

EL PASO COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



The El Paso County Coroner’s Office (EPCCO) serves the citizens of El Paso County by investigating all sudden, unexpected, and non-natural deaths. While many deaths can be certified by the decedent’s physician, approximately 20-25% require further investigation. This process determines the cause and manner of death for those individuals in addition to protecting public health and safety.

In 2025, EPCCO performed **994 autopsies on in-county deaths**. For a fee, the El Paso County Coroner’s Office also completed 437 examinations for deaths originating in 20 other Colorado counties. Local autopsies increased 14.6% from 2024; “out of county” exams increased by 25%, reflecting the mass recovery of remains from Davis Mortuary in Pueblo County. If those cases are excluded, “out of county” exams increased 10%.

2025 TOTAL CASES INVESTIGATED 6739 (7% increase from 2024)	2025 TOTAL AUTOPSIES 1431 (18% increase from 2024)	2025 DEATHS WITHOUT AUTOPSY 5308
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This past year, the El Paso County Coroner’s Office facilitated the recovery, processing, and identification of remains discovered at Davis Mortuary in Pueblo, CO. During the course of that investigation, EPCCO also co-ran the Pueblo County Coroner’s Office alongside the Fremont County Coroner’s Office.

In 2025, EPCCO’s staff consisted of five full-time board-certified forensic pathologists, including Coroner and Chief Medical Examiner Emily Russell-Kinsley, M.D.; Deputy Chief Medical Examiner Megan Lawless, M.D.; and Associate Coroners Alyssa Byrd, M.D.; Amanda Hersh, D.O.; and Jarod Murdoch, D.O; and one part-time contract forensic pathologist. The office also employed three administrative staff, 11 death investigators, four toxicologists, one histologist, and six morgue technicians.

Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S.) 30-10-606 describes the roles and responsibilities of county coroners during death investigations. Complete forensic investigations primarily provide the cause and manner of death for individual decedents, but they can also assist in settling insurance or estate claims and determining the pursuit of civil or criminal charges relating to those deaths. The investigation of deaths can also identify issues relating to public health and safety by indicating trends in diseases, accidents, and crimes. As a result, these investigations provide peace of mind for both surviving loved ones and the public.

One of EPCCO’s responsibilities is to confirm the decedent’s identity and notify that person’s next-of-kin. In most cases, identification can be completed quickly through visual or forensic means. However, this process may prove more challenging in cases that involve burns, extensive injuries, or decomposition.

The El Paso County Coroner’s Office works to exhaust all leads pursuant to identification of the deceased and notification of their families. In 2025, 4 cases from El Paso County, dating back to 1984, were still pending identification. DNA testing, forensic anthropology, and facial reconstruction methods have been utilized in those investigations to broaden the reach of these efforts. As a result of this work, 8 long-term John and Jane Does whose identities had been unknown for a month or more were identified within El Paso County in 2025.

This past year, EPCCO released 69 unclaimed remains to the Public Administrator to receive their final disposition. The Public Administrator’s Office steps in when family cannot be located or cannot make arrangements for the deceased.

Means of Identification*

Visual - 517	DNA - 2
Fingerprints - 443	Unidentified** - 10
Circumstantial - 23	Out of County Coroners - 381
Dental - 2	

*These counts exclude cases investigated during the recovery of remains from Davis Mortuary.
**This number includes unidentified cases from outside of El Paso County.

The term “autopsy” refers to a post-mortem (after death) examination of a deceased person to determine their cause and manner of death. An autopsy can feature different levels of examination appropriate to each case.

295

295 cases in 2025 were “**external only**”, wherein the cause and manner could be established by the external examination* and a thorough medical history.

96

96 exams were **partial autopsies**, typically consisting of internal “head only” examinations to determine whether or not head trauma caused or contributed to the death.

987

987 autopsies included a full internal exam in which each organ is examined. These are considered “**complete**” autopsies.

24

24 deaths were certified after an investigation and review of medical records but without an exam. EPCCO may perform these reviews in rare cases where a decedent does not have a primary care provider at the time of death or only sees one licensed outside of Colorado.

96%

96% (1320 cases) included **toxicology testing**. Samples are nearly always collected during the autopsy, but tests may not be performed at the discretion of the pathologist.

843

843 of 994 (85%) of El Paso County’s autopsies involved **death scene investigation**. This means that a death investigator was dispatched to the place of death to perform an on-site investigation.

0

El Paso County Coroner’s Office performed 0 **exhumations** in 2025.

Please note that the above statistics do not include any cases associated with the Davis Mortuary recovery, as those exams were unique to that effort.

***External Examination** – Every autopsy includes a thorough examination of the outside of the decedent’s body to document changes due to natural disease, identifying marks and scars, evidence of medical treatment, injuries, and an inventory of clothing and property.

Average Time to Completion

In 2025, the average duration between autopsy and report completion was **33.4 days**. 108 cases (7.8%) required more than 60 days for a finished report, typically due to the case’s complexity, ongoing investigation, and/or additional testing. This represents an increase from 64 long-term cases in 2024.

Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S.) 30-10-606 mandates that the following deaths must be reported to and investigated by the Coroner:

- Sudden, unexpected, or non-natural deaths
- When no physician is available to certify the deaths
- Industrial or workplace accidents
- Deaths that occur in the custody of law enforcement or in the care of a public institution
- Deaths due to public health threats
- All unexplained deaths

The responsibilities of a Colorado county Coroner's Office include:

- Pronouncing death
- Determining the cause and manner of death
- Identifying human remains
- Notifying the decedent's next-of-kin
- Investigating deaths in conjunction with, but independent of, law enforcement agencies
- Collecting evidence present on or within the body
- Securing a decedent's property for their next-of-kin
- Providing expert testimony in criminal or civil proceedings
- Granting tissues and/or organs for donation when permission has been given by the next-of-kin

2025 Revenue for El Paso County Coroner’s Office

Grant for Violent Death Reporting	\$2,329.00
Out of County Autopsy Fees	\$765,175.00
Histology Fees	\$2,580.00
HB-21-1317 Tax Reimbursement	\$11,250.00
OD2A-S Toxicology Grant	\$45,000.00
Facility Fees	\$2,200.00
Other Miscellaneous Fees*	\$93,122.46
Total Revenue for 2025	\$921,656.46
	62% increase from 2024

El Paso County citizen cost breakdown

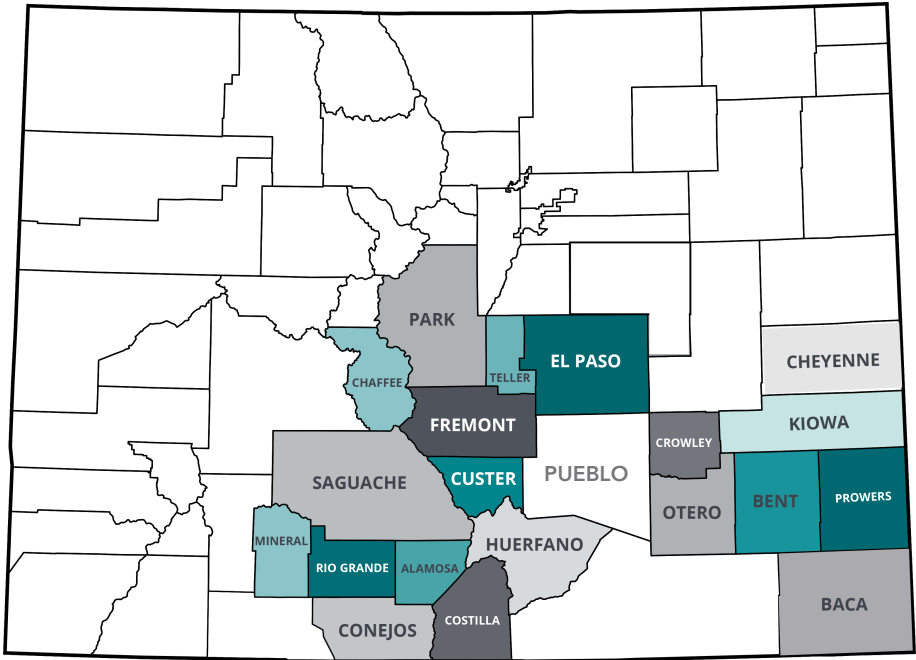
2025 population** of El Paso County	757,040
Total 2025 budget	\$4,400,262
Overall cost to citizens	\$3,478,606
Annual cost to each El Paso County citizen	= \$4.60

*The “Other Miscellaneous Fees” category includes reimbursements owed to EPCCO for its role in the mass recovery of remains from Davis Mortuary and the staffing of the Pueblo County Coroner’s Office during that state of emergency.

**US Census Bureau (2025)

1431

total autopsies



COUNTY	# of Autopsies	# of Autopsies	COUNTY
ALAMOSA	27	70	FREMONT
BACA	7	20	HUERFANO
BENT	9	7	KIOWA
CHAFFEE	40	7	MINERAL
CHEYENNE	3	19	OTERO
CONEJOS	15	37	PARK
COSTILLA	17	15	PROWERS
CROWLEY	9	53*	PUEBLO
CUSTER	5	28	RIO GRANDE
EL PASO	994	17	SAGUACHE
		32	TELLER

*These exams were completed as part of the Davis Mortuary recovery operation.

“Manner of death” refers to the circumstances surrounding the cause of death. The “cause of death” describes the disease or injury that led to the death. There are five possible manners present on a Colorado death certificate:

Natural - These deaths are due solely to disease or aging.

Accident - These deaths occur due to unintentional injury.

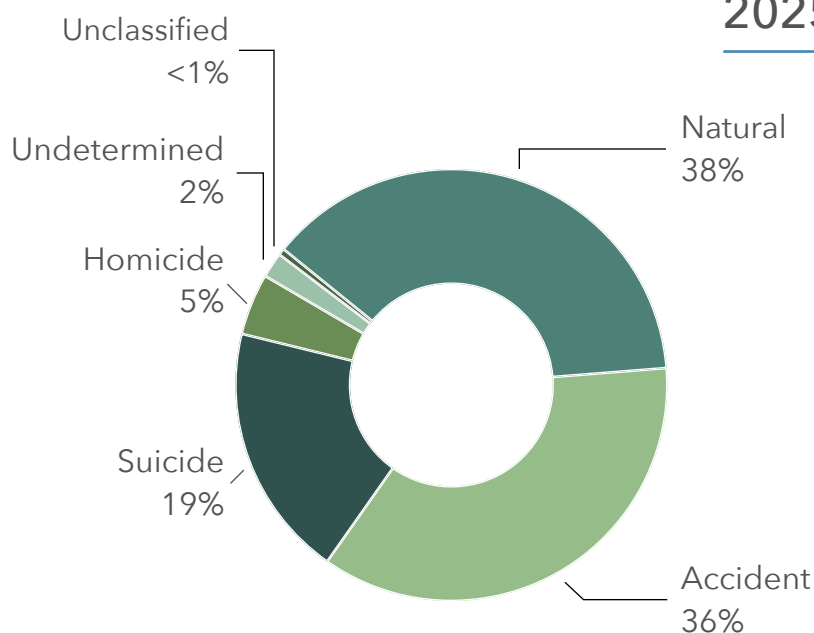
Suicide - These deaths are the result of an intentional self-inflicted act.

Homicide - These deaths occur due to the intentional, injurious actions of another individual toward the decedent.

Undetermined - Deaths in this category may or may not have a determined cause of death, or they may exhibit two or more possible manners.

Unclassified - The death of a fetus in utero (in the uterus) does not receive a manner determination.

2025 El Paso County Deaths



Natural	378 (38%)
Accident	359 (36%)
Suicide	190 (19%)
Homicide	46 (5%)
Undetermined	19 (2%)
Unclassified	2 (<1%)

Natural deaths are the result of processes such as aging or disease. In these cases, autopsies are performed if the death occurred suddenly or while the decedent was not under the care of a Colorado provider.

72 autopsied deaths were directly caused by chronic ethanol (alcohol) use, and 25 autopsies included chronic alcohol use as a secondary factor in the death. This does not necessarily represent an increase in fatal alcohol use in our community, as a greater number of individuals who misused ethanol received examinations to rule out traumatic causes of death.

The table below lists the most common conditions associated with the natural deaths which received an autopsy.

Cardiovascular Disease	181	378 total autopsied Natural deaths in El Paso County in 2025
Chronic Alcohol Abuse	72	
Infections	31	
Diabetes	15	
Pulmonary Disease	12	
Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder	11	
Morbid Obesity	10	
Cancer/Neoplasm	8	
Congenital/Genetic Disorders	8	
Global/Geriatric Decline	8	
Other	5	
Pulmonary Embolism	5	
Chronic Substance Abuse	4	
Gastrointestinal Disease	4	
Neurological Decline/Dementia	4	

The conditions that most commonly appear as significant contributing factors in death, alongside other causes, include obesity, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, tobacco use, and pulmonary diseases.

Compared to 316 fatal accidents in 2024, 2025 saw 359 autopsy cases with an accidental manner – an increase of 14%. Fatal motor vehicle accidents remained stable between 2024 and 2025. Drug overdoses climbed by 16% compared to the previous year. Hypothermia deaths, commonly associated with homelessness, declined from 16 to 12.

Drug Overdoses	178
Falls	38
Motor Vehicle Collisions*	35
Motor Vehicle Crashes Involving Motorcycles	28
Pedestrian Injuries	13
Exposure	12
Drowning	10
Natural Disease Exacerbated by Drug Use	8
Pediatric Unsafe Sleep	5
Choking	5
Asphyxia	4
Fires/Thermal Injuries	4
Carbon Monoxide	3
Other	2
Motor Vehicle Crashes Involving Bicycles	1
Motor Vehicle Crashes Involving E-Scooters	1
Motor Vehicle Crashes Involving Heavy Equipment	1
Motor Vehicle Crashes Involving Mopeds	1
Motor Vehicle Crashes Involving RVs	1
Train Strike	1
Unknown Causes	1

*This statistic includes only motor vehicle crashes (MVCs) where the decedent occupied a passenger or commercial vehicle.

Blunt Force Injury Accidents

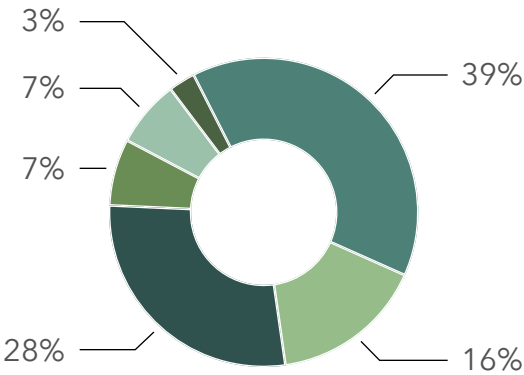
Passenger & Commercial Vehicles	35	E-Scooters	1
Motorcycles	27	Mopeds	1
Simple Falls in Adults	14	Horseback	1
Pedestrians	12	Sports Injury	1
Falls Down Stairs	11	Train Strike	1
Bicycles	2	Other	3

88 total motor vehicle fatalities

32% involved motorcycles
16% involved pedestrians

Manners

Accident	82	Homicide	1
Suicide	4	Unclassified	1



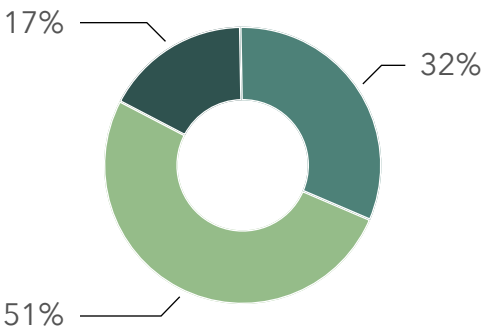
Type of Vehicle Decedent Occupied*

Motorcycle	28 (39%)
Sedan	12 (16%)
SUV	20 (28%)
Truck	5 (7%)
Other	5 (7%)
Unknown	2 (3%)

*Please note that this data does not count MVCs involving pedestrians.

Type of Collision if Known**

Front	10 (24%)
Side	15 (37%)
Rollover	10 (24%)
Rear	4 (10%)
Unknown	2 (5%)



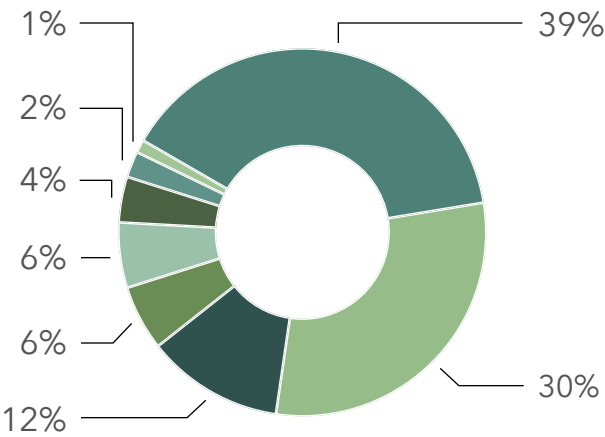
Use of Restraint/Seatbelt**

Yes	13 (32%)
No	21 (51%)
Unknown	7 (17%)

**Please note that this data does not count MVCs involving bicycles, motorcycles, pedestrians, e-bicycles, e-scooters, or mopeds.

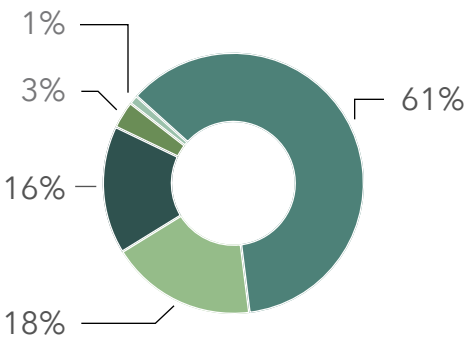
Suspected Primary Cause of Crash

Reckless Driving/Excessive Speed	34 (39%)
Impaired Driver	26 (30%)
Unknown	11 (12%)
Operational Error	5 (6%)
Pedestrian Fault	5 (6%)
Suicidal Intent	4 (4%)
Road Conditions	2 (2%)
Homicidal Intent	1 (1%)



Position in Vehicle

Driver	54 (61%)
Passenger	16 (18%)
Pedestrian	14 (16%)
Other	3 (3%)
Unknown	1 (1%)

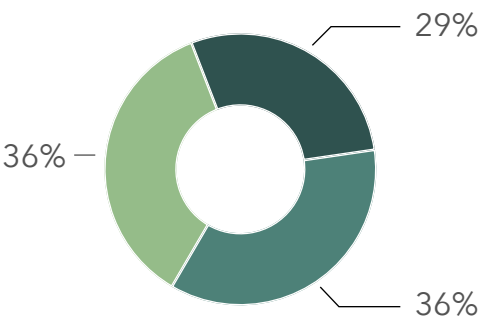


Of the 40 fatal incidents where the decedent was the "at-fault" driver, and where toxicology was performed, 68% (27) had alcohol, THC, and/or other drugs in their system at the time of autopsy.

Alcohol	7	Alcohol & THC	6
Drugs	2	Alcohol, Drugs & THC	1
Drugs & Alcohol	4	THC	4
Drugs & THC	3	Unknown	5
No Substances	8		

Vehicle vs Pedestrian

Driver at Fault	35.7% (5)
Pedestrian at Fault	35.7% (5)
Unknown	28.6% (4)



Accidental drug overdose deaths rose 16% from 2024 to 2025. Fentanyl deaths likewise increased compared to the prior year’s data by 17%. Fatalities involving methamphetamine increased by 18%, occurring 42% of the time in combination with fentanyl. Newly emerging drugs include carfentanil, medetomidine, tianeptine, and phenazolam. Xylazine was prominent at the end of the year. Instances of bromazolam appear to be decreasing.

178

total accidental overdose deaths in
El Paso County in 2025

Breakdown of contributing substances across all accidental ODs

Methamphetamine*	48	Methamphetamine & heroin*	2
Methamphetamine & fentanyl*	34	Cocaine & ketamine	1
Fentanyl*	26	Cocaine & methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)	1
Cocaine*	12	Cocaine & oxycodone	1
Methadone*	6	Cocaine, methamphetamine, & oxycodone	1
Fentanyl & cocaine*	5	Heroin*	1
Other prescription drugs	5	Fentanyl analogue & benzodiazepines	1
Oxycodone*	4	Fentanyl, fentanyl analogue, & methamphetamine	1
Fentanyl, methamphetamine, & cocaine	4	Fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine	1
Fentanyl & oxycodone*	3	Fentanyl, methamphetamine, & methadone	1
Fentanyl & methadone	3	Methamphetamine, fentanyl, oxycodone*	1
Methamphetamine & methadone	3	Methamphetamine & methadone	1
Other prescription opioids*	3	Methamphetamine & oxycodone*	1
1,1-Difluoroethane	2	Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)	1
Heroin & cocaine	2	Morphine	1
Methamphetamine & cocaine*	2		

(Categories marked with * include cases where the substance was identified alongside ethanol and/or other prescription medications not otherwise represented on this list.)

Most Common Drugs in Overdose Deaths

Methamphetamine	100	Methadone.....	14
Fentanyl & Analogues	80	Ethanol	13
Cocaine	29	Oxycodone.....	11

12%

of overdose deaths
involved drugs
prescribed by the
decedent's physician

66%

of accidental drug
deaths were male
- 0 were documented as
transgender

72%

had a known drug
use history prior to
death

90%

of overdose deaths
occurred before the
decedent could be
transported to the
hospital

27%

of all deaths had
THC metabolites
present at
autopsy

37%

of drug overdose
deaths had THC
metabolites
present at death

57% involved methamphetamine
59% involved opioids
45% involved fentanyl

82

total fentanyl-related deaths in 2025
(includes accidents and suicides)

Average age across all
drug overdose deaths

45 YEARS

(46 in 2024)

Average age of
fentanyl overdoses

41 YEARS

Average age of non-
fentanyl overdoses

48 YEARS

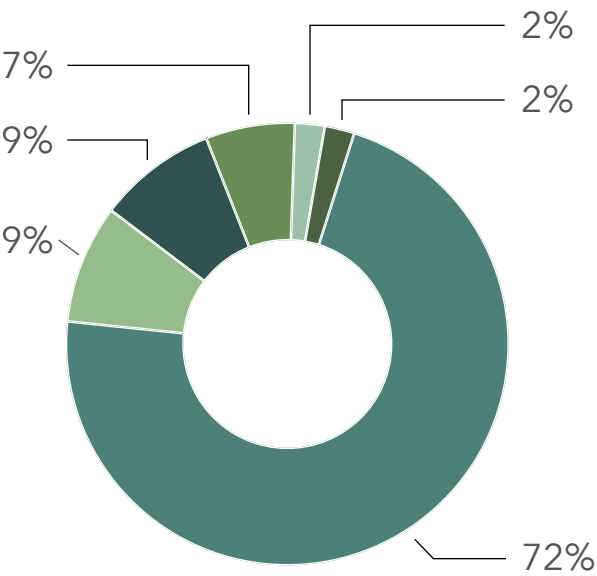
(a decrease of 2 years
compared to 2024)

2025 saw a 9.8% decrease in homicides (51 in 2024). Homicides involving domestic violence rose from nine in 2024 to 17 in 2025. Firearm-related homicides held steady from the previous year.

46 total homicides in 2025

Weapons Used

Firearms	33 (72%)
Blunt Force	4 (9%)
Sharp Force	4 (9%)
Other	3 (7%)
Blunt & Sharp Force	1 (2%)
Strangulation	1 (2%)



Apparent Circumstances of the Homicides

Domestic/Family Violence	17
Altercation	9
Unknown	7
Officer Involved*	6
During the Commission of Another Crime	5
Other	2

35%

of decedents personally knew the suspect in their death

78%

of victims were male

- 0 were documented as transgender

*All 6 officer-involved deaths were caused by a use of force that resulted in the death of another. In these cases, the manner is ruled homicide. However, this determination is not an opinion on the legality of the force used, as this judgment is not within the purview of the Coroner’s Office.

There was a 23% increase in total suicides compared to 2024 (155).

190 total suicides in El Paso County in 2025

Firearms	101
Ligature	33
Drugs	32
Asphyxia	12
Other	5
Sharp Force	4
Height	3

Drugs Used in Suicide

Single Non-Opioids	12
Mixed Non-Opioids	12
Mix Containing Opioids	5
Only Opioids	3

2025 Suicide Facts

43

average age at death
(range of 11 - 90 years)

36

suicides were under the age of 25
- 9 were under the age of 18

33%

included physical or digital death notes

62%

had a reported history of prior suicidal thoughts

30%

had a reported history of suicide attempts

75%

of suicide autopsies contained drugs (44%), alcohol (36%) or THC (26%) at the time of death

23%

were veterans or active duty military personnel
- 3% were active duty

73%

Of completed suicides were male
- 5 were documented as transgender



The six most common risk factors linked to suicide in El Paso County are preexisting mental health issues (82%), substance and/or alcohol abuse (41%), physical health issues (33%), history of abuse and/or domestic violence (33%), relationship issues (29%), and financial issues (23%).

In 2025, the El Paso County Coroner’s Office investigated the deaths of 44 children (individuals under the age of 18 years old). These cases are reviewed by the El Paso County Child Fatality Review Team to identify trends and develop initiatives that can prevent the deaths of minors. Youth suicides more than doubled from 4 in 2024 to 9 in 2025. One fentanyl-related death occurred over the past year.

44 total

Age

<1 Month	4
1 Month - 11 Months	7
1-4 Years	5
5-12 Years	7
13-17 Years	21

Breakdown

Natural	11
Suicides	9
Motor Vehicle Crash	6
Pediatric Unsafe Sleep	5
Homicides	3
Accidental Drug Overdose	2
Choking	1
Pedestrian	1
Undetermined	2
Unclassified (Fetal)	2

Adolescent Suicides (Ages 10-17 Years)

Gender	
Male	2
Female	7
Documented Transgender	0
Method	
Ligature	5
Firearms	3
Drugs	1
Identified Risk Factors	
Mental health issues, history of self-harm and/or suicidal thoughts, recent arguments, family discord, academic issues, and history of abuse or domestic violence	

Unsafe Sleep Infant Deaths: 5 Total

Deaths due to an unsafe sleep surface	1
Deaths due to co-sleeping with adults	4

Since homelessness remains a concern for our community, it is important to examine what issues cause or contribute to death in this population. In 2025, the El Paso County Coroner’s Office investigated 87 unexpected deaths of homeless individuals, a statistic which remained steady from 86 in 2024. Homicides decreased from 7 to 3, while drug-related deaths rose by 29%. Hypothermia and exposure deaths dropped from nine cases to five for 2025.

87 total deaths in El Paso County’s homeless population during 2025

Homelessness can include any of the following:

- Sleeping on the streets
- Sleeping in a tent, vehicle, or temporary shelter
- “Couch surfing” or “squatting”
- Transitional living programs
- Temporary residence in a motel or hotel

49 average age at death

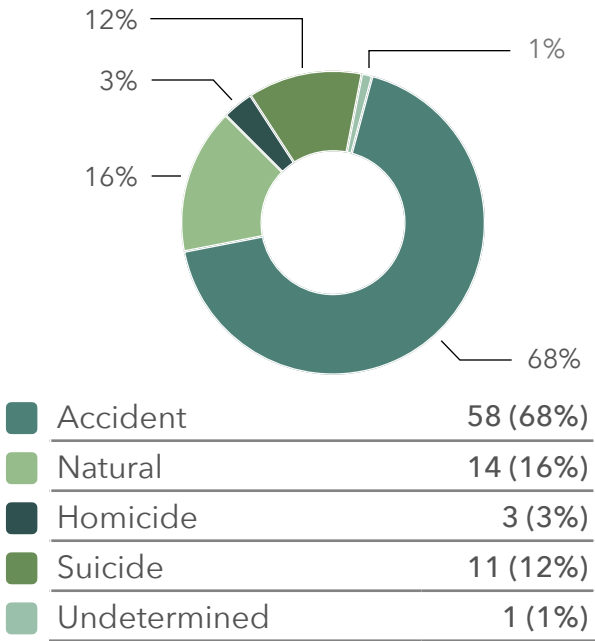
86% of homeless deaths were male

- 2 were documented as transgender

21% had a last known address outside of El Paso County

Accidents	58 TOTAL
Drug intoxication	40 (69%)
Hypothermia or exposure	5 (9%)
Motor vehicle vs pedestrian	4 (7%)
Drowning	3 (5%)
Fall	2 (3%)
Other	4 (7%)

Manners of Death



Homicides	3 TOTAL
Gunshot Wound	2
Blunt & Sharp Force	1

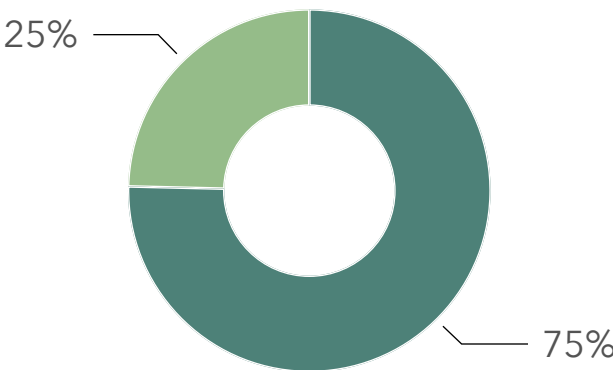
Drug Intoxications	40 TOTAL
Methamphetamine +/- other drugs	19
Fentanyl & methamphetamine +/- other drugs	13
Fentanyl +/- other drugs	5
Other illicit drugs	3
Prescription drugs	1

In 2025, 135 individuals died of firearm-related injuries. There was a slight decrease in firearm-associated homicides compared to 35 in 2024. However, suicides involving firearms rose by 10%. There were no accidental deaths or deaths with an Undetermined manner related to firearms in 2025. Six deaths fell into the category of “officer-involved”, wherein the use of deadly force by law enforcement led to a fatality.

135 total firearm-related deaths in 2025

Breakdown of Manners

- Suicide 102 (75%)
- Homicide 33 (25%)



Firearm-Related Homicide Circumstances

Altercation	8
Domestic Violence	7
Use of deadly force by law enforcement	6
While committing another crime	2
Other	1
Unknown	11

Age Ranges

**FIREARM
HOMICIDE**

16 - 59
years old

**FIREARM
SUICIDE**

13 - 85
years old

62%
Males

vs.

30%
Females

utilized a firearm to complete suicide.

1 firearm-related suicide involved a decedent who had been documented as transgender.