

Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics

State Data Brief

August 2012. CACS 2012-01-01CR

Arrest Related Deaths in Nevada, 2009-11

By Timothy C. Hart, Ph.D.,
Kiera Flynn, and
Colleen Savage

For nearly a decade, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), through the Deaths in Custody Reporting Program (DCRP) (PL 106-297), has collected inmate death records from each of the nation's 50 state prison systems, 50 state juvenile correctional authorities, and from local jails throughout the country.

In 2003, BJS began collecting arrest-related deaths data from state and local law enforcement agencies as a part of the DCRP. Since the initial data collection year, law enforcement agencies in Nevada have not provided BJS with arrest-related deaths in custody information and are under no obligation to do so.

In 2009, funding from the State Justice Statistics Program (award #2009-BJ-CX-K035), administered by BJS, was used by the Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics (CACS) to develop and implement a statewide online data collection instrument. This survey tool offers local law enforcement agencies throughout Nevada a quick and easy way provide arrest-related deaths in custody information that can be included in the DCRP. In 2011, 51 of Nevada's 53 agencies (96%) participated in the project.

This State Data Brief presents details related to the arrests-related deaths that occurred in Nevada from 2009 through 2011 and that were reported to CACS. The report includes information on when incidents occurred, demographic information of the suspects, the cause and manner of the reported deaths, the mental/physical condition of suspects at the time of the incidents, the locations of the deaths, and whether suspects were armed.

Highlights

- From 2009 through 2011, Nevada's law enforcement agencies identified 33 individuals who died during the course of an arrest.
- Arrest-related deaths in Nevada have increased more than 62% over the past three years.
- The majority of arrest-related deaths involved individuals who were male (94%) and who were White, non-Hispanic (42%).
- Thirty-nine percent of arrest-related deaths involved individuals who were between 36 and 50 years of age, which is greater than any other age group.
- Ninety-one percent of incidents were classified by the reporting agency as a "homicide by law enforcement officer(s)."
- The most serious offense committed by decedents was attempted murder (24%), followed by assault with a deadly weapon (21%).
- Eighty-two percent of incidents involved an armed individual and 46% of individuals who died during arrest resisted the arrest.

This report includes information on incidents that met certain criteria for inclusion. Detailed information on those incidents that were included and excluded from this study are presented in the Methodology section. The opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of BJS.

Arrest-Related Deaths, 2009-11

From 2009 through 2011, state and local law enforcement agencies in Nevada identified 33 incidents that involved a suspect who died during the course of an arrest. The number of arrest-related deaths in Nevada has increased from 8 incidents in 2009 to 13 incidents in 2011, which is a 62% increase over three years. Detailed demographic information about decedents is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected demographic characteristics of individuals who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009-11.

Demographic characteristics	Number	%
Gender		
Male	31	93.9
Female	2	6.1
Race		
White, non-Hispanic	14	42.4
Black, non-Hispanic	6	18.2
Multiple races	2	6.1
Other	1	3.0
Hispanic, any race	7	21.2
Missing	3	9.1
Age		
<18	1	3.0
18-24	4	12.1
25-35	11	33.3
36-50	13	39.4
+50	2	6.1
Missing	2	6.1

Note: Detail may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Arrest-related deaths incidents that took place in Nevada between 2009 and 2011 and that were reported to CACS most often involved an individual who was male (94%), White, non-Hispanic (42%), and who was between 36 and 50 years of age (39%).

Manner and Medical Cause of Death

Information on the manner and medical cause of death was provided to CACS by each law enforcement agency reporting an arrest-related death in Nevada. This information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Manner of death and medical cause of death for individuals who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009-11.

Medical information	Number	%
Manner of death		
Homicide by law enforcement	30	90.9
Suicide	2	6.1
Accident	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0
Missing	1	3.0
Medical cause of death		
Cardiopulmonary arrest due to neck restraint	1	3.0
Cocaine/ethanol intoxication	2	6.1
Gunshot wound(s)	27	81.8
Hanging	1	3.0
Other	1	3.0
Missing	1	3.0

Note: Detail may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Nearly all arrest-related deaths that occurred between 2009 and 2011 and that were reported to CACS were classified by law enforcement agencies as a "homicide by law enforcement officer(s)."

Unlike the manner of death, the medical cause of death varied across incident. For example, while most suspects' medical cause of death was determined to be the result of a gunshot(s) wound (82%), other suspects died from cocaine/ethanol intoxication (6%) or from hanging (3%)

Offense(s) Committed by Deceased

Information on the type of offense(s) committed by individuals who died during the course of an arrest was also requested from Nevada's agencies that participated in the CACS data collection project. The most serious offense committed by decedents is provided in Table 3.

Analysis of these data indicates that nearly a quarter of all individuals who died during an arrest would have been charged with attempted murder. About 1-in-5 would have been charged with assault with a deadly weapon, and 18% would have been charged with a battery/domestic violence. One decedent would have been charged with arson, while another would have been charged with jaywalking.

Table 3. Most serious offense committed by individuals who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009-11.

Offense charge information	Number	%
Most serious offense		
Attempted murder	8	24.2
Arson	1	3.0
Assault w/a deadly weapon	7	21.2
Battery/Domestic violence	6	18.2
Home invasion	1	3.0
Jaywalking	1	3.0
Resisting arrest with a weapon	3	9.1
Robbery	1	3.0
Sale of a controlled substance	1	3.0
Sexual assault on a victim <14	1	3.0
Warrants	1	3.0
Not applicable/Missing	2	6.1

Note: Detail may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 4. Mental/physical condition of the deceased and the location of the death among those who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009-11.

Condition and location	Number	%
Did the deceased--		
Appear intoxicated	6	18.2
Exhibit mental health problems	5	15.2
Verbally threaten the officer(s)	4	12.1
Resist being cuffed/arrested	15	45.5
Attempt to escape	10	30.3
Become physically combative	3	9.1
None of the above	1	3.0
Where did the deceased die?		
At medical facility following clinical intervention	8	24.2
At crime scene	23	69.7
DOA at medical facility	1	3.0
Missing	1	3.0

Note: Agencies were permitted to select more than one mental/physical condition. Detail may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Condition and Location of Deceased

Information concerning the deceased's mental and physical condition was requested from the agencies that provided CACS with arrest-related death data. Among the types of conditions reported, most individuals (46%) who died during an arrest in Nevada resisted arrest or being handcuffed and about 3-in-10 attempted to escape (Table 4). One-third of decedents appeared intoxicated or exhibited mental health problems. Seventy percent of decedents died at the scene.

Weapon Use

Eighty-two percent of situations involving an arrest-related death in Nevada from 2009 through 2011 involved an individual armed with a weapon (Table 5). During those situations, the weapon was used to either threaten the officer or some other person 96% of the time. The deceased was reportedly unarmed in about one-eighth of all incidents.

From 2009 through 2011, when an individual was killed by a Nevada law enforcement officer who used equipment or a weapon, a firearm was most often the type of weapon used. A conductive energy device (i.e., a stun gun) was used relatively less often. Other "less than lethal device" was used 20% of the time.

Table 5. Weapons used by and against individuals who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009-11.

Weapon use by and against deceased	Number	%
During the arrest process, the deceased--		
Carried or possessed a weapon	27	81.8
Used a weapon to threaten the officer	17	63.0
Used a weapon to threaten other persons	9	33.3
Used a weapon to assault the officer	11	40.7
Used a weapon to assault other people	3	11.1
None of the above	2	7.4
Did not carry a weapon	4	12.1
Missing	2	6.1
Equipment/weapon used against deceased		
Used something anytime during the arrest process	25	75.8
Firearm	17	68.0
Handcuffs	6	24.0
Conducted energy device	4	16.0
Other "less than lethal" device	5	20.0
None of the above	8	24.2

Note: Agencies were permitted to select more than one type of equipment/weapon use. Detail may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Methodology

Data for this report was collected by the Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics (CACCS)—the state of Nevada's Statistical Analysis Center (SAC)—through an online reporting system funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and its State Justice Statistics (SJS) Program.

Only incidents that met specific criteria were considered an arrest-related death in custody for the purpose of this data collection effort. An incident was included as an arrest-related death in custody if it took place in 2009 and involved the death of a person in the process of arrest and who was...

- Killed by any use of force by law enforcement officers;
- In the physical custody, or under the physical restraint of law enforcement officers, even if the person was not formally under arrest at the time;
- At crime/arrest scene or medical facility prior to booking;
- Killed in vehicular pursuit accidents during which law enforcement officers took direct action against the driver or vehicle (e.g., shooting at the suspect, forcing the vehicle off the road with an obstruction, spike strip, or the officer's own vehicle).
- While in transit to or from law enforcement facilities; or
- While confined in lockups or booking centers (facilities from which arrestees are usually transferred within 72 hours and not held beyond arraignment).

An incident was excluded if it involved a person in the process of arrest that was...

- Confined in local jails (facilities which typically house inmates for periods beyond 72 hours after arraignment);
- Confined in State prisons, State juvenile correctional facilities, or private correctional facilities;

- Killed in the course of law enforcement activities against whom no charges were intended (e.g., innocent bystanders, hostages, law enforcement personnel).
- Who die before coming into contact with any law enforcement officers (e.g., subjects of arrest warrants who died before any arrest process began); or
- Killed in vehicular accidents during which law enforcement officers did NOT take any direct action against the driver or vehicle.

All but two agencies in Nevada provided 2009 arrest-related deaths in custody information. Selected findings summarized in this State Data Brief are based on these data and are presented as part of the CACS State Data Brief Project.

State Data Brief Project

As independent research projects, faculty and graduate students in UNLV's Department of Criminal Justice write research reports on major issues in criminal justice in Nevada. These "State Data Briefs" are statistical summaries of various criminal justice system practices in Nevada over time and highlight differences between Nevada and other states. These reports cover all aspects of the criminal justice system.

The data briefs are short in length, provide several graphs and charts of statewide and national patterns, and are written in an easily readable, non-technical style. They are designed to provide members of the general public, local officials, community organizations, and media outlets a concise and objective statistical profile of current criminal justice practices in Nevada that may serve as a foundation for informed discussions of future crime control policies and practices. CACS State Data Briefs are modeled after similar reports produced by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Contact Information

Questions or comments about the information contained in this report, data used to generate this report, or about other resources available related to this topic should be address to:

Terance D. Miethe, Ph.D.
State Data Brief Project Coordinator
Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics
University of Nevada Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway - Box 5009
Las Vegas, NV 89154-5009

(B)702-895-0236

(F)702-895-0252

Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics

Department of Criminal Justice
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 S. Maryland Pkwy. – Box 5009
Las Vegas, NV 89154-5009

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