

Death Investigation Infrastructure in Nebraska


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Background


- Nebraska is a county-based coroner system in which the **elected County Attorney** serves as the ex officio coroner.
 - Coroner duties may be delegated to county sheriff, deputy county sheriff, or other peace officer (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 23-1210)
 - Each county is responsible for cost of autopsy services including transportation to autopsy facility
 - Wide variation of resources.
 - “Contract” with pathologists for autopsy performance
 - 93 counties in Nebraska, 30 new county attorneys last election cycle
 - Each coroner/deputy coroner required to initial death investigation training within 1 year of election/appointment.
 - Wide variation in knowledge, training, and experience
 - Wide variation in autopsy referral practices
 - Responsible for the certification of cause and manner of death
 - Emphasis on criminal proceedings NOT public health
 - All death investigations performed by law enforcement – no medicolegal death investigators
 - No central data resources or access

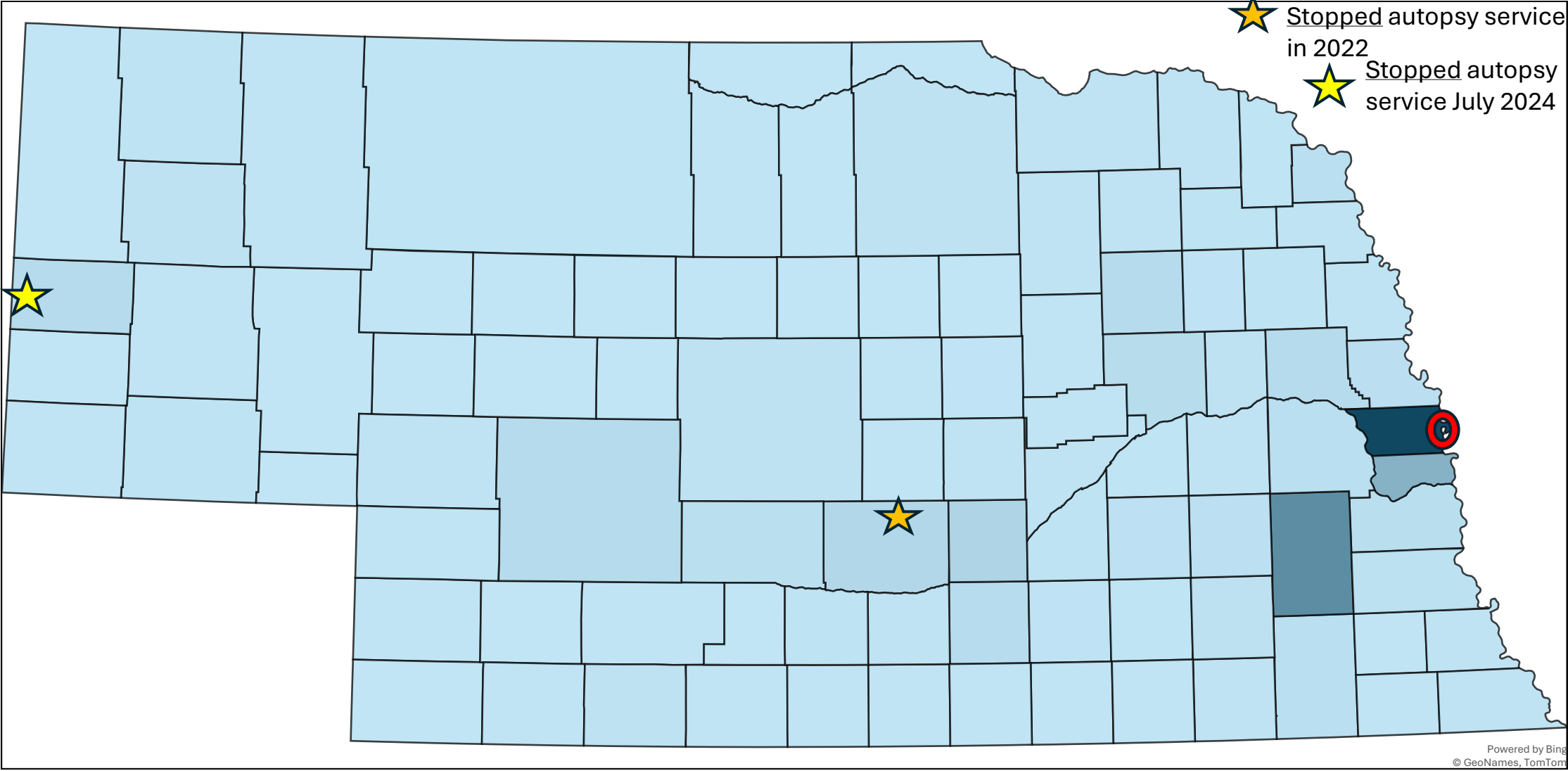
Nebraska Counties by Population (Total Population 1.978 million+ (2023))

Population
465 566,880

 Currently performing forensic autopsies

 Stopped autopsy service in 2022

 Stopped autopsy service July 2024



Nebraska Coroner Statutes

Deaths to be Investigated

- In each instance when the county coroner is given notice in accordance with section 23-1821 [when it appears that an individual has **died while being apprehended by or while in the custody of a law enforcement officer** or detention personnel], the coroner or coroner's physician shall perform an examination, a test, or an autopsy as he or she may deem necessary to establish, by a reasonable degree of medical certainty, the cause or causes of death and shall thereafter certify the cause or causes of death to the presiding judge of the district court. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 23-1822.

Deaths to be Autopsied

- The county coroner or coroner's physician shall perform, at county expense, an autopsy on **any person less than nineteen years of age who dies a sudden death**, except that **no autopsy needs to be performed** if (a) the death was caused by a readily recognizable disease or **the death occurred due to trauma resulting from an accident** and (b) the death did not occur under suspicious circumstances. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 23-1824.
- In each instance when the county coroner is given notice in accordance with section 23-1821 [when it appears that an individual has **died while being apprehended by or while in the custody of a law enforcement officer or detention personnel**], the coroner or coroner's physician shall perform an examination, a test, or an autopsy as he or she may deem necessary to establish, by a reasonable degree of medical certainty, the cause or causes of death and shall thereafter certify the cause or causes of death to the presiding judge of the district court. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 23-1822.

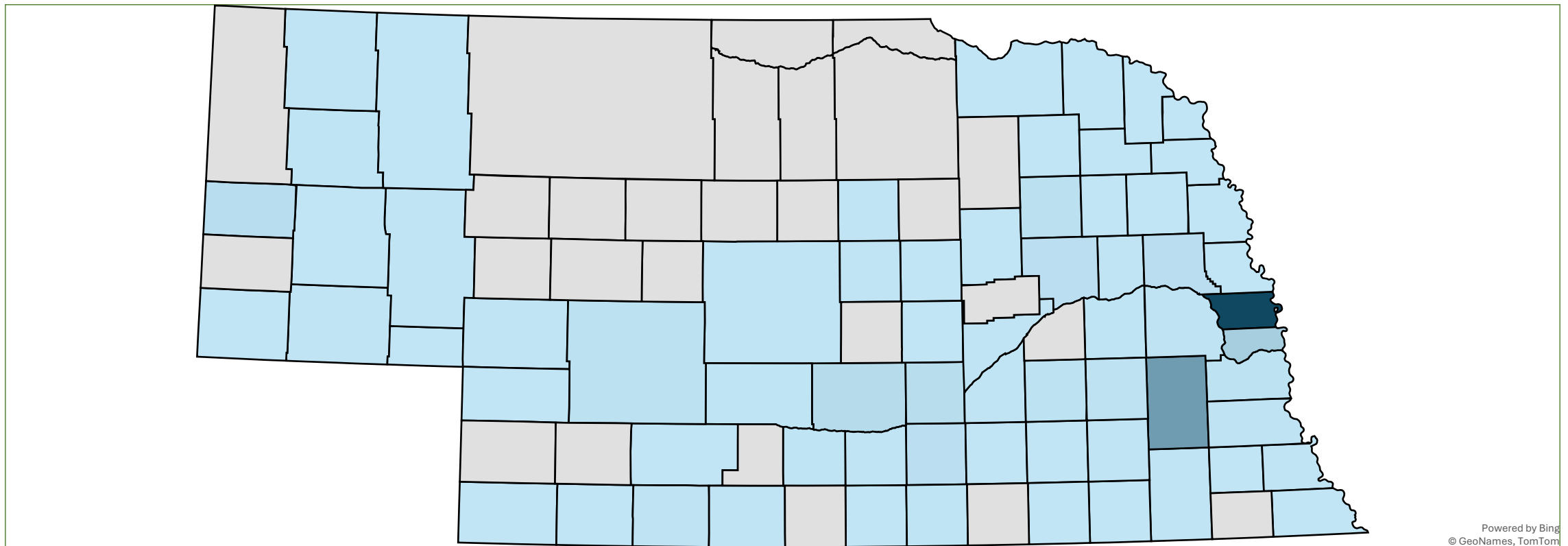
Fatal Overdoses (2016-2021)

2016-2021 OD/Drug-related Deaths by Total Number per County

OD/Drug-related Deaths 2016-2021

1

452



Note: No certified overdose fatalities in the gray shaded counties

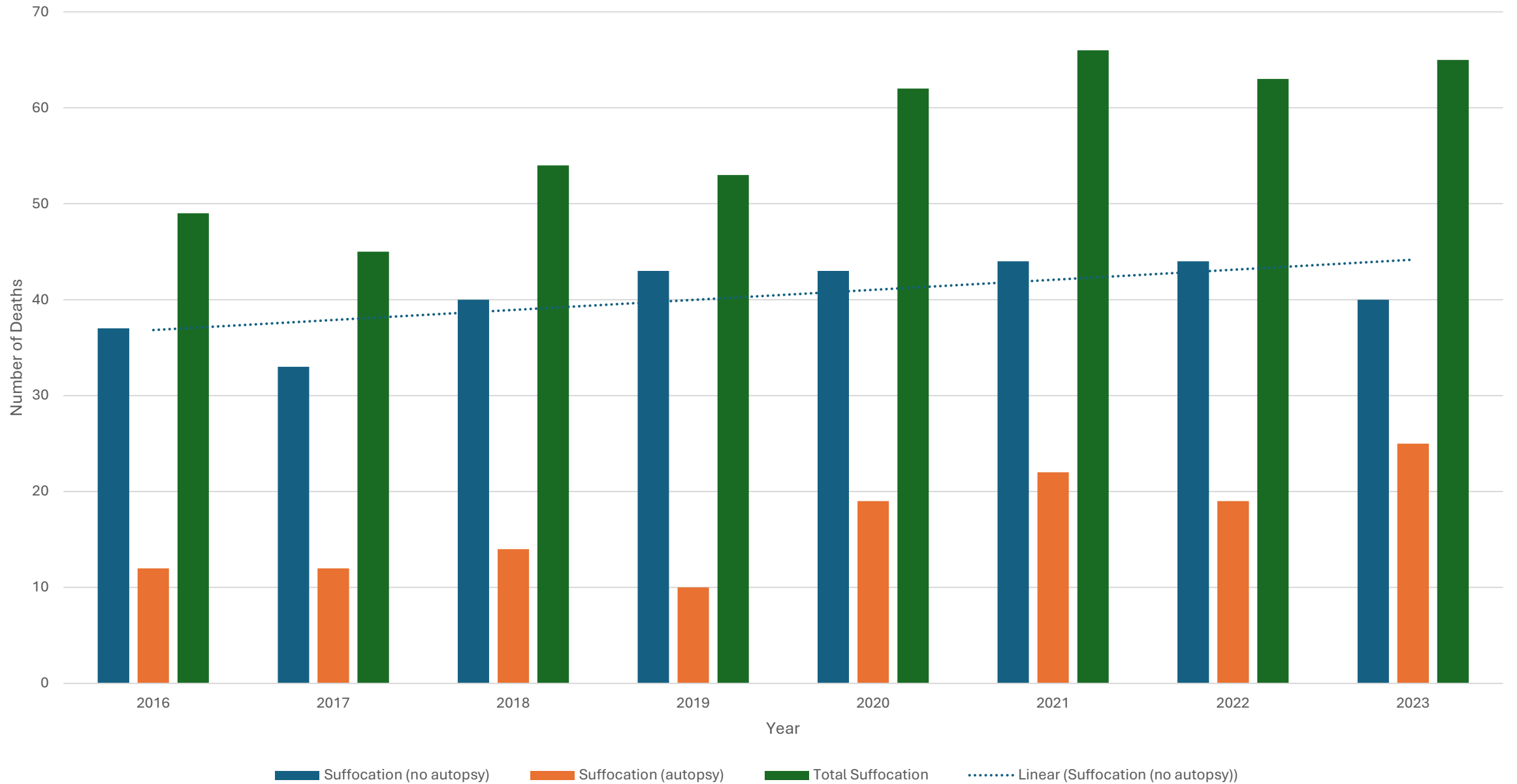
Other State of Nebraska Trends

All data in following slides pulled from multiple queries of the CDC Wonder Database and compiled for years 2016-2023

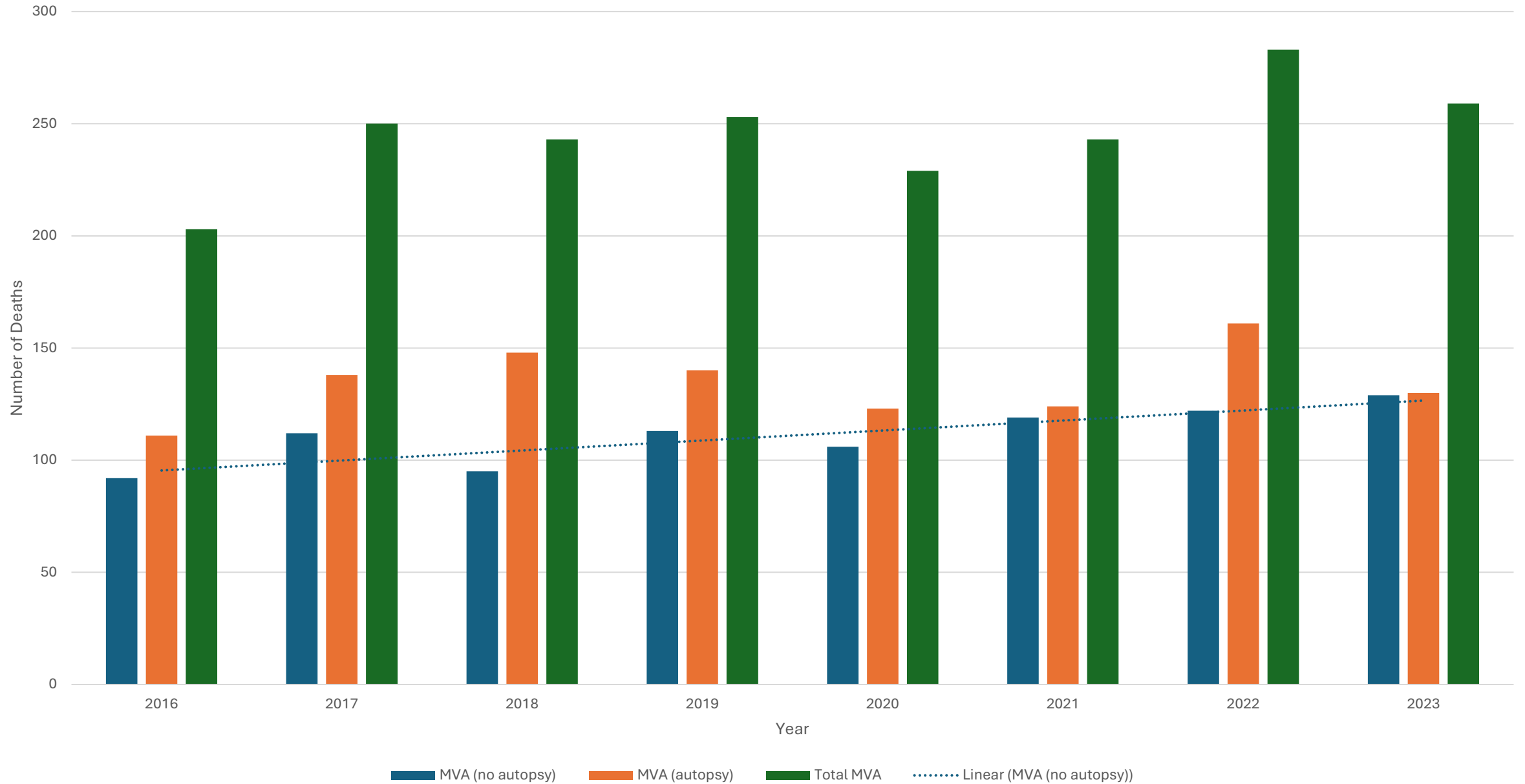
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System, Mortality 1999-2020 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2021. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999-2020, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10.html> on Oct 5, 2024 8:24:59 AM

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System, Provisional Mortality on CDC WONDER Online Database. Data are from the final Multiple Cause of Death Files, 2018-2022, and from provisional data for years 2023-2024, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10-provisional.html> on Oct 5, 2024 8:41:31 AM

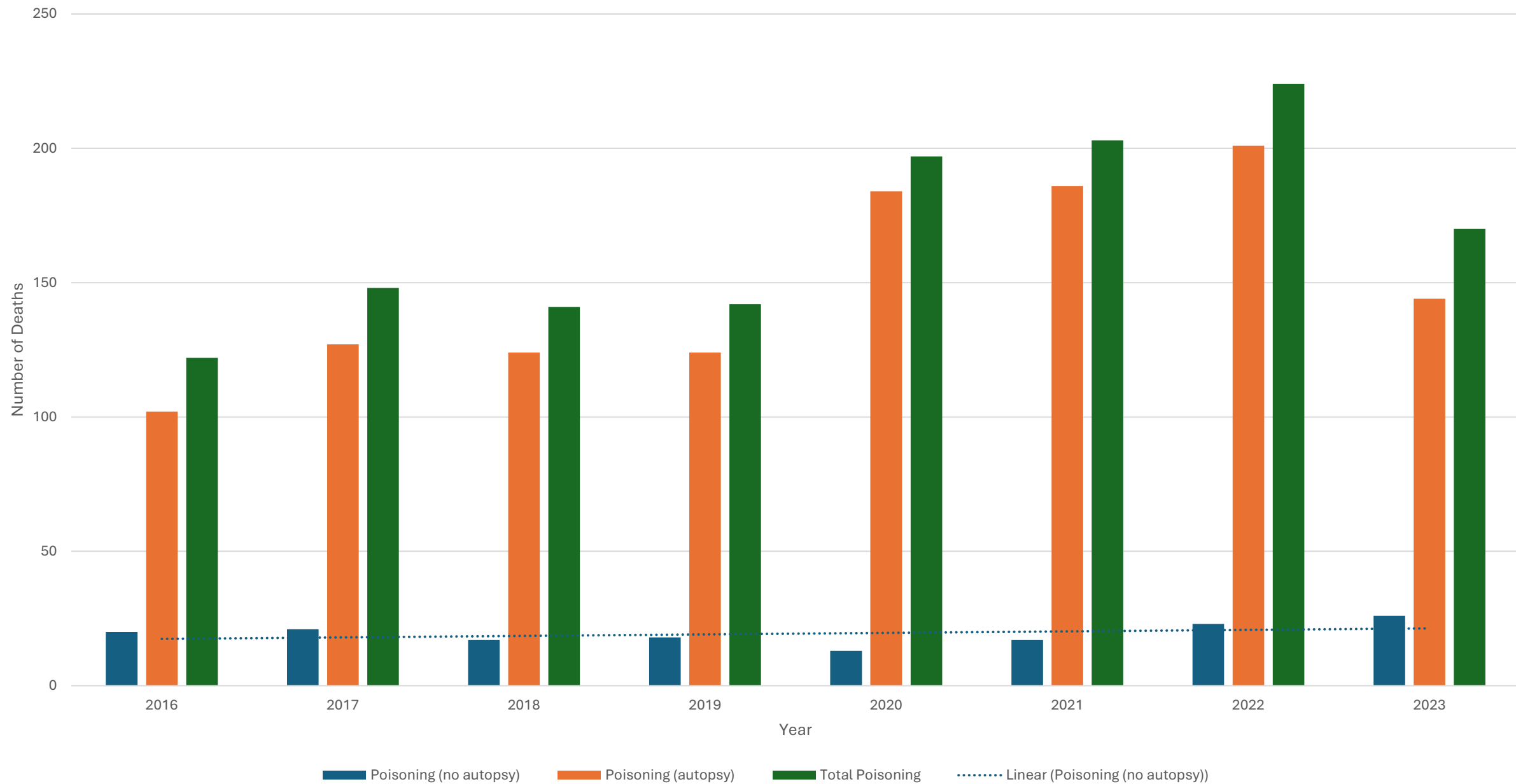
Accidental Suffocation (2016-2023)



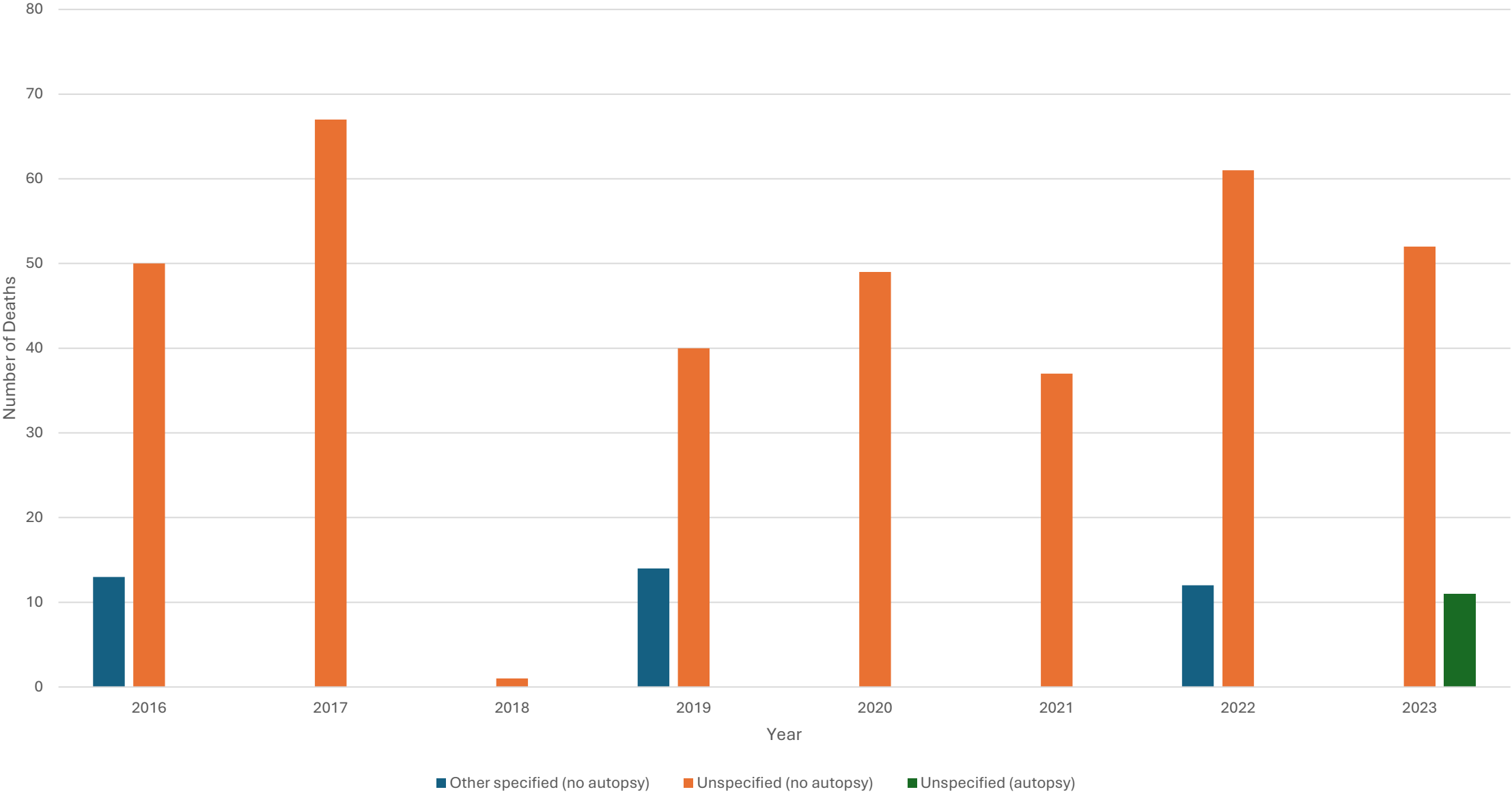
Motor Vehicle Accidents (2016-2023)



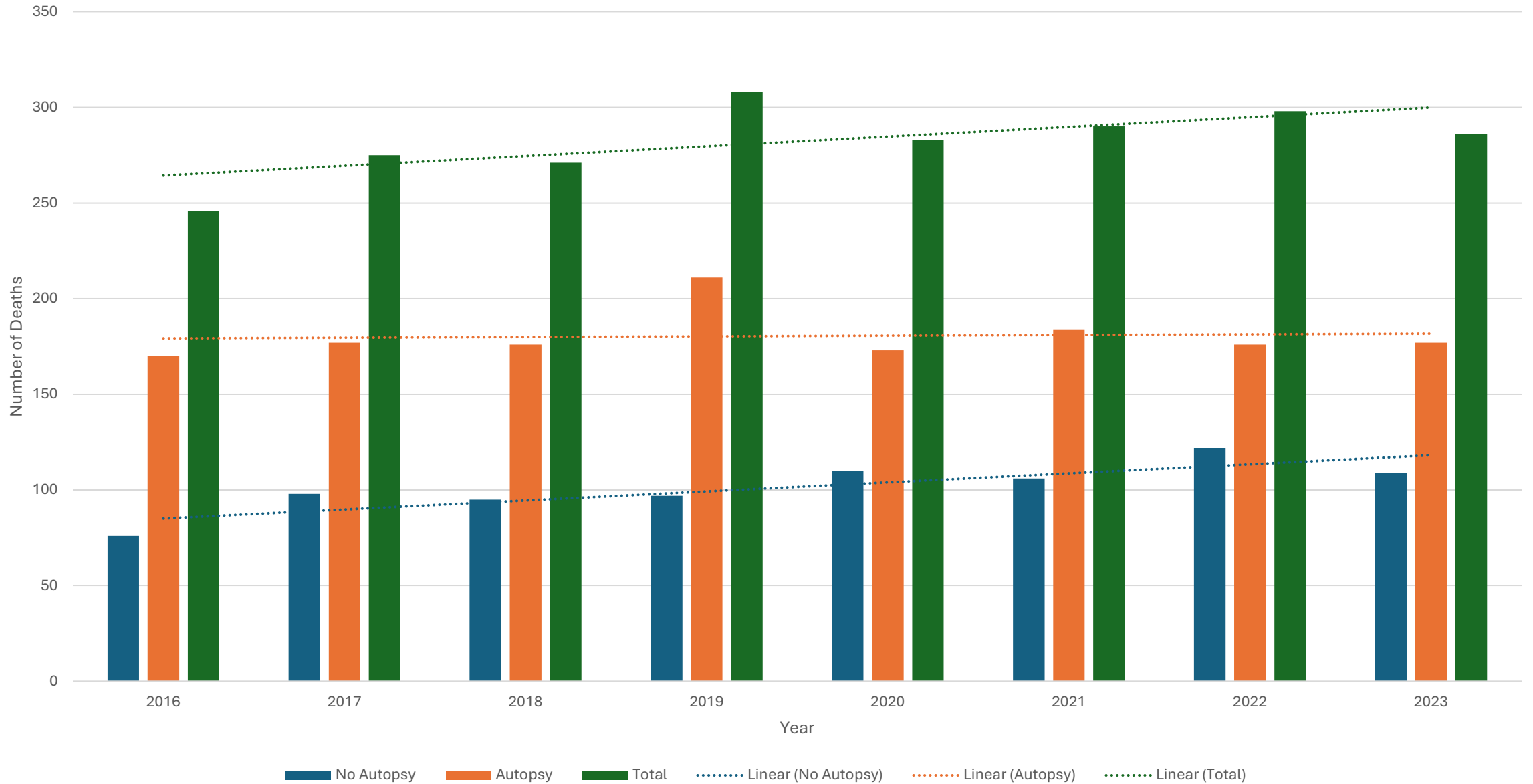
Accidental Poisoning (2016-2023)



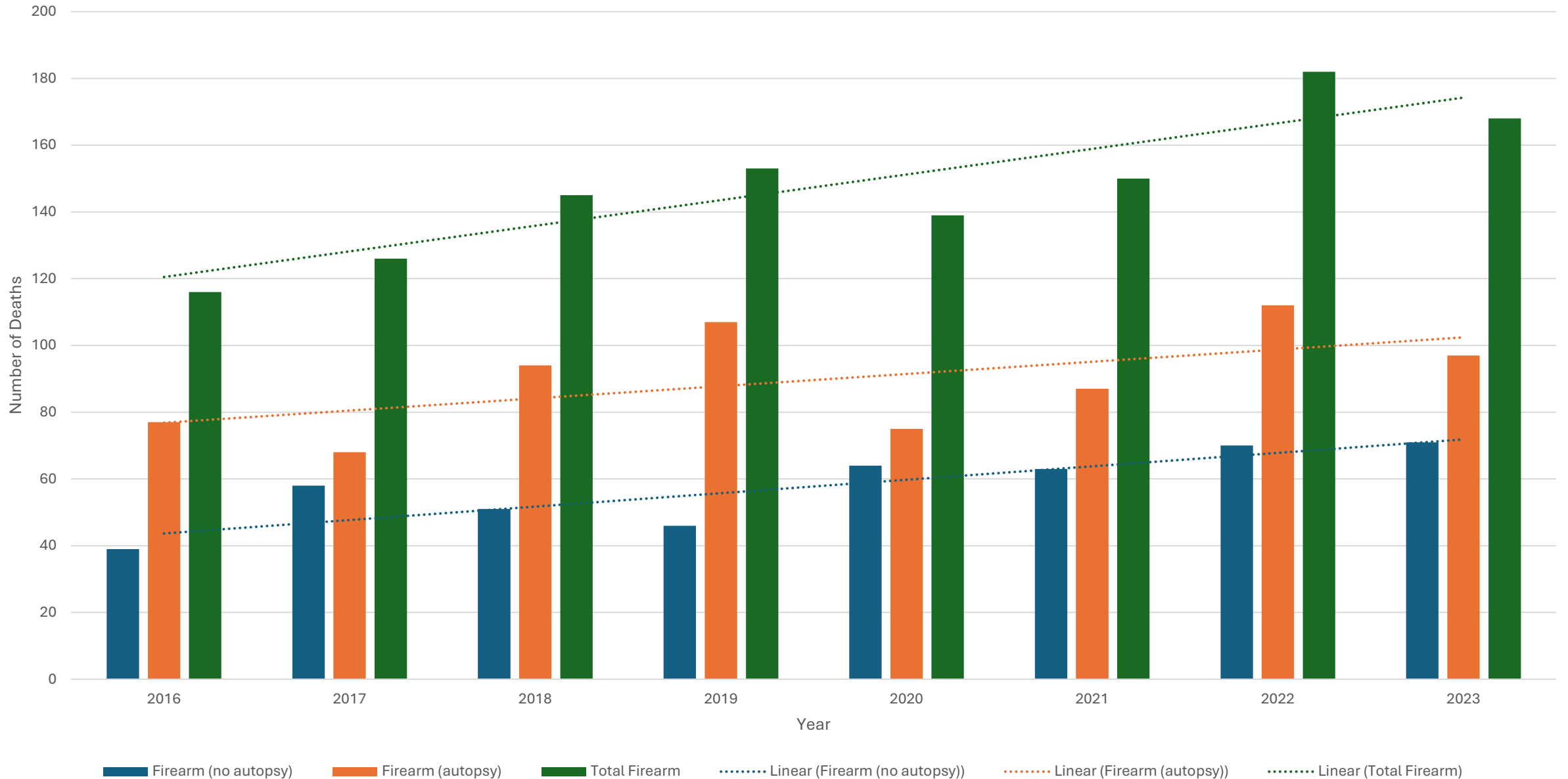
Other and Unspecified Accidents (2016-2023)



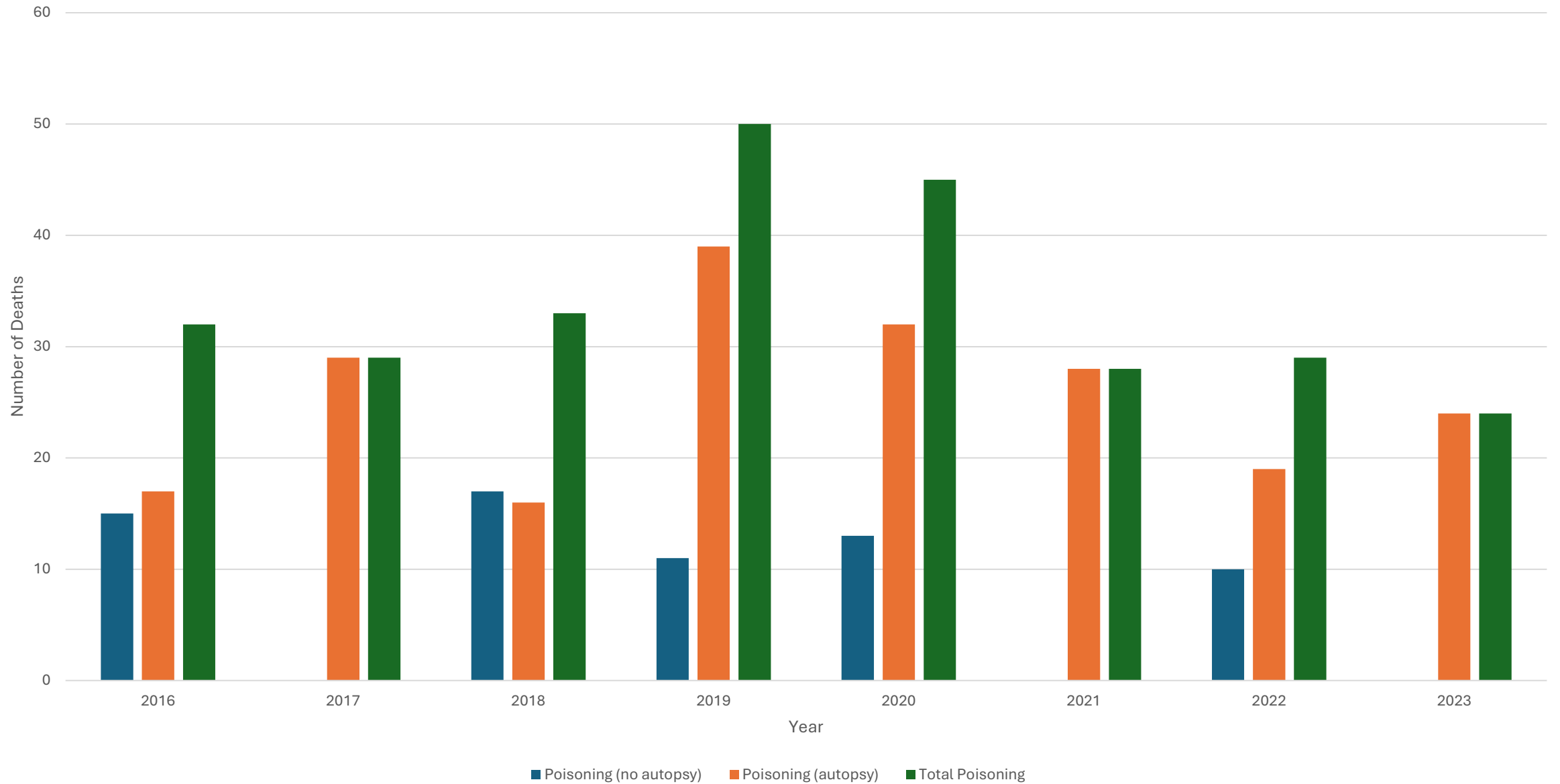
Suicide (2016-2023)



Firearm-Related Suicides (2016-2023)



Poisoning-Related Suicides (2016-2023)



Suffocation-Related Suicides (2016-2023)

