

State of Illinois
JB Pritzker, Governor

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
Delrice Adams, Executive Director



2024 ILLINOIS DEATHS IN CUSTODY ANNUAL REPORT



ICJIA

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

2024 Illinois Death in Custody Annual Report

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Prepared by:
Research & Analysis Unit
Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

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Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
60 E Van Buren Street, Suite 650
Chicago, Illinois 60605
Phone: 312.793.8550
www.icjia.illinois.gov

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Section 1: Background

Purpose

The Illinois Reporting of Deaths in Custody Act (RDCA) requires the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) to publish an annual report summarizing trends and information on Illinois deaths in custody (730 ILCS 210/3-5(i)). In addition, RDCA requires ICJIA to publish each “law enforcement agency’s policies, procedures, and protocols related to: (a) treatment of a person experiencing withdrawal from alcohol or substance use; (b) the facility’s provision, or lack of provision, of medications used to treat, mitigate, or address a person’s symptoms; and (c) notifying an inmate’s next of kin after the inmate’s in-custody death” (730 ILCS 210/3-5(j)(3)). This report addresses both requirements. It includes a summary of death in custody incident reports provided to ICJIA, highlighting the demographic characteristics of decedents, reporting agencies, and circumstances surrounding incidents, and summarizes policies provided to ICJIA pursuant to 730 ILCS 210/3-5(j)(3).

Per RDCA, ICJIA must also report on “recommendations and State and local efforts underway to reduce deaths in custody” (730 ILCS 210/3-5(i)(3)). This reporting is scheduled for 2025 (*Section 5*).

Additionally, the federal Death in Custody Reporting Act (34 U.S.C. § 60105; DCRA) establishes reporting requirements for all deaths in custody, details of which ICJIA must submit to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) on a quarterly basis. In practice, ICJIA combines RDCA and DCRA reporting.

This report also presents initiatives that ICJIA is undertaking to overcome some of the limitations to data quality (*Section 4*) and to the recording of efforts to reduce deaths (*Section 5*). Since quality check processes are still being implemented, this report predominantly addresses data limitations by summarizing data exactly as provided to ICJIA, except in cases where duplicate records were identified. That is, with the exception of removing duplicate records, ICJIA staff did not modify records pursuant to quality check processes.

Data Sources and Required Data

ICJIA receives death in custody data from several state agencies:

- **Illinois State Police (ISP):** ISP provides reportable records from law enforcement agencies through two reporting processes: Arrest-Related Deaths (ARD) and Use of Force incidents resulting in death (UOF), as required under the Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting Act.
- **Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC):** The IDOC Planning and Research division provides records on deaths occurring within adult correctional settings.
- **Illinois Department of Corrections Jail and Detention Standards Unit (JDSU):** The JDSU contributes records of deaths in county and municipal jails.
- **Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ):** IDJJ provides records related to deaths occurring in state youth correctional centers.

Additionally, law enforcement agencies have the option to report deaths via ICJIA's online reporting tool. However, this direct reporting method is voluntary.

Under RDCA, ICJIA is mandated to collect information on all deaths in Illinois that occur:

- **While under the custody of:**
 - A law enforcement agency.
 - A local or state correctional facility.
 - A peace officer.
- **As a result of a peace officer's use of force.**

Data required for RDCA and for DRCA overlap but are not synonymous. DRCA's reportable deaths include incidents where people die:

1. While detained or arrested.
2. In the process of being detained or arrested.
3. Incarcerated in a municipal or state correctional facility.

The primary difference between the two sets of requirements is that RDCA explicitly includes deaths by use of force, regardless of whether the decedent had already been placed under arrest.

Limitations

Two limitations exist, and ICJIA is initiating steps to overcome each. They are as follows:

(1) Under RDCA and DCRA, ICJIA is mandated to collect, analyze, and report data on deaths in custody to ensure transparency and accountability in the criminal legal system. However, while ICJIA is tasked with this responsibility, it has no authority to compel external agencies to comply with the requirement to submit data.

This limitation presents challenges to achieving a comprehensive data collection. Reporting compliance relies on the cooperation and voluntary participation of law enforcement agencies, correctional facilities, and other entities. The accuracy and completeness of the data depend on the timeliness and thoroughness of agency submissions. ICJIA remains committed to working collaboratively with external agencies to improve reporting processes and ensure this critical information is accurately captured and transparently communicated to stakeholders (*Section 4*).

(2) ICJIA was limited this year in meeting the 730 ILCS 210/3-5(i)(3) requirement to recommend and present State and local efforts underway to reduce deaths in custody. This task involves implementing data collection processes beyond those used to document death in custody incidents. Specifically, ICJIA must gather additional information about strategies and initiatives aimed at reducing these deaths. In short, the requirement necessitates a separate research and analysis project (*Section 5*). For example, obtaining comprehensive information on State and local efforts requires engagement with law enforcement agencies, correctional facilities, community advocates, and public health professionals. Similarly, any recommendations must be grounded in a thorough understanding of current practices throughout Illinois, combined with established best practices.

Section 2: Summary – Deaths in Custody

ICJIA researchers analyzed deaths in custody reported across Illinois in 2024 and identified key demographic trends and agency-level patterns. Illinois agencies reported 129 deaths in custody that calendar year. Table 1 summarizes death in custody data from 2021-2024 to show the data in relation to earlier years.

Table 1
Illinois Deaths in Custody Reported to ICJIA, 2021-2024

Field	n (% of Field Total)			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Decedent age				
20 or younger	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.8%)
21-25	6 (4.1%)	8 (6.3%)	8 (5.7%)	6 (4.1%)
26-35	9 (6.1%)	20 (15.9%)	20 (14.3%)	16 (13.0%)
36-45	17 (11.5%)	13 (10.3%)	30 (21.4%)	24 (18.7%)
46-55	23 (15.5%)	27 (21.4%)	26 (18.6%)	23 (17.1%)
56-65	40 (27.0%)	29 (23.0%)	22 (15.7%)	26 (20.3%)
66-79	43 (29.1%)	24 (19.0%)	24 (17.1%)	26 (20.3%)
80 or older	8 (5.4%)	3 (2.4%)	8 (5.7%)	7 (5.7%)
Missing	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	148	126	140	129
Decedent gender				
Male	142 (95.9%)	117 (92.9%)	131 (93.6%)	127 (98.4%)
Female	6 (4.1%)	8 (6.3%)	9 (6.4%)	2 (1.6%)
Missing	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	148	126	140	129
Decedent race/ethnicity				
Asian	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Black	79 (53.4%)	57 (45.2%)	52 (37.1%)	66 (51.2%)
Hispanic/Latino	12 (8.1%)	13 (10.3%)	10 (7.1%)	13 (10.1%)
White	55 (37.2%)	50 (39.7%)	71 (50.7%)	48 (37.2%)
Missing	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.4%)	7 (5.0%)	2 (1.6%)
Total	148	126	140	129
Type of location where event causing death occurred				
At arrest scene/while affecting on arrest	9 (6.1%)	13 (10.3%)	4 (2.9%)	8 (6.2%)
Medical facility ^a	1 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
En route to a medical facility	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)
Booking center	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Municipal or county jail	10 (6.8%)	27 (21.4%)	41 (29.3%)	18 (14.0%)
State prison	125 (84.5%)	76 (60.3%)	81 (57.9%)	95 (73.6%)
Temporary holding facility	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.6%)	3 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Other	2 (1.4%)	6 (4.8%)	10 (7.1%)	8 (6.2%)
Total	148	126	140	129

	n (% of Field Total)			
Manner of death				
Death attributed to use of force by a peace officer	9 (6.1%)	10 (7.9%)	8 (5.7%)	9 (7.0%)
Homicide	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Natural causes	118 (79.7%)	63 (50.0%)	69 (49.3%)	67 (51.9%)
Suicide	6 (4.1%)	18 (14.3%)	15 (10.7%)	12 (9.3%)
Accident	6 (4.1%)	6 (4.8%)	2 (1.4%)	7 (5.4%)
Unavailable ^b	0 (0.0%)	18 (14.3%)	26 (18.6%)	21 (16.3%)
Other	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Missing	9 (6.1%)	11 (8.7%)	20 (14.3%)	13 (10.1%)
Total	148	126	140	129
Reporting agency type				
Police department	11 (7.4%)	18 (14.3%)	11 (7.9%)	11 (8.5%)
Sheriff's office	6 (4.1%)	20 (15.9%)	30 (21.4%)	19 (14.7%)
State prison	125 (84.5%)	76 (60.3%)	84 (60.0%)	98 (76.0%)
Missing	6 (4.1%)	12 (9.5%)	15 (10.7%)	1 (0.8%)
Total	148	126	140	129

Note: Percentages may not equal 100%, due to rounding. Differences between 2021 to 2023 totals and those in previously published Death In Custody Annual Report publications are due to ICJIA data quality checks.

^a Many agencies reported a hospital as the name of the location where an individual died but did not select a medical facility as a location type. See Section 3: Data Quality Control for ICJIA's policies on handling data discrepancies.

^b Manner of death was listed as unavailable in cases pending investigation. ICJIA plans to increase follow-up procedures in 2025 to reduce the number of records with an undetermined manner of death.

Figure 1 shows monthly death in custody trends from January 2024 through December 2024. The data show that deaths in custody fluctuated from three to as high as 15 in any given month. Overall, institutions reported an average of 11 deaths per month. These figures include individuals who died at any point of custody, including during arrest, transportation, booking, temporary lockup, and incarceration.

Figure 1

2024 Deaths in Custody by Month (N = 129)

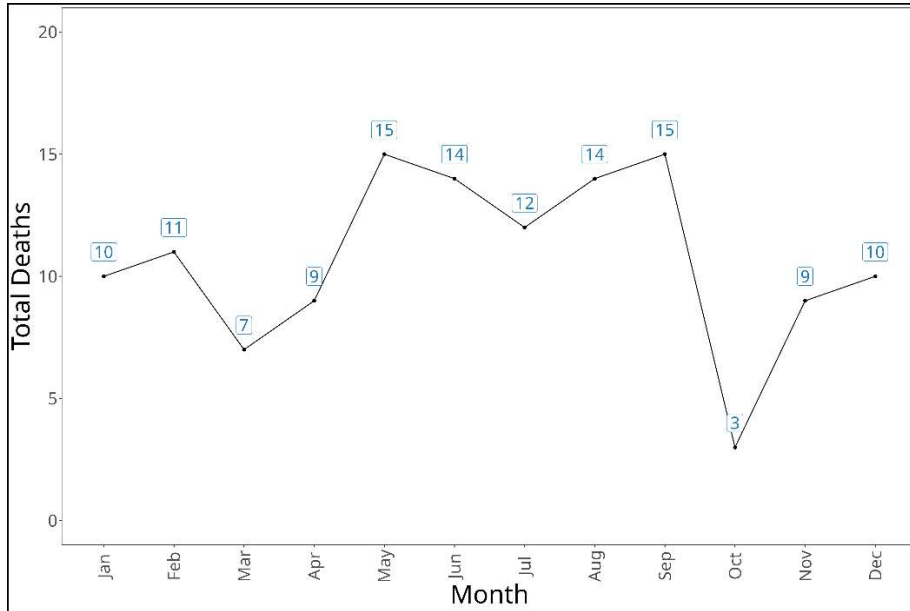
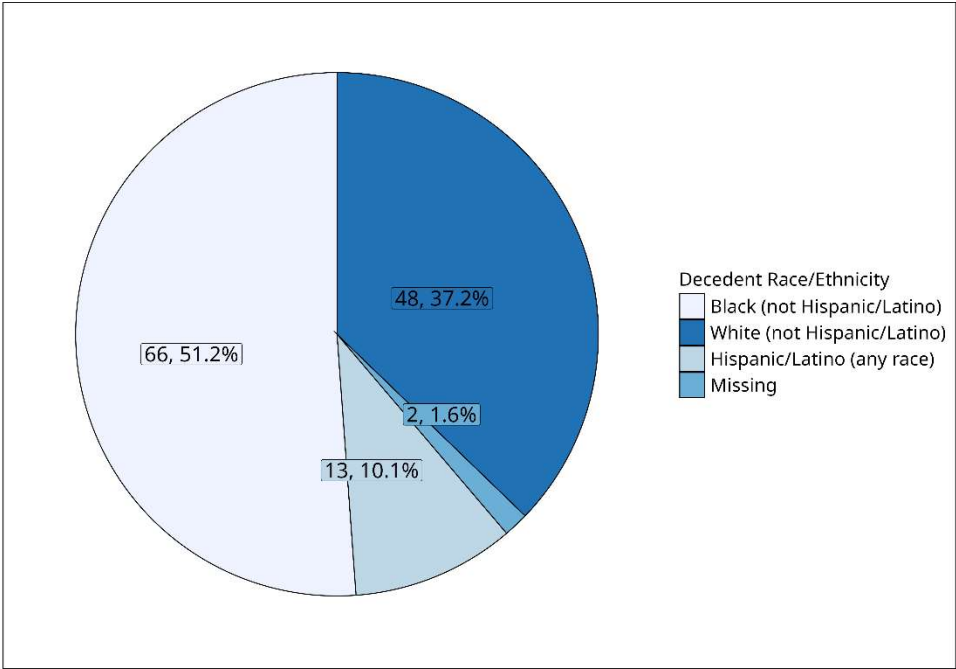


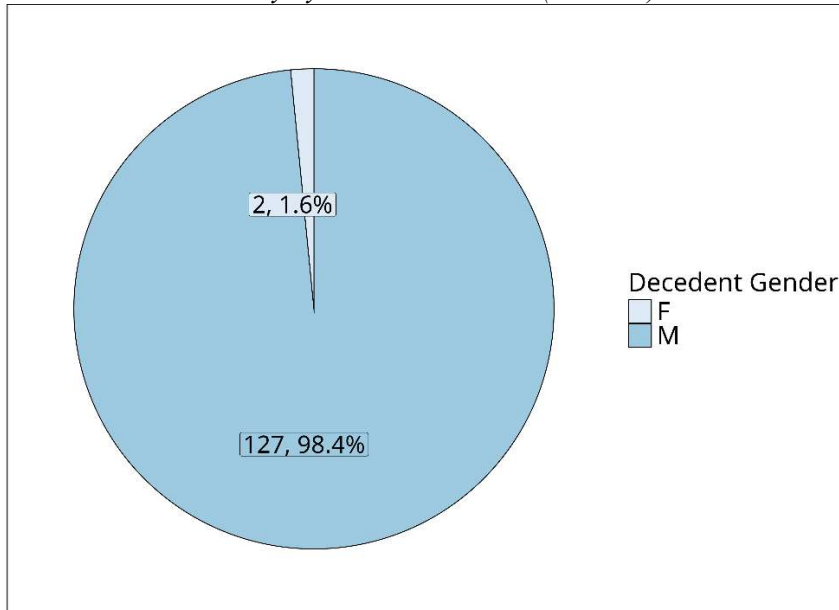
Figure 2 shows deaths in custody by decedent race in 2024. Just over 51% of decedents were identified as Black, about 37% were identified as White, and about 10% were identified as Hispanic or Latino. Racial/ethnic identity data were missing from two records.

Figure 2
2024 Deaths in Custody by Race of Decedent (N = 129)



Ninety-eight percent of death in custody decedents were male, while less than 2% were female (Figure 3).

Figure 3
2024 Deaths in Custody by Decedent Gender (N = 129)



Of the 129 people who died in custody in 2024, 36.4% were under the age of 46 (*Figure 5*). Individuals between the ages of 46 and 65 accounted for 40.0% of the deaths, while individuals over 65 accounted for 25.6% of the deaths. Compared to age at time of death figures for all Illinois residents, individuals who died in custody tended to die younger (Illinois Department of Public Health, 2022).

Figure 5
2024 Deaths in Custody by Age at Death (N=129)

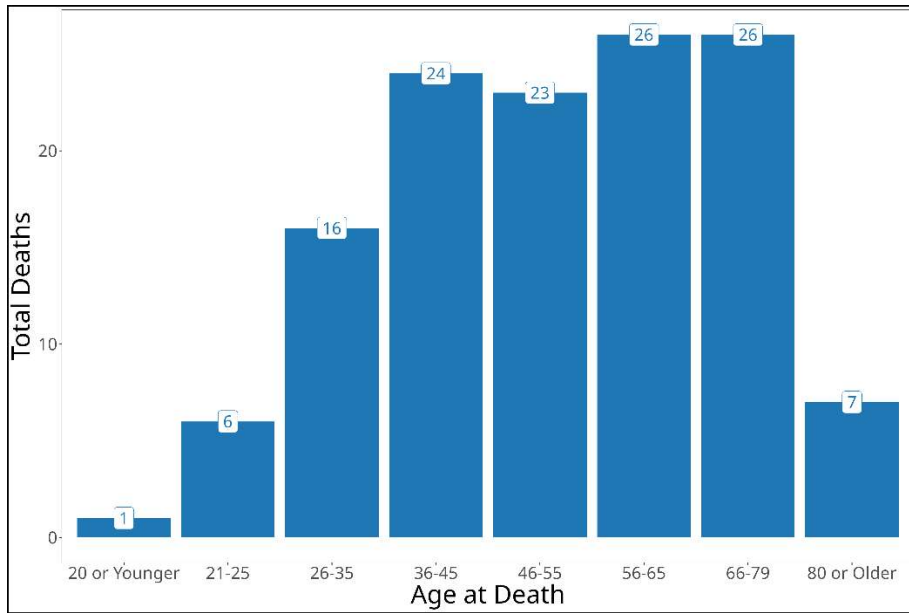


Figure 6 shows the average decedent age at death for each agency type. Individuals who died in police custody were younger, on average, than those who died in the custody of sheriffs or state prisons.

Figure 6
2024 Average Age at Death by Agency Type

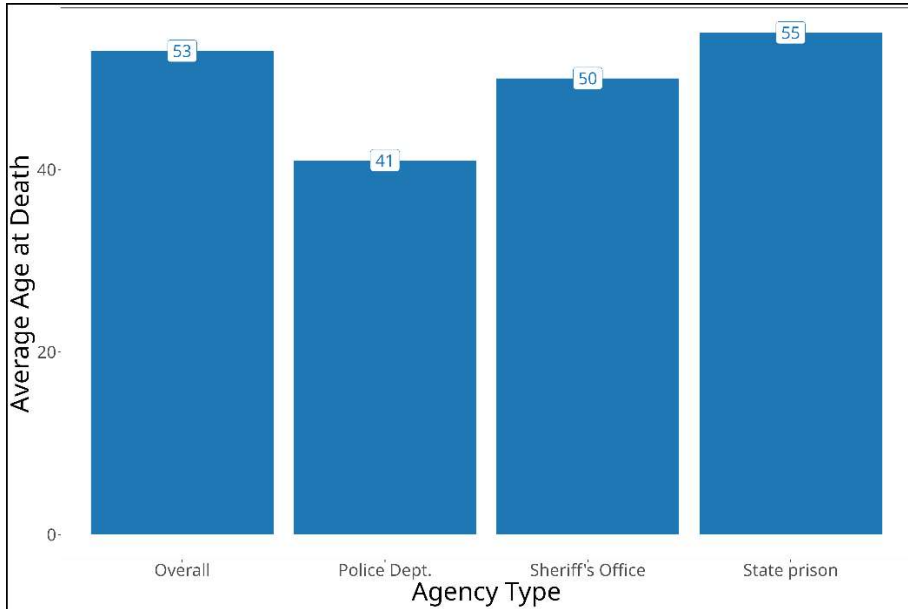
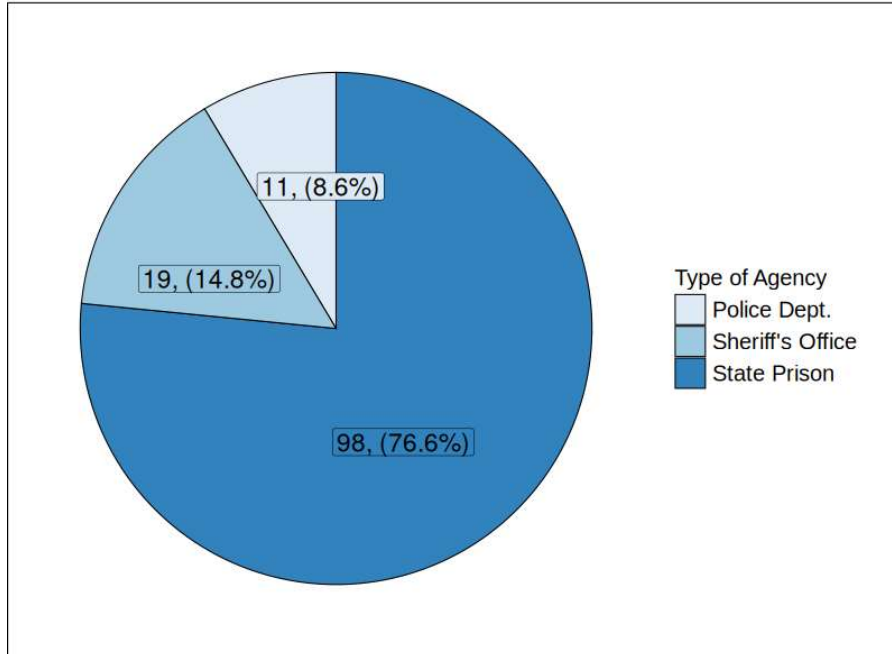


Figure 7 shows the percentage of deaths in custody by the type of agency in 2024. State prisons accounted for 77% of all deaths in custody, while police departments accounted for just under 9%, and sheriff's offices accounted for nearly 15%.

Figure 7

2024 Deaths in Custody by Agency Type (N = 128)



Note: One response was excluded from this figure due to incomplete data.

Table 2 summarizes the manners of death in custody in 2024 by agency type. In most counties, the coroner determines the manner of death (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). In Cook County, the determination may also involve the medical examiner, depending on the circumstances (Cook County Government, n.d.). However, for the purposes of reporting deaths in custody, the manner of death may also be determined by correctional officers, police officers, medical staff, or other personnel responsible for reporting. If a death investigation is not complete at the time of reporting, the manner of death is categorized as *Undetermined*.

When reading Table 2, note that each column represents the total number of deaths for a specific agency type, with each manner of death as a proportion of that total. For example, the first column indicates two deaths occurred in police custody due to accidents, accounting for 18.2% of the 11 deaths in police custody in 2024. Nearly 73% of deaths in police custody were attributed to officer use of force. In contrast, the leading manner of death in state prisons was natural causes (64.3%), which includes a wide range of medical conditions. Sheriff's department custody records did not reveal a leading manner of death, as many cases lacked complete data or were categorized as undetermined. However, natural causes were the most commonly reported category in cases with completed investigations (21.1%).

Deaths attributed to natural causes, accidents, or suicides occurred most frequently in state prisons, which also reported the highest overall number of deaths (Figure 7). This is likely due to the more extended periods of time that individuals spend in prison custody compared to police departments or sheriff's offices. Prisons also reported the most deaths and tended to have custody of individuals for longer periods than police departments or sheriff's offices do. Officer use of force was the leading cause of death in police custody and was less frequent in other types of custody. Among the three types of agencies, police departments had the fewest open investigations and the least amount of missing data when this report was published.

Table 2
Manner of Death by Agency Type – 2024 Deaths in Custody (N = 128)

Agency Type	Police department		Sheriff's office		State prison		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
	Accident	2	18.2	0	0.0	5	5.1	7
Natural causes	0	0.0	4	21.1	63	64.3	67	52.3
Officer use of force	8	72.7	1	5.3	0	0.0	9	7.0
Suicide	1	9.1	0	0.0	11	11.2	12	9.4
Homicide	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Undetermined ^a	0	0.0	8	42.1	12	12.2	20	15.6
Missing	0	0.0	6	31.6	7	7.1	13	10.2
Total	11	100.0	19	100.0	98	100.0	128	100.0

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not equal 100%.

^a In one record, both the manner of death and agency type were missing. That record is not reflected in this table.

Summary – Death in Custody Totals

Death in custody totals offer insights into the demographics of decedents and the characteristics of reporting agencies. Deaths in custody in 2024 totaled slightly less than in 2023. Meanwhile, the proportion of male individuals who died has increased over the past few years, and the proportion of Black individuals who died has also increased.

Deaths in custody fluctuated throughout 2024, peaking during the warmest months (May-September). Over half of all decedents were identified as Black. No Asian decedents were reported in 2024, a decrease from previous years. The proportion of female decedents was low this year, at under 2%. The ages of individuals who died in custody were relatively young, particularly when compared to age-at-death statistics for the general Illinois population. The data showed a lower average age among individuals who died in police custody (41) and a slightly higher average age among individuals who died in prison custody (55). The overall average age at death was 53. Most deaths occurred in state prison custody (77%), while 15% occurred in sheriff's custody (including jail stays), and just under 9% occurred in police custody.

Section 3: Policies Related to Deaths in Custody

Overview

This section addresses ICJIA's requirement to collect each agency's policies, procedures, and protocols on three topics:

1. **Medication:** The facility's provision, or lack of provision, of medications used to treat, mitigate, or address a person's symptoms.
2. **Withdrawal from substances:** Treatment of a person experiencing withdrawal from alcohol or substance use.
3. **Next-of-kin notification:** Notifying an inmate's next of kin after the inmate's in-custody death. (730 ILCS 210/3-5(j)(3)).

Sample and Methods

ICJIA researchers created a survey using Qualtrics software, which prompted law enforcement to upload files containing the relevant policies/procedures/protocols (Qualtrics, 2024). The survey was sent to law enforcement stakeholders at 894 agencies, comprising 774 police departments, 102 sheriff's offices (including jails operated by county sheriffs), 15 county juvenile corrections facilities,¹ IDJJ (responsible for five state juvenile corrections facilities), ISP, and IDOC. Another 53 agencies were not included because a valid email address could not be identified to distribute the survey. ICJIA staff confirmed that 17 agencies were no longer operational, and four unsworn agencies did not have the authority to hold individuals in custody as defined in RDCA or DCRA. Outreach efforts to law enforcement agencies included the use of a law enforcement directory (National Public Safety Information Bureau, 2024) and partnerships with law enforcement leaders and professional organizations (Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System, IDOC, IDJJ).

The survey opened on October 31, 2024. The original deadline for submission was December 15, 2024, but ICJIA accepted late responses. The following analysis will include only policies submitted by the deadline, but all policies collected by ICJIA will be posted online as required by RDCA (730 ILCS 210/3-5(j)(3)). After combining duplicates, ICJIA received responses from 391 agencies between October 31, 2024 and December 15, 2024.

¹ In Illinois, the five state-operated juvenile corrections facilities are operated by IDJJ, which is separate from the 16 county-operated facilities. One county-operated facility was not reached.

A total of 350 police departments, or 45.2%, of the 774 police departments contacted started the survey by the December 15 deadline (Table 3). This was higher than the proportion of sheriff’s offices (34.3%) or juvenile justice agencies (31.3%) who started the survey by the deadline. Overall, 338 police departments (43.7%) completed the survey by the deadline. This was also higher than the proportion of sheriff’s offices (30.4%) and juvenile justice agencies (31.3%) who completed the survey. ISP started and completed the survey by the deadline. IDOC sent their policy information after the deadline had passed.

Table 3
2024 RDCA Policy Survey Response Rates

Agency type	Started		Completed		Total contacted
	n	%	n	%	n
Police department	350	45.2	338	43.7	774
Sheriff’s office	35	34.3	31	30.4	102
Juvenile justice	5	31.3	5	31.3	16
ISP	1	100.0	1	100.0	1
IDOC	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Total	391	43.7	375	41.9	894

Data Collected and Analyzed

Of the 375 agencies that completed the full survey, 135 (36.0%) uploaded at least one file on all three topics, and 130 (34.7%) reported they did not have policies on any of the topics. Some file uploads contained multiple policies, and a few agencies uploaded full policy manuals.³ IDOC is not represented in the figures because it did not provide a response before the analysis was initiated. However, the policies provided by IDOC after the deadline will be posted on ICJIA’s website.

Medication Policies

A total of 383 agencies completed the medication policy section of the survey and 233 reported having at least one such policy. Those agencies included 200 of 344 police departments (58.1%), 27 of 33 sheriffs’ offices (81.8%), five of five juvenile justice agencies (100%), and one representative for the Illinois State Police (100%). A total of 150 agencies reported they did not have policies on medication. Those agencies included 144 of 344 police departments (41.9%) and six of 33 sheriffs’ offices (18.2%).

³ The statistics reported in this paragraph measure the number of files uploaded for each survey item, not the number of unique policies represented within each file.

Figure 8a
Number of Law Enforcement Agencies With Medication Policies in Place

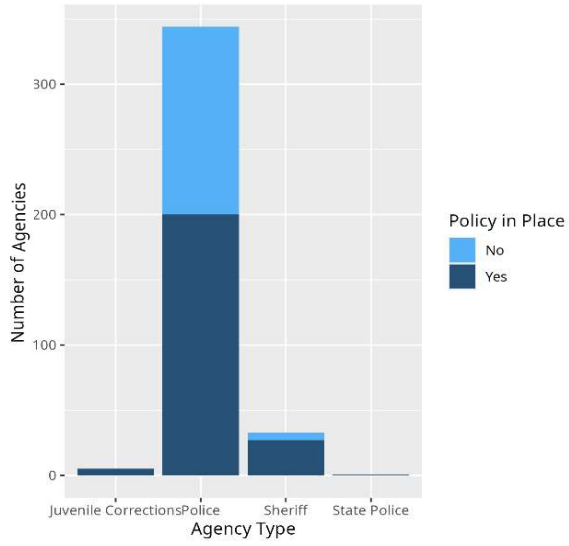
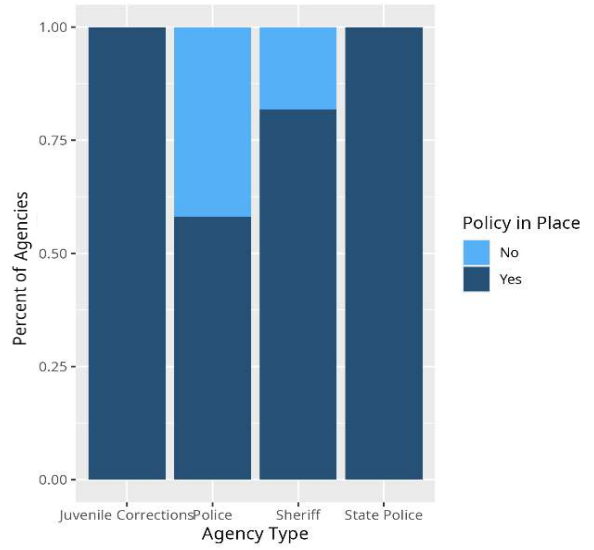


Figure 8b
Percent of Law Enforcement Agencies With Medication Policies in Place



Withdrawal From Substances Policies

A total of 375 agencies completed survey questions on withdrawal from substances policies and 175 reported having at least one such policy. Those agencies included 146 of 338 police departments (43.1%), 23 of 31 sheriff's offices (74.2%), five of five juvenile justice agencies (100%), and one representative for the Illinois State Police (100%). A total of 200 agencies reported having no policies on responding to withdrawal from substances. Those agencies included 192 out of 338 police departments (56.8%) and eight of 31 sheriffs' offices (25.8%).

Figure 9a

Number of Law Enforcement Agencies With Withdrawal Policies in Place

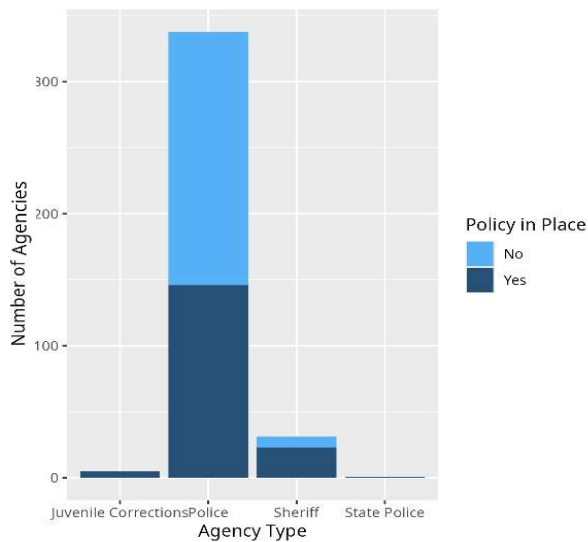
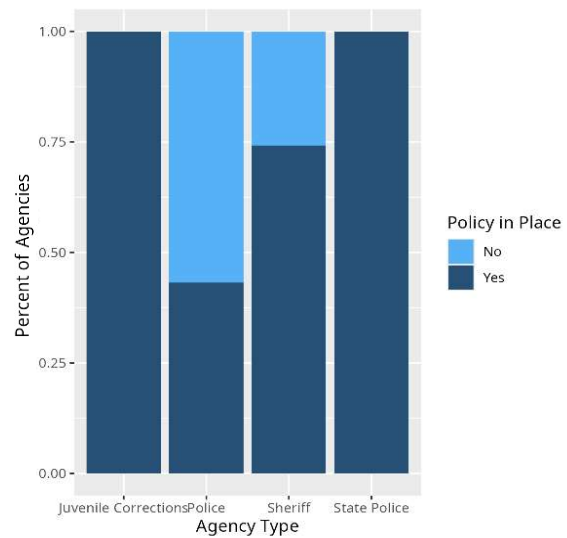


Figure 9b

Percent of Law Enforcement Agencies With Withdrawal Policies in Place



Next-of-Kin Notification Policies

A total of 375 agencies completed survey questions on next-of-kin notification policies and 180 reported having at least one such policy. Those agencies included 159 of 338 police departments (47.0%), 17 of 31 sheriffs' offices (48.6%), three of five juvenile justice agencies (60.0%), and one representative for the Illinois State Police (100%). A total of 195 agencies reported having no policies on next-of-kin notification. Those agencies included 179 of 338 police departments (52.9%), 14 of 31 sheriffs' offices (45.2%), and two of five juvenile justice agencies (40.0%).

Figure 10a
Number of Law Enforcement Agencies with Next-of-Kin Policies in Place

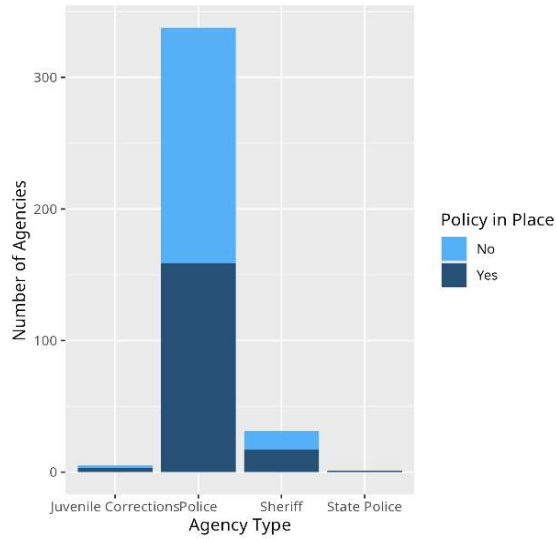
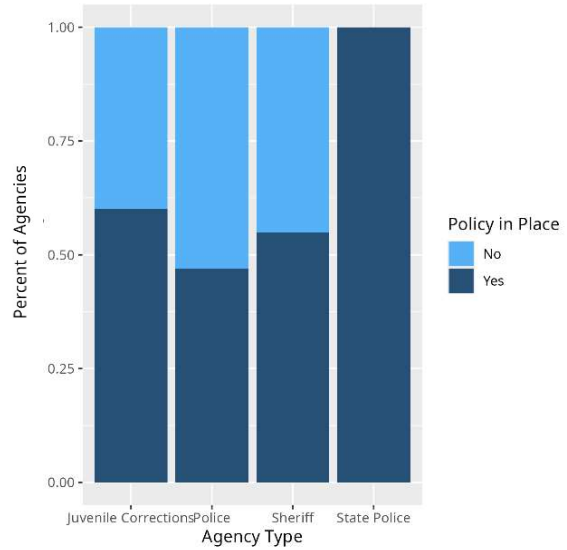


Figure 10b
Percent of Law Enforcement Agencies Next-of-Kin Policies in Place



Overall, the policy collection effort found that while most agencies that responded had at least one policy in place on at least one topic, relatively few agencies (slightly over one-third of responses) had policies on all three topics. For each of the three topics, a sizable proportion of agencies reported that they have no relevant policies or procedures in place. Police departments were most likely to report having no policy in place on any given subject. More than half of police departments did not have policies on withdrawal from substances or on next-of-kin notification. The full contents of all policies collected by ICJIA will be published online in a searchable pdf format.

Section 4: ICJIA Initiatives for Data Quality Control

In the 2022 and 2023 annual reports on death in custody, ICJIA identified important areas for improving statutory compliance. During 2024, ICJIA has been addressing the limitations related to data comprehensiveness and quality assurance. Our team has been developing strategies for auditing records. This section describes progress made toward those improvements and efforts underway to ensure easier audit participation for agencies.

During 2024, ICJIA has been addressing limitations by initiating efforts to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of death in custody records. The efforts include:

- **Complete Reports.** Asking reporting agencies to complete data fields that were missing or unknown at the time of initial reporting.
- **Missing Records.** Cross-checking multiple sources for missing records.
- **Data Accuracy.** Conducting internal quality checks for record redundancy and other aspects of data accuracy. These efforts included automating some processes and intensifying the focus on data audits.

At this report's writing, these processes are in their initial phases. The objectives of the 2024 audit were to address the three efforts mentioned above and to explain them in this report.

Ensuring Complete Reports

The first goal is to ensure that all submitted death in custody reports are complete. In late 2024, ICJIA staff began following up with reporting agencies when missing data fields were discovered. Some data elements, such as the manner of death, depend on law enforcement investigations or coroner reports, which may not be finalized when a report is submitted. In such cases, ICJIA staff contacted the responsible agency for information on the status of the missing information. ICJIA's policy is to report data exactly as they are presented by law enforcement and to avoid making assumptions about incomplete fields. For example, if the manner of death was left blank but narrative details suggest a possible cause, researchers would confirm the information with the agency rather than interpret the narrative themselves.

Identifying Missing Reports

The second goal was to identify whether any reports were missing from the dataset. ICJIA adopted two strategies to achieve this:

Cross-Checking External Databases: ICJIA compared its records with external sources, such as the Washington Post police shootings and the Campaign Zero Mapping Police Violence databases (Campaign Zero, 2025; The Washington Post, N.d.). These databases are widely cited in death in custody research, and are used by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance to validate federal reporting under the Death in Custody Reporting Act (Conner et. al., 2019; Gardner, 2020; James, 2023; Simckes et. al., 2023; Solomon, 2024; Walkup, 2021).

Searching Media Outlets: Staff systematically searched media reports for potential cases of deaths in custody. Using standardized search terms (e.g., lethal, death, jail, prison, officer-involved) and Boolean operators, they identified additional cases that met reporting criteria under Illinois state laws (730 ILCS 210/3; 34 U.S.C. § 60105). For any potential missing case, ICJIA contacted the relevant agency for information on the case and to request submission, if appropriate.

ICJIA staff emailed agencies to request missing information identified during the audit process. These requests ranged from completing individual fields to submitting records that may have been overlooked. ICJIA aims to standardize and streamline this process with pre-filled surveys containing available details. Agency respondents would only need to complete missing fields or explain why a particular death was not reportable under DCRA or RDCA. This would simplify the process for both researchers and agency personnel, and would provide opportunities to report on the audit process itself in the future.

Maintaining Data Accuracy

The third goal is to identify and correct errors in the dataset to ensure its reliability and validity. This involved a combination of automated and manual data checks.

- **Duplicate Reports:** In some cases, multiple agencies responding to the same incident submitted reports. Sometimes, agencies submitted updates to their original reports. Automated data cleaning processes sometimes failed to identify these duplicates, especially if there were discrepancies in name or date fields. To address this, ICJIA implemented manual reviews to identify and remove duplicate records.
- **Data Cleaning:** The audit process included a detailed review of data for typos, inconsistencies, and other errors that might affect the integrity of the dataset.

These measures reflect ICJIA's commitment to enhance the accuracy and comprehensiveness of its death in custody data and to ensure transparency in its reporting processes.

During this period of quality improvement, it is important to recognize that there may be differences between data in previous reports and the current dataset. Efforts to identify and add missing data as well as to detect and remove duplicates may slightly alter overall totals. Audit processes are ongoing and conducted quarterly. At the time of this report, the audit for the final quarter of 2024 (October-December) was not yet completed. By committing to routine audits and incremental improvements, ICJIA is creating a system that prioritizes data integrity and transparency. These efforts ensure that future analyses will be grounded in a comprehensive and accurate understanding of deaths in custody, enabling more effective responses to this critical issue.

As the quality check processes evolve, it is anticipated that ICJIA will identify errors or inconsistencies – missing data, possible duplicates, fields that contradict each other – and make modifications to records upon corroboration with reporting agencies.

Section 5: ICJIA Initiative to Examine Efforts to Reduce Deaths in Custody

RDCA specifies the deaths in custody annual report should include both a description of current initiatives to reduce deaths in custody and recommendations for practices that could reduce deaths in custody (730 ILCS 210/3-5(i)(3)). The 2023 annual report described plans to disseminate a survey on efforts to reduce deaths in custody. In 2024, ICJIA staff focused on data auditing and obtaining law enforcement policies. The work involved extensive contact with law enforcement agencies. During these processes, we learned that law enforcement may feel burdened by concurrent survey efforts. Believing that an additional survey would risk low response rates, staff developed an alternate plan to provide more detailed insights on efforts to reduce deaths in custody. ICJIA staff now are prepared to initiate a project designed to fulfill the requirements specified in 730 ILCS 210/3-5(i)(3).

ICJIA's agenda for researching efforts to reduce deaths in custody begins with capacity-building. The efforts described in Section 4: ICJIA Initiatives for Data Quality Control will support ICJIA's goal of identifying strategies for reducing deaths in custody. ICJIA is updating its law enforcement agency contacts to ensure that data collected more accurately represents Illinois law enforcement systems. Staff hiring to complete this work is also underway.

Another component of the research includes interviewing Illinois stakeholders who are already working to reduce the number of people who die in custody each year. ICJIA staff will begin by conducting a pre-interview stakeholder analysis by monitoring media sources to gather background information, by reading publications by Illinois leaders on related topics, by attending professional networking events, and by conducting informal outreach conversations to gain insights into the field. The interview process must encourage different perspectives, considering factors such as geographic location, areas of expertise, relationships to the justice system, and local contexts. Staff will share the results of the stakeholder analysis with external partners for feedback before the interviews are conducted (Varvasovszky & Brugha, 2000). Interview participants will be invited to suggest other potential participants to expand our network of contacts (Heckathorn, 2011; Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). After the interviews, ICJIA researchers will highlight key themes and takeaways, providing quotes and examples to illustrate the main ideas.

To begin exploring recommendations for reducing deaths in custody, ICJIA is planning a scoping literature review on reducing deaths in custody in each of the custodial settings covered by the RDCA (police, sheriffs and jails, juvenile corrections, adult corrections). A scoping literature review can help identify evidence-supported interventions that have been successful in reducing deaths in custody. Scoping reviews can also help evaluate the quality of the research studies included and compare the contexts where these interventions were tested with the context of Illinois institutions.

Conclusion

In 2024, ICJIA made significant strides in its efforts to improve the collection, quality, and analysis of death in custody data. Key accomplishments include identifying critical areas for improvement, implementing a revamped internal audit process, and initiating steps toward a streamlined and standardized audit outreach system. These efforts represent an important foundation for building a more accurate and transparent data reporting framework.

ICJIA also advanced its policy collection efforts, gathering information on medication, withdrawal from substances, and next-of-kin notification policies from 383 agencies. This marks a crucial step toward understanding systemic practices and identifying gaps in the care and oversight provided to individuals in custody.

Looking ahead, ICJIA is planning a qualitative research study to gather insights from leaders across Illinois on efforts to reduce deaths in custody. A scoping literature review is planned to identify evidence-based practices that can inform actionable recommendations for reducing fatalities in custodial settings. These initiatives will enable ICJIA to integrate national best practices with Illinois-specific insights, creating a data-driven foundation for future policy reform.

As part of its ongoing commitment, ICJIA will continue to enhance the quality and completeness of its data while expanding its research capacity. These efforts underscore the agency's dedication to improving transparency, accountability, and outcomes within the criminal legal system. By prioritizing robust data collection and meaningful analysis, ICJIA aims to provide actionable insights to drive policy change and reduce preventable deaths in custody.

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Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

60 E. Van Buren Street, Suite 650
Chicago, Illinois 60605
Phone: (312) 793-8550
Fax: (312) 793-8422
TDD: (312) 793-4170

<https://icjia.illinois.gov/>