

Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics

State Data Brief

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Arrest-Related Deaths in Nevada, 2009

By Timothy C. Hart, Ph.D.,
Bridget Kelly, M.A.,
Courtney LaHaie, M.A.,
and Terance D. Miethe, Ph.D.

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 in custody 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 offered local law enforcement agencies throughout Nevada a quick and easy way provide arrest-related deaths in custody information that could be included in the DCRP. Fifty-one of Nevada's 53 agencies (96%) participated in the project.

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

Highlights

- Nevada's law enforcement agencies identified 9 individuals who died during the course of an arrest in 2009.
- Seven of the 9 arrest-related deaths in Nevada were reported by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Nevada's largest law enforcement agency.
- Two-thirds of all deaths occurred during the last six months of the year.
- The majority of deaths involved a suspect who was male and who was White (not of Hispanic origin).
- All of the incidents were classified by the reporting agency as a "homicide by law enforcement officer(s)."
- Most of the incidents involved a suspect who was armed at the time of the incident.

of the incidents, the location of the death, and whether the suspects were armed.

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 in 2009

State and local law enforcement agencies in Nevada identified 9 incidents during 2009 that involved a suspect who died during the course of an arrest. One-third of the incidents took place during the first half of the year, compared to two-thirds that occurred after June 30th. For most of the incidents reported to CACS, detailed demographic information about the suspect was provided. This information is summarized in Table 1.

Demographic characteristics	Number	%
Gender		
Male	7	77.8
Female	1	11.1
Missing	1	11.1
Race		
White, non-Hispanic	4	44.4
Black, non-Hispanic	0	0.0
Multiple races	1	11.1
Other	0	0.0
Hispanic, any race	3	33.3
Missing	1	11.1
Age		
<18	1	11.1
18-24	0	0.0
25-35	4	44.4
36-50	2	22.2
+50	0	0.0
Missing	2	22.2

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

Arrest-related deaths in custody incidents that took place in Nevada during 2009 and that were reported to CACS most often involved a suspect who was male (78%), White, non-Hispanic (44%), and who was between 25 and 35 years of age (44%).

Cause and Manner of Death

For the overwhelming majority (78%) of all incidents reported to CACS, a medical examiner or coroner had conducted an evaluation to determine the cause of the suspect's death (Table 2).

All arrest-related deaths in custody, where a medical examiner or coroner evaluated the death, classified the incident as a "homicide by law enforcement officer(s)."

Table 2. Medical examination, manner of death, and medical cause of death for suspects who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009.

Medical information	Number	%
Medical examination		
Yes	7	77.8
No	1	11.1
Missing	1	11.1
Manner of death		
Homicide by law enforcement	7	77.8
Other homicide	0	0.0
Suicide	1	11.1
Accident	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0
Missing	1	11.1
Medical cause of death		
Cardiopulmonary arrest due to neck restraint	1	11.1
Cocaine/ethanol intoxication	1	11.1
Gunshot wound(s)	4	44.4
Hanging	1	11.1
Missing	2	22.2

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

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 (44%), other suspects died from hanging (11%) and from a drug overdose (11%).

Suspects' Charges

Information on whether charges were filed against a suspect prior to his/her death was also requested from Nevada's agencies that participated in the CACS data collection project.

Analysis of the data provided indicates none of the suspects were charged with an offense at the time of their death. However, in situations where the agency could have filed charges, they reportedly intended on filing them (Table 3).

Among situations involving an arrest-related death and where charges were going to be filed, the offense in which the suspect was involved varied greatly. In one instance, the suspect was reportedly going to be charged with jaywalking, while another incident involved the alleged sexual assault of a minor.

Table 3. Filed charges and the most serious offense charge(s) against suspects who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009.

Offense charge information	Number	%
Where charges filed at the time of the incident?		
Yes	0	0.0
No, but intended	6	66.7
No, medical assistance call	2	22.2
Missing	1	11.1
Most serious offense		
Arson	1	11.1
Battery	2	22.2
Jaywalking	1	11.1
Resisting arrest with a weapon	1	11.1
Sexual assault on a victim <14	1	11.1
Not applicable/Missing	3	33.3

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

Condition and Location of Deceased

Information concerning the deceased mental and physical condition was requested from the agencies that provided CACS with arrest-related death data. Among the types of conditions reported, most suspects (55%) who died during an arrest in Nevada resisted arrest or being handcuffed, about one-third attempted to escape, and 9% were believed to have had a mental health problem (Table 4).

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

Condition and location	Number	%
Did the deceased--		
Appear intoxicated	0	0.0
Exhibit mental health problems	1	9.1
Verbally threaten the officer(s)	0	0.0
Resist being cuffed/arrested	6	54.5
Attempt to escape	4	36.4
Become physically combative	0	0.0
Where did the deceased die?		
Medical facility	4	44.4
Crime scene	3	33.3
Booking center	0	0.0
En route to booking/medical fac	0	0.0
Elsewhere	0	0.0
Missing	2	22.2

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

Analysis of the data also reveals that among the incidents where information was provided to CACS, about half of the suspects died at a medical facility and about half died at the crime scene.

Weapon Use

During the majority of situations involving an arrest-related death in Nevada, the suspect was armed with a weapon. During those situations, the weapon was used to either threaten the officer or some other person 60% of the time (Table 5). The deceased was reportedly unarmed in about one-fifth of all incidents.

Table 5. Weapon use by and against those who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009.

Weapon use by and against deceased	Number	%
During the arrest process, the deceased--		
Carried or possessed a weapon	5	55.6
Used a weapon to threaten the officer	2	40.0
Used a weapon to threaten other person	1	20.0
Used a weapon to assault the officer	0	0.0
Used a weapon to assault other people	0	0.0
None of the above	2	40.0
Did not carry a weapon	2	22.2
Missing	2	22.2
Type of weapon used against deceased		
Handgun	2	22.2
Rifle/shotgun	3	33.3
Nightstick	0	0.0
Conducted energy device	1	11.1
Other	1	11.1
None	2	22.2

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

When a suspect was killed, a firearm was most often the type of weapon used. A conductive energy device (i.e., a stun gun) was seldom used.

Methodology

Data for this report was collected by the Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics (CACS)—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, including trends in crime and arrests, police practices, prosecution and pretrial activities, adjudication and sentencing, and corrections.

The data briefs are short in length (2-4 pages), 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.

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