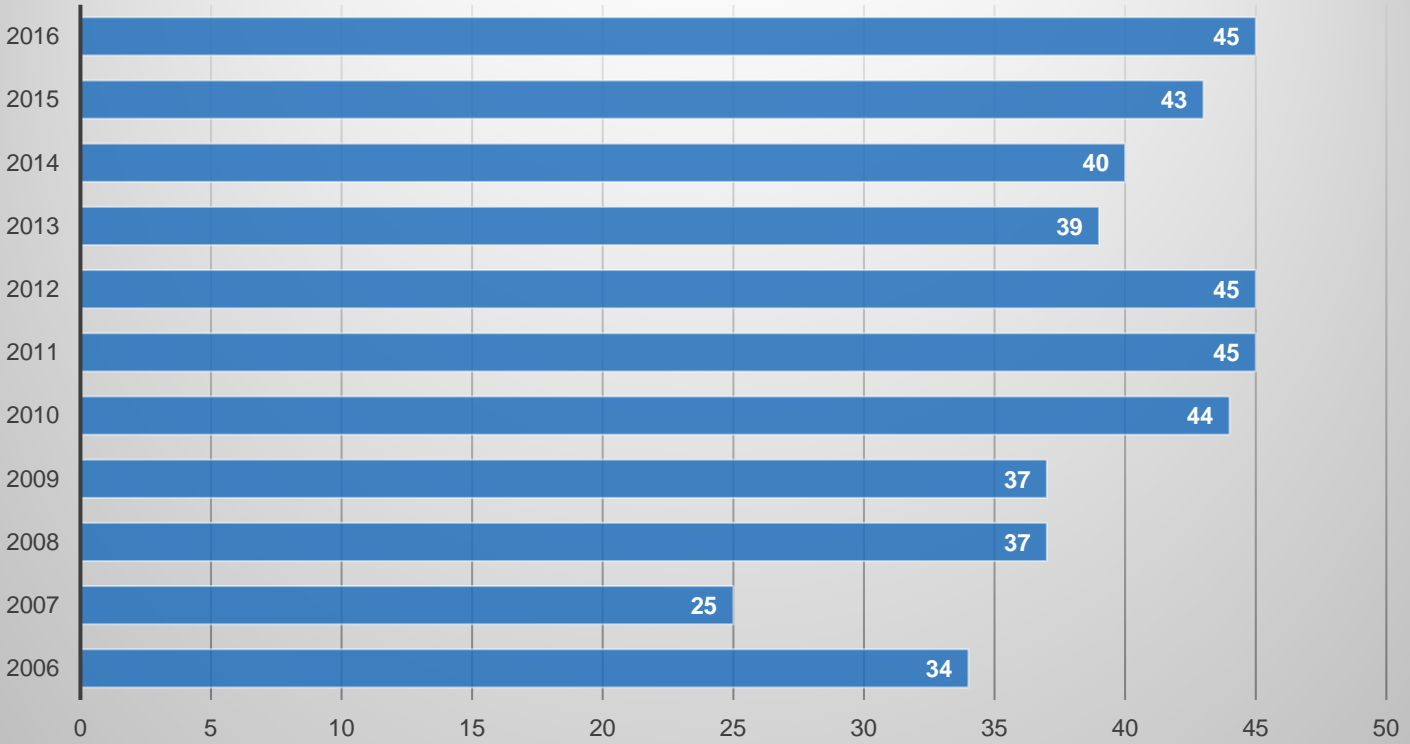
Historical Data- Statistics By County

Scott County

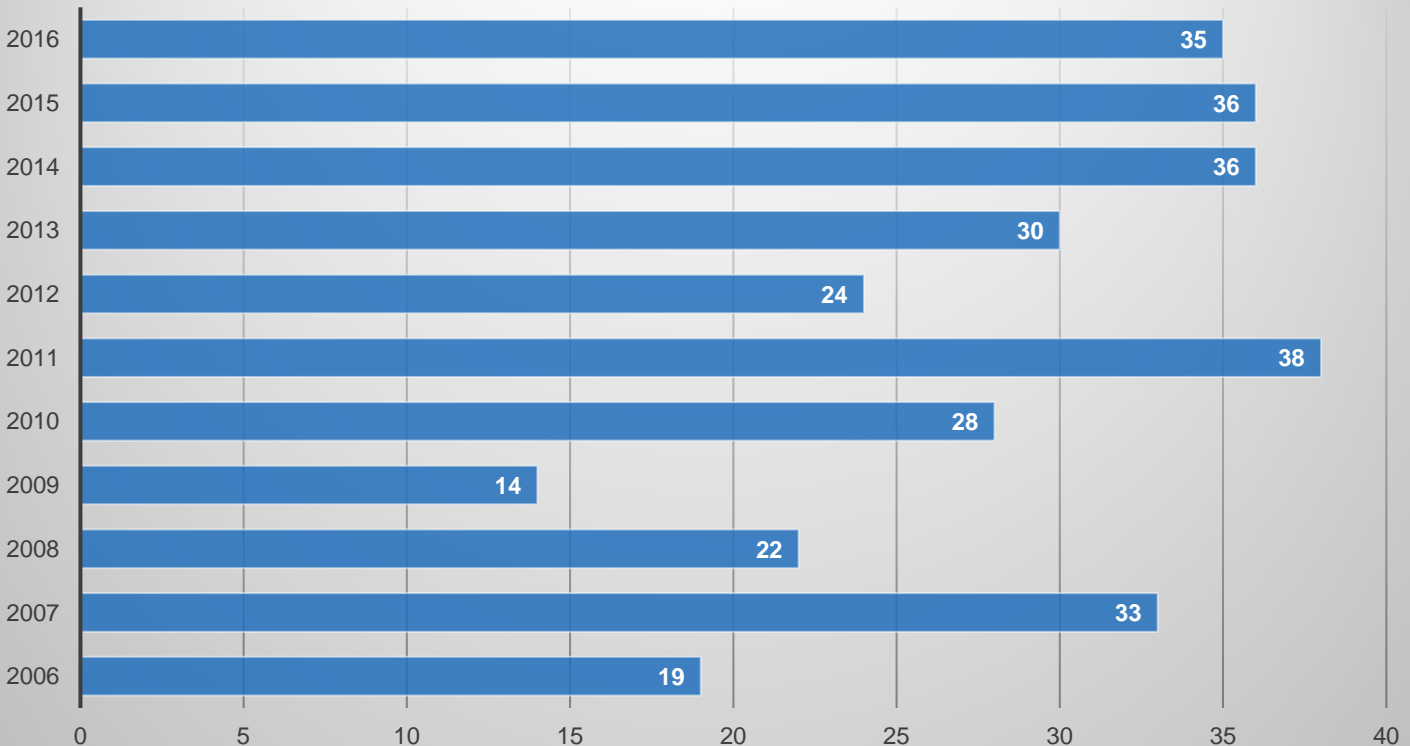
Cases Accepted: Scott County, 2006-2016



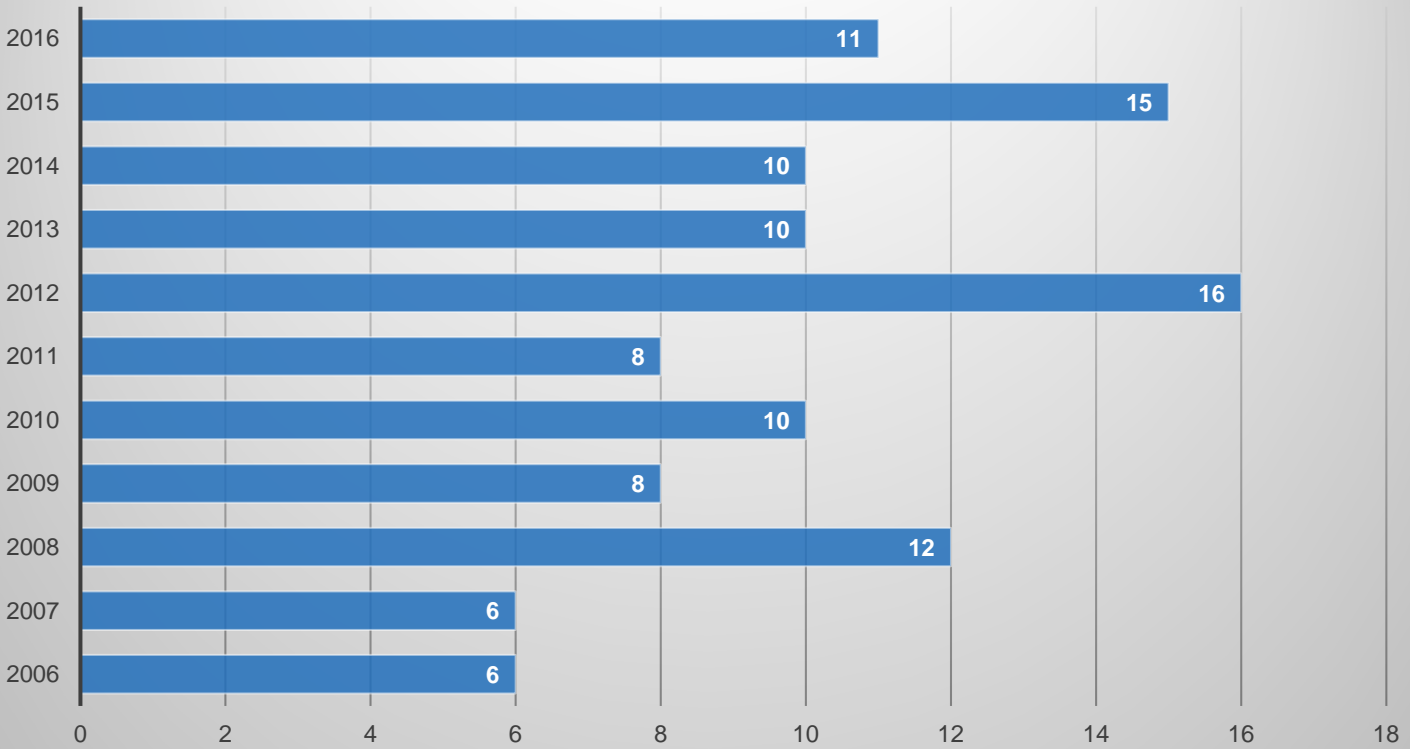
Natural Deaths: Scott County, 2006-2016



Accident Deaths: Scott County, 2006-2016



Suicide Deaths: Scott County, 2006-2016



Homicide Deaths: Scott County, 2006-2016

