

2020 HAWAII DRUG RELATED DEATHS AND OVERDOSE REPORT



Hawaii HIDTA March 2021

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INTRODUCTION:

The following information, charts and statistical data are presented in this report to represent and interpret the data collected from Hawaii's County Coroner Physicians and Honolulu Medical Examiner (representing the four island counties of Hawaii) during Calendar Year 2020. The data is taken directly from County Coroner Physicians' and Medical Examiner's autopsy reports and represents only the drug related/overdose deaths verified by examinations, investigations and toxicology reports performed in CY2020.

Producing a "straight-forward" narrative associated to the compilation of raw numbers (data) into organized charts and graphs is always a challenge, and further compounded over the debate of these statistics and interpretations ad nauseum, depending on the researcher's/presenter's agenda. But the Hawaii HIDTA believes that the data achieved by virtue of the cooperation of Hawaii's Coroners and Medical Examiner, can effectively navigate the direction and strategy of Hawaii's drug interdiction enforcement agencies, and hopefully the region's drug prevention, treatment, and education providers as well.

These yearly reports began in 2018 and encompass the Hawaii Medical Examiner data collected from 2016 to 2020. These annual reports, compiled into charts and graphs for analysis, are made public to better serve our criminal justice, treatment and prevention and research disciplines. This reporting methodology was made possible through the analytical effort and diligent work of the Hawaii HIDTA Investigative Support Center (ISC), and in direct cooperation with the Honolulu Medical Examiner and County Coroners. To date, the Hawaii HIDTA is the only entity in Hawaii that retrieves and analyzes drug related death data directly from Hawaii's forensic pathology authorities.

The Hawaii HIDTA wishes to thank Maui Police Department Chief Tivoli Faaumu, Kauai Police Department Chief Todd Raybuck and Hawaii County Police Department Chief Ferreira for authorizing release of the drug-related death reported data in their jurisdictions. And without the efforts and professionalism of County Coroner Physician Martin Ishikawa (representing neighbor-islands), Honolulu Medical Examiner Masahiko Kobayashi and Hawaii HIDTA Director Gary Yabuta, this annual reporting process would not be possible.

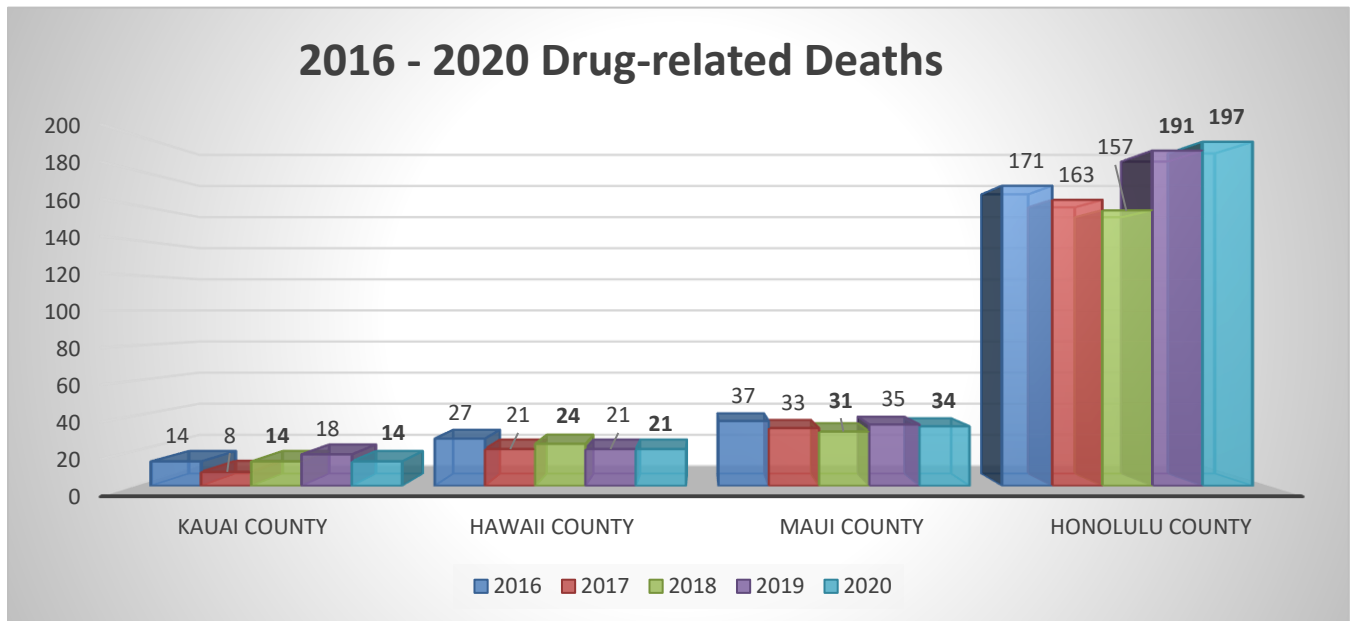
Furthermore for definition or better said clarification purposes, we have spent considerable time and discussions with investigators, medical officers, epidemiologists, and other research professionals to find an effective delineation of what should be considered a “Drug Overdose” or a fatal cause of death in this context. The preponderance of opinions weighed towards a supposition that any one of the drug related deaths (author’s term) included in this report is considered a Drug Overdose.

For the purposes of this reporting terminology, whether a single-massive toxic poisoning as direct cause of death, or the last identified drug trait in a string of chronic drug abuse that placed the person into a final fatal medical condition-they are all considered **Overdoses**. (Not even our participating forensic pathologists could agree as to whether these deaths were actual drug overdoses or by other causes, and the influence of subjectivity may prevail when attempting to do so.)

This report is Hawaii HIDTA’s best effort to provide the reader with a simplified and intelligent product that may assist your understanding of what drugs people die from in Hawaii, what are the new and emerging drug trends in Hawaii, and what are Hawaii’s greatest drug threats. In caution, this author leaves you with a final thought:

“The great enemy of the truth is very often not the **lie**—deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the **myth**—persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.” –JOHN F. KENNEDY

GENERAL OVERALL DRUG DEATH STATISTICS:

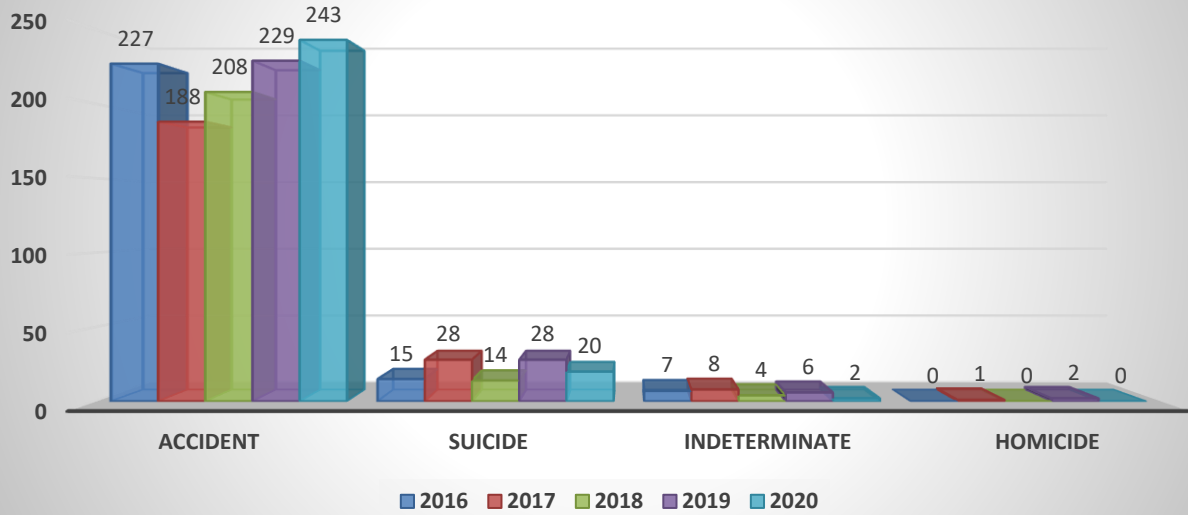


<i>Drug-Related Deaths</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Kauai County	14	8	14	18	14
Hawaii County	27	21	24	21	21
Maui County	37	33	31	35	34
Honolulu County	171	163	157	191	197
Total	249	225	226	265	266

<i>Deaths - All Causes</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Kauai County	553	570	545	600	547
Hawaii County	1,586	1,705	1,673	1,717	1,764
Maui County	1,064	1,136	1,161	1,265	1,213
Honolulu County	7,806	8,094	8,143	8,161	8,274
Total	11,009	11,505	11,522	11,744	11,798

<i>% of Deaths that are Drug-Related</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Kauai County	2.5%	1.4%	2.6%	3.0%	2.6%
Hawaii County	1.7%	1.2%	1.4%	1.2%	1.2%
Maui County	3.5%	2.9%	2.7%	2.8%	2.8%
Honolulu County	2.2%	2.0%	1.9%	2.3%	2.4%
Average	2.5%	1.9%	2.2%	2.3%	2.2%

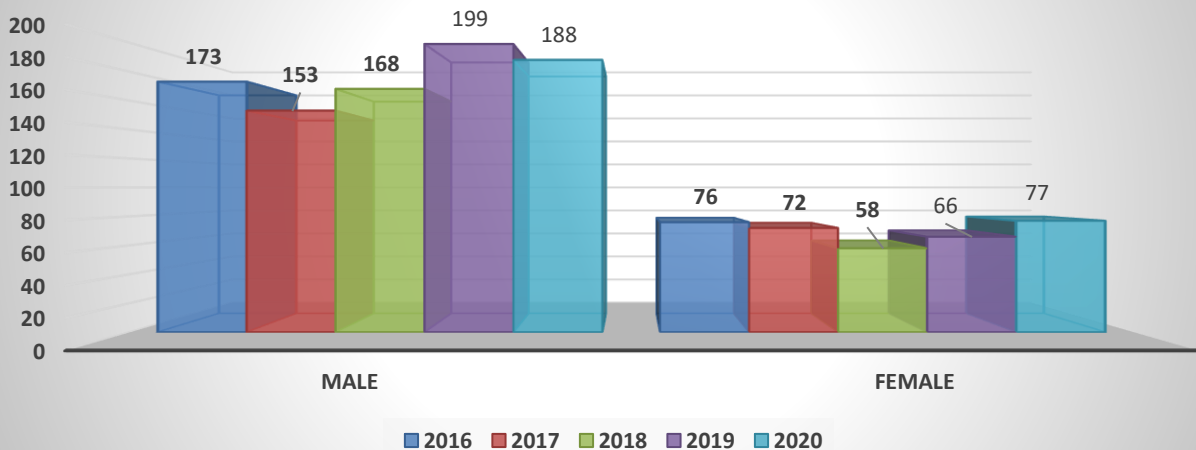
2016-2020 Drug-related Deaths by Type



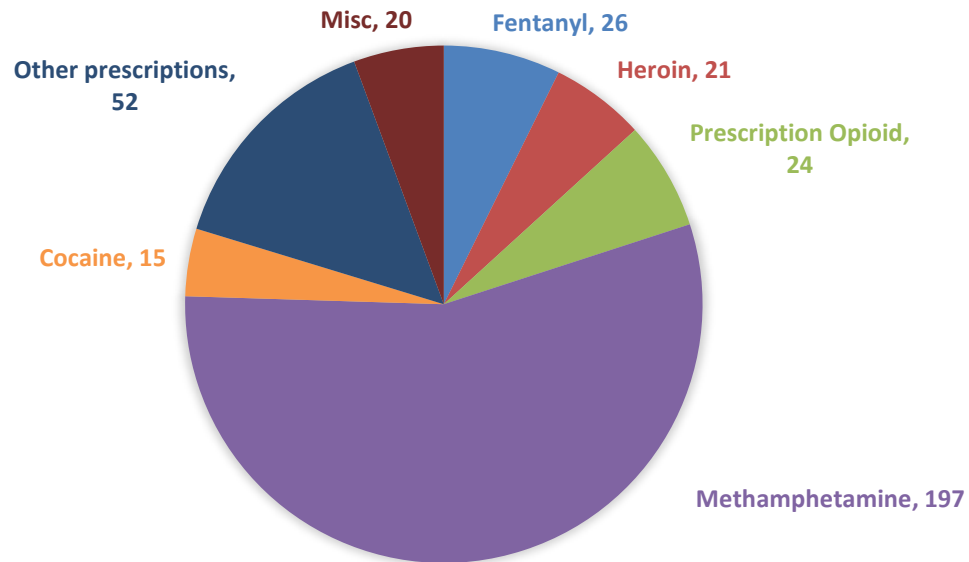
Cause of Death	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Accident	227	188	208	229	243
Suicide	15	28	14	28	20
Indeterminate	7	8	4	6	2
Homicide	0	1	0	2	0

Drug Deaths - Gender	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	173	153	168	199	188
Female	76	72	58	66	77

2016-2020 Drug-related Deaths by Gender



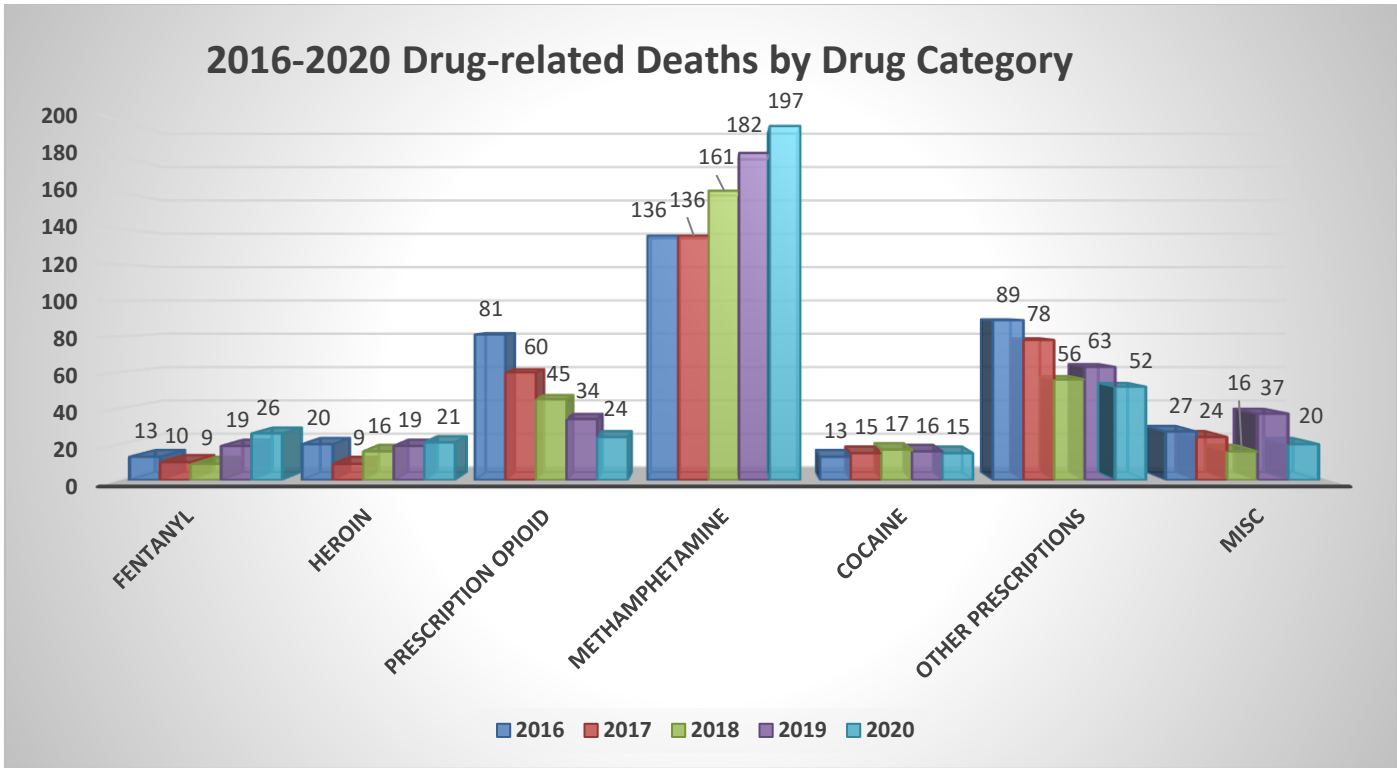
2020 DRUG-RELATED DEATHS BY DRUG CATEGORY



Drug Deaths by Category	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Fentanyl	13	10	9	19	26
Heroin	20	9	16	19	21
Prescription Opioid	81	60	45	34	24
Methamphetamine	136	136	161	182	197
THC*	13	20	20	14	14
Cocaine	13	15	17	16	15
Other prescriptions	89	78	56	63	52
Misc.**	27	24	16	37	20

* THC is included only as appearing in the toxicology screen, not as a causal factor.

** Misc. represents non-narcotic substances found in the screens, i.e. Ethanol, non-prescription drugs, non-narcotic substances, etc.

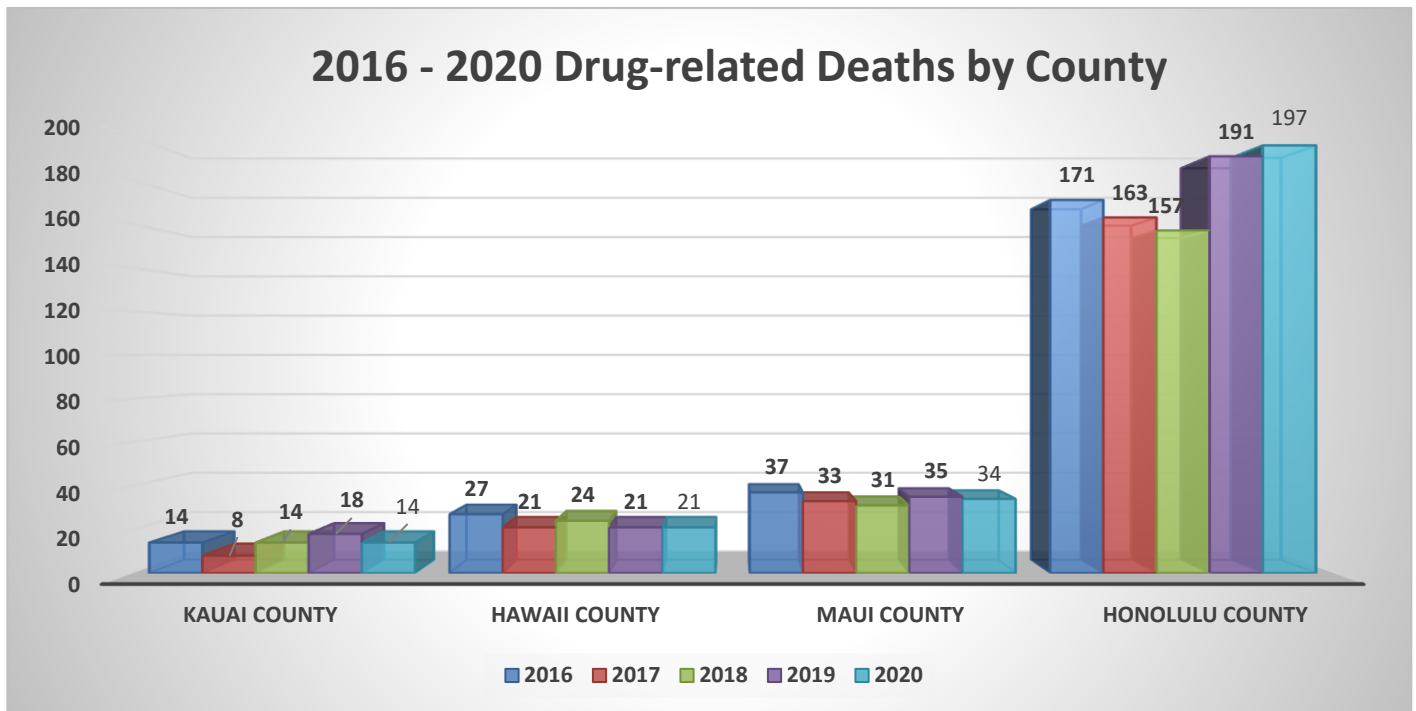


Summary of 2020 Hawaii Overall Drug Death Statistics:

Total drug related deaths	266	Accidental:	243
		Suicide:	20
Total Meth related	197	Homicide:	0
Meth only*	163	Undetermined:	2
Meth Mixed	34		
Fentanyll Totals	26		
Fentanyll Only	5		
Fentanyll Mix	21		
Heroin Totals	21		
Heroin Only	5		
Heroin Mix	16		
Cocaine Totals	15		
Cocaine Only	5		
Cocaine Mix	10		
All Other Drugs & Alcohol	6		

* The description as (drug) only and (drug) mixed, refer to the (drug) as principal cause of death vs. a mix or cocktail of drugs immediately leading to the death.

DRUG RELATED DEATHS STATISTICS BY COUNTY :



The following pages and charts refer to the frequency of different drug appearance in the toxicology reports related to the drug related deaths reported by county, i.e., Kauai reported 14 drug related deaths in 2016: as seen in the above chart. The toxicology panels revealed the presence of Fentanyl at least once in that total, Heroin at least twice and Methamphetamine five times and so on..., as listed in the following charts.

Emphasis: the number of drug related deaths for a given year will not be equal to the numbers of drugs listed below, as multiple drugs may often be present in any given case. These charts represent the frequency of any given drug occurring in the drug related deaths in each county per annum.

Kauai County

Drug Frequency in Deaths: Kauai	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Fentanyl	1	0	0	1	3
Heroin	2	1	0	1	2
Prescription Opioid	9	3	3	4	0
Methamphetamine	5	4	12	9	12
THC	2	2	5	3	0
Cocaine	2	0	1	1	1
Other prescriptions	9	6	3	7	2
Misc.	3	2	2	4	0

<i>Kauai County Drug-Related Death Statistics.</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	11	4	12	12	11
Female	3	4	2	6	3
	14	8	14	18	14
Male	79%	50%	86%	67%	79%
Female	21%	50%	14%	33%	21%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Residents	14	7			
Visitors	0	0			
Unknown	0	1			
	14	8			
Accident	12	5	14	12	13
Suicide	2	3	0	6	1
Indeterminate	0	0	0	0	0
Homicide	0	0	0	0	0
	14	8	14	18	14
Average Age	45	51	48	56	50

Maui County

Drug Frequency in Deaths: Maui	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Fentanyl	1	0	0	1	3
Heroin	2	1	0	1	2
Prescription Opioid	9	3	3	4	0
Methamphetamine	5	4	12	9	12
THC	2	2	5	3	0
Cocaine	2	0	1	1	1
Other prescriptions	9	6	3	7	2
Misc.	3	2	2	4	0

<i>Maui County Drug-Related Death Statistics</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	17	21	22	27	21
Female	20	12	9	8	13
	37	33	31	35	34
Male	46%	64%	71%	77%	62%
Female	54%	36%	29%	23%	38%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Residents	28	33			
Visitors	5	0			
Unknown	4	0			
	37	33			
Accident	30	26	25	29	31
Suicide	4	5	6	5	2
Indeterminate	3	2	0	1	1
Homicide	0	0	0	0	0
	37	33	31	35	34
Average Age	51	55	55	51	51

Hawaii County

Drug Frequency in Deaths: Hawaii	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Fentanyl	4	3	6	3	1
Heroin	1	0	3	1	0
Prescription Opioid	13	9	7	6	3
Methamphetamine	11	11	18	10	15
THC	11	5	7	6	0
Cocaine	1	1	0	3	0
Other prescriptions	16	13	11	6	6
Misc.	7	2	1	5	2

<i>Hawaii County Drug-Related Death Statistics</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	21	17	18	18	13
Female	6	4	6	3	8
	27	21	24	21	21
Male	78%	81%	75%	86%	62%
Female	22%	19%	25%	14%	38%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Residents	N/A	N/A			
Visitors	N/A	N/A			
Unknown	N/A	N/A			
Accident	24	18	23	17	18
Suicide	2	1	1	4	2
Indeterminate	1	2	0	0	1
Homicide	0	0	0	0	0
	27	21	24	0	21
Average Age	47	49	46	46	49

Honolulu County

Drug Frequency in Deaths: Oahu	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Fentanyl	5	4	1	12	16
Heroin	15	8	12	14	16
Prescription Opioid	42	35	18	16	17
Methamphetamine	110	102	117	139	148
THC	0	0	1	0	0
Cocaine	7	13	14	10	10
Other prescriptions	36	38	23	12	31
Misc.	10	16	8	20	12

<i>Honolulu County Drug-Related Death Statistics</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	124	111	116	142	143
Female	47	52	41	49	53
	171	163	157	191	196
Male	73%	68%	74%	74%	73%
Female	27%	32%	26%	26%	27%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Residents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Visitors	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Unknown	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Accident	161	139	146	171	182
Suicide	7	19	7	13	14
Indeterminate	3	4	4	5	0
Homicide	0	1	0	2	0
	171	163	157	191	196
Average Age	50	49	49	52	51

Conclusions and Related Findings:

Based on the information presented above the following conclusions and observations should be made:

- Significantly, the overall number of drug related deaths did not increase in the overall from 2019 to 2020, and both years held near at 265 and 266 deaths, respectively. Also, the percentage of Opioid related deaths remained the same at 19% although the Methamphetamine related deaths rose by 8%.
- The largest groups by age were 40s to 60s with 50s representing the largest group at 97 deaths, the overall average age was around 51; there was only one adolescent death (15) and the oldest was 98.
- COVID-19 did not appear to affect drug deaths trend in 2020.
- The prices for both Cocaine and Heroin remained relatively stable from 2019 to 2020 and interestingly enough did not skyrocket like Methamphetamine did during the course of 2020 and COVID-19.
- Prior to the pandemic and in the beginning of 2020, the price of methamphetamine was extremely low, at \$350 per ounce; but by mid-year, the price increased to an average of \$2,100 per ounce. By year's end, the price of methamphetamine was \$650 per ounce. The increase of methamphetamine is believed to be related to interstate air passenger travel restrictions to Hawaii and the arbitrary jump in wholesale drug pricing controlled by the Mexican Cartels (principal manufacturer and distributor of methamphetamine).
- Emergency Room Physicians in Hawaii advised that towards the end of 2020, substance use disorders (SUD) ER intake for emergency medical treatment for previous chronic Heroin users were being admitted for acute Methamphetamine related treatments during COVID-19.
- Hawaii is experiencing an increase in the trafficking of counterfeit opioid pills, i.e., counterfeit oxycodone pills laced with fentanyl. Fentanyl related deaths in Hawaii increased from 19 in 2019 to 26 in 2020.
- The novel mainland concept and practice of spiking or lacing (combining drugs), i.e., Methamphetamine and Fentanyl, and Cocaine with Fentanyl, is expected to continue into 2021 and in the future.
- The principal emphasis made by all of the presented statistics in this report, which focuses on methamphetamine in Hawaii based on pure forensic pathology data, is to make it perfectly clear and plain to see that it is the abuse of this most destructive and malicious drug known as crystal methamphetamine that produces the highest level of drug related deaths in Hawaii. All of the other drugs pale in comparison. This fact is best represented by the following and final graphic which bears repeating:

2020 DRUG-RELATED DEATHS BY DRUG CATEGORY

