

A retrospective comparative study on unidentified deceased individuals brought for postmortem examination was conducted from January 2022 to December 2024 at ABVIMS&RML Hospital, New Delhi

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ABSTRACT: Death is an event that is the permanent cessation of body function and the permanent loss of existence of that personality. It's a painful event for all those who are in contact with that personality. It is rather more painful if death of a person occurs as unknown and there is no legal heir of that person to claim the body. In metropolitan city like Delhi thousands of people come in search of livelihood and they die here without any proof of identity. As we know India's literacy rate is 82.14 % (Male) and Female literacy is (65.46%). Those unknown bodies have no I card for their address, and after searching a lot like publishing an advertisement in a newspaper police have to cremate their body. Scientific methods like DNA analysis are used to identify remains access to the database may not always be available.

These bodies are generally found on footpath, railway stations, beggars, with low socioeconomic status. We conducted retrospective comparative study from Jan-2022 to Dec- 2024 at ABVIMS RML and found unknown males, with history of chronic pneumonitis, age gap of 41-50 year, time since death more than one week are predominately autopsied at RML Hospital & more no of unknown autopsies are done in summer season.

Keyword: unknown Delhi, chronic Pneumonitis

INTRODUCTION

Death is an event which is permanent cessation of body function and permanent loss of existence of that personality. It's a painful event for all those who are in contact with that personality. It is rather more painful if death of a person occurs as unknown and there is no legal heir of that person to claim the body. In metropolitan city like Delhi, thousands of people come in search of livelihood, and they die here without any proof of identity. As we know India's literacy rate is 82.14 % (Male) and Female literacy is (65.46%). These unknown bodies have no I card for their address, and after a lot record police have to cremate their bodies. Scientific methods like DNA analysis are used to identify remains access to the database may not always be available.

In brief Unknown dead bodies are those dead bodies in which identity is not determined till the examination and reporting. Identity here means establishment of individuality of a person, like his name, gender his/her whereabouts.

These bodies are generally found on footpaths, railway stations, beggars, with low socioeconomic status. As per latest Sept 2023 census, Aadhar has been generated for 138.68 Crore population now covering 95% of the Indian population while current population of India is 143.81 crore (2023). But Aadhar cannot be used for identification purposes as it cannot be used for criminal purposes.

It is defined as a deceased person who has no authorised representative or next of kin willing and able to make final disposition of the remains.

Delhi Unidentified dead bodies in a year

Year	Total bodies	Males	Females
2018	2991	331	20
2019	2602	278	25
2020	2215	310	14
2021	2178	346	14
2022	1542	219	12

There is a Unique Hospital identification number hospitals and mortuaries assign a UHID/UID/Unique morgue no to every unknown dead body so that the body can be tracked properly in registers.

All documents(Inquest,MLC,autopsy report, and photographs can be linked to the same body. Identification later becomes possible through the same UHID.It prevents mix-ups,duplication or wrongful handover of bodies. For an unknown person, UHID is written like- UID/PM No/Morgue receipt no, depending on the hospital In missing –person cases, UHID is crucial for linking-Police record,DNA reports,fingerprint searches,autopsy reports, and burial /cremation acknowledgement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a study by Rastogi k.Ashok, Bajrang K Singh et al at MGM Medical college Indore, India,out of 2195 dead bodies brought for medicolegal autopsy in one year (2015) , 226 unknown dead bodies were done out of which 186 unknown male, female, case numbered 33 and in 7 cases, sex could not be determined. Max. no. of cases were inthe age group of 41-50 year out of which 44 were male and 8 case unknown female followed by 31-40 years, in which 46 female cases were seen out of which 40 were male and 06 were female. Max no of cases were seen in the summer, followed by the monsoon season and the least in the winter season. The maximum number of cases having cause of death as injuries, followed by asphyxia max were males followed by females .They found natural deaths due to pathology outnumbered unnatural death and in natural death multiple organ pathology was much more common than single organ pathology. The second major cause of death was injuries by blunt and sharp objects.

Acc to study at Nalanda Medical College with Hospital (NMCH) Patna conducted from Jan-2016- Dec- 2017. A total of 829 bodies were bought and out of of these, 124 were unknown; 83 case of male and female contributed 41 cases. Out of 119 cases 40 cases were natural and 79 case were unnatural, while 5 cases were of unconfirmed cause of death. Among unnatural (RTA railway accidents were common) followed by homicidal. Male were mostcommonly affected . An accident wasmost commonlyfollowed by homicide/suicide.

Accordingto study conducted by theUttarakhand department of FMT, GMC Garhwal region. A total of 407 PM were conducted at the mortuary ofdept. During the study, among then 56 cases were unidentified 39 cases were in decomposed state and 17 were in a fresh state. The study was conducted from. 1st Jan-2018 to 31 Dec-2022 Max. Case in Septemberand least in January. The maximum no of unidentified cases brought for autopsy were recovered from the river, followed by hospital deaths.Opinion regarding cause of death was reserved in 27 cases, followed by cause of death as drowning, followed by head injury and death due to natural disease. Maximum no of cases were of males, with an agegapof 31-40 years.

In a study conducted at AIMS ,B G nagarKarnataka , 796 postmortem have been performed during the period of Jan 21 to Dec 2024. 796 autopsies were conducted in the department of AIMS, BG Nagar. 84 case were unidentified of these 25 case were identified. And rest remains unidentified. The highest no of deceased was in the 41-50 year age group, with male. November saw an increase in deaths, accounting for 11 cases .Additionally, 39 cases were found at bus stops, highways and roads. The primary cause of death was natural, with disease and pathological conditions responsible for the fatalities. Natural deaths from illness conditions accounted for 60.7 5 of fatalities. The Government must make sincere efforts to provide food and shelter to its citizens to reduce the number of beggars and homeless individuals.

In a study conducted at the Regional forensic science lab New Delhi form 2017-2021 , A total of of 100 cases were filed related to unidentified dead cases were selected from total case received from 2017- 2021. Majority

were of age ranged from for 3-90 year Majority dying of injury/ trauma .The approx time since death ranged from same day to 6 months.

In New Delhi vagabond, drug addict and beggars die under unfortunate circumstances.The unidentified body is preserved on the mortuary till 72 hrs after arrival

In study conducted at GMC Patiala total of 1919 bodies were brought of which were of which 169 cases the mean age of 44-82 male predominance max unidentified bodies discovered at religious places.

In a study conducted at the Mortuary complex of Sir T.General hospital and Govt medical college Bhavnagar in dept of Forensic Medicine, in a study of 3 years, 104 autopsy cases of unidentified dead body 24 .04% cases were identified during or after the autopsy. The majority of cases were of male sex (85.58%), and age above 60 years(31.73%). The maximum was found on roads, street or highways(53.84%). The majority of cases revealed natural cause(47.11%).Maximum cases were in the fresh state(74.04%). Maximum cases were in month of June followed by Jan, Nov and December.

In a study conducted at a Tertiary care hospital in North Tamil Nadu ,Dept of Forensic Medicine at Govt. Villupuram Medical College& Hospital, Tamil Nadu ,Majority of the cases were of Males(77.5%),Maximum age group was of 61 to 70 years(23.5%),In Maximum cases cause of death could not be given(18.9%) followed by lung disease (18.3%),Postmortem done between 3 to 7 days in 29.26% cases. Maximum bodies were found on the National Highway involved in RTA (15.1%) followed by streets.12.86%.

In a study conducted at Dept of Forensic Medicine and toxicology,the Department of Pathology, Faculty of Health Sciences University of Cape Town South Africa, Maximum cases were Males, age group 30 to 50 years Death predominately resulted from Natural, accidental or suicidal causes. Commonly found on railways and roads.

AIM & OBJECTIVES

1. To collect socio-demographic Data of unknown cases done at ABVIMS&RML hospital, New Delhi, in the Past three years.
2. To know the cause of death,the time since death in all these cases.

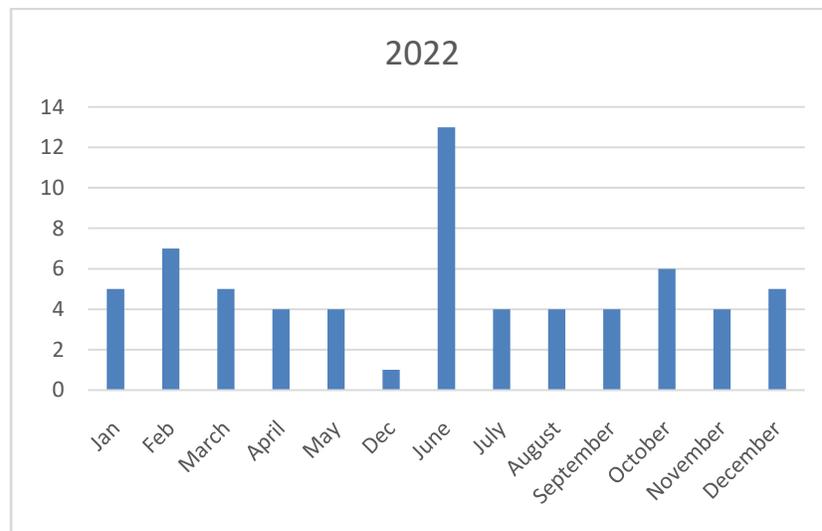
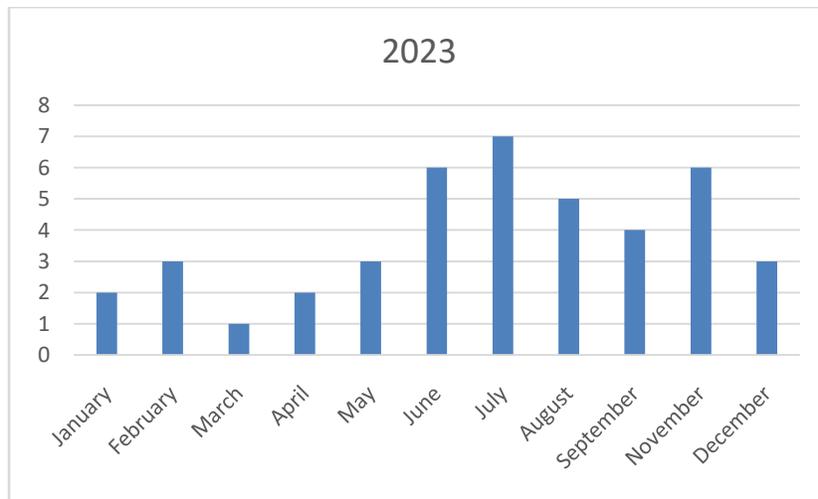
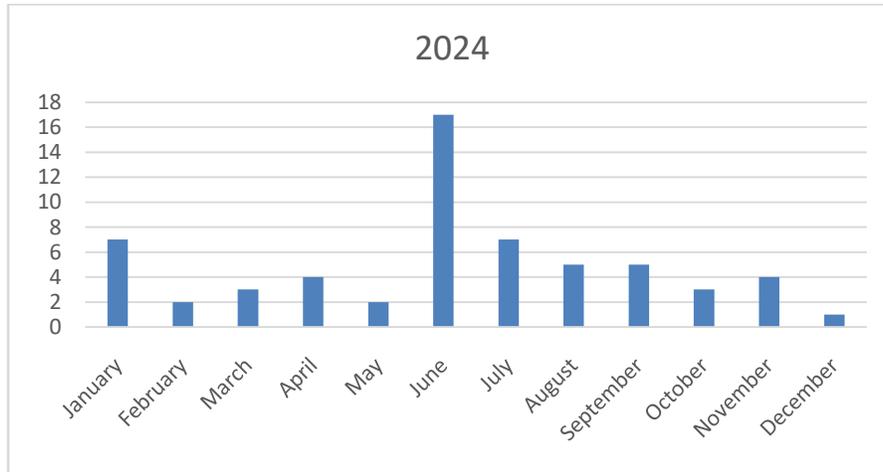
MATERIAL AND METHODS

We collected retrospective data from Jan, 2022 to Dec 2024 from post-mortem records available in the department and compared all three-year unknown deaths. The tables were prepared, and the results were prepared.

RESULTS

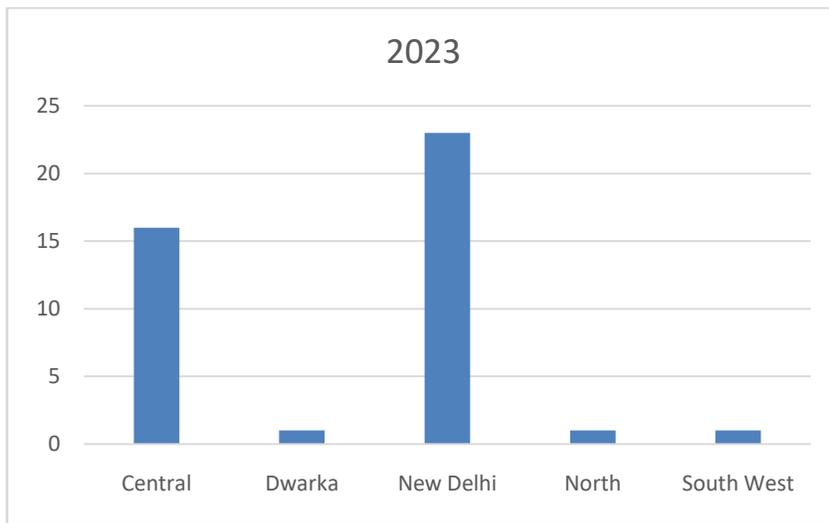
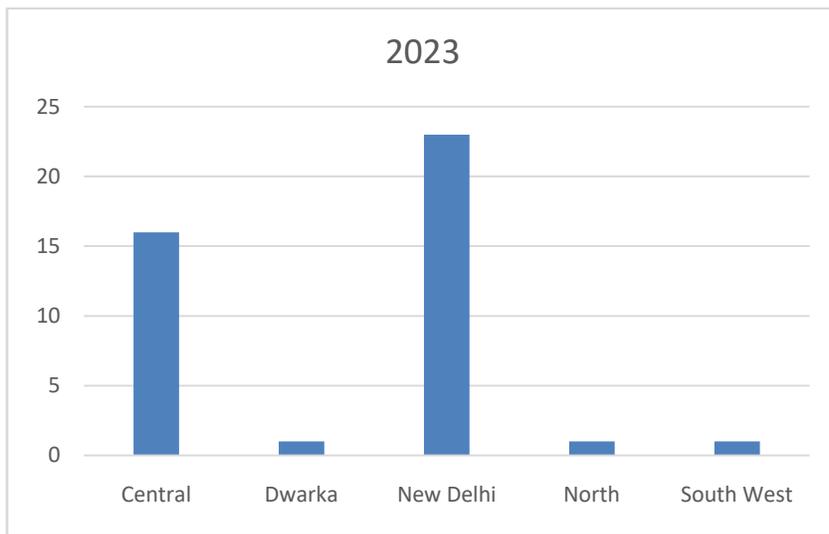
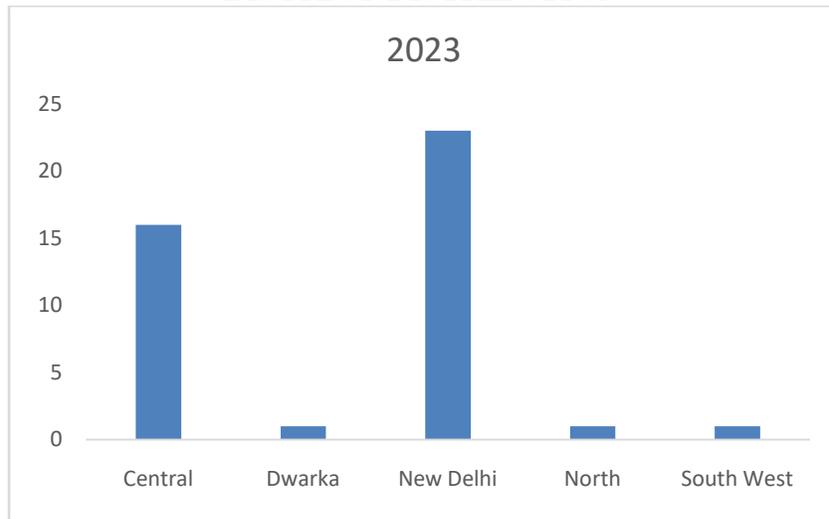
Total no of cases in 2022, 2023 &2024 were 809,821 & 1083 respectively. Unknown cases were sixty-seven (8.3%), forty three (5.2%) and Sixty one (5.6%).

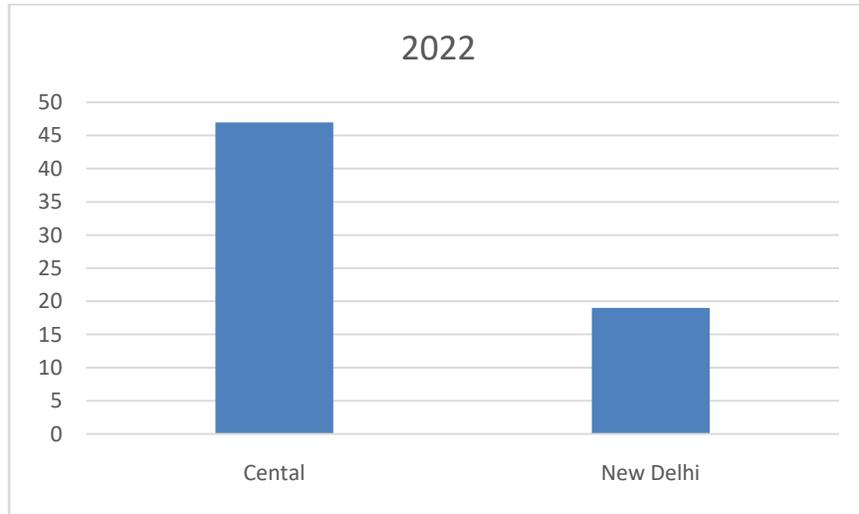
SEASONAL VARIATION



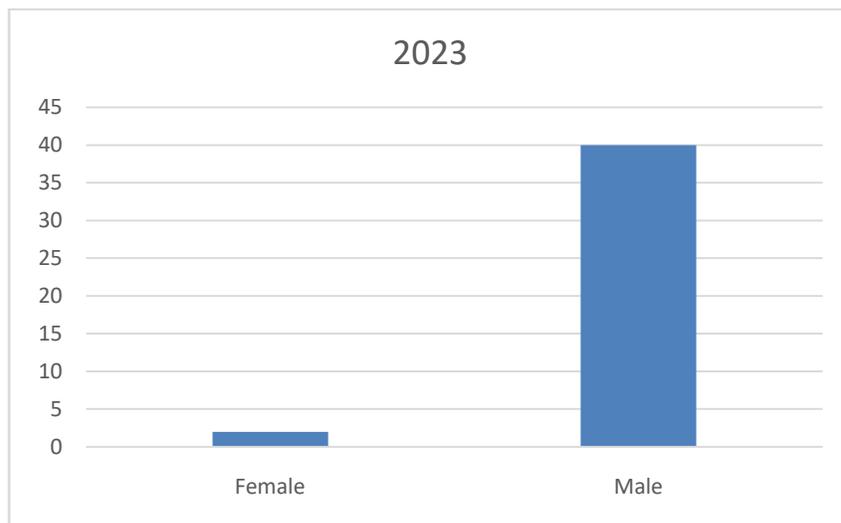
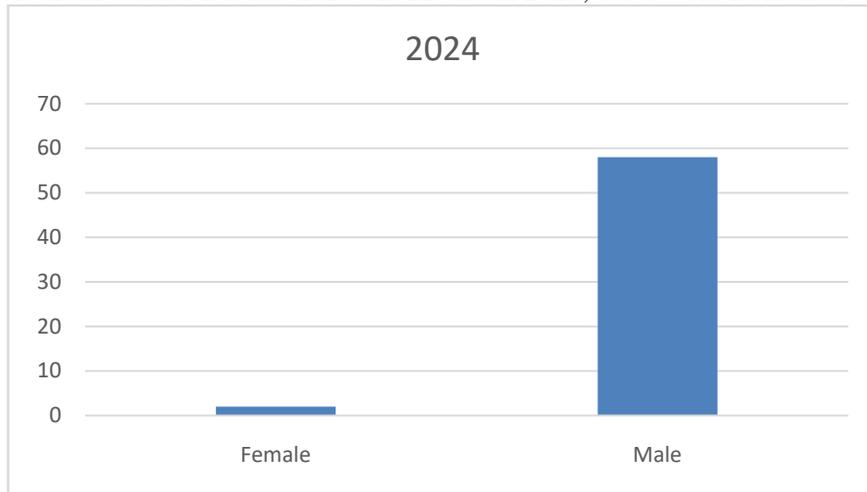
In 2024 & 2022 maximum cases were in June and in 2023 it was in July. So predominately maximum unknown cases were in June-July.

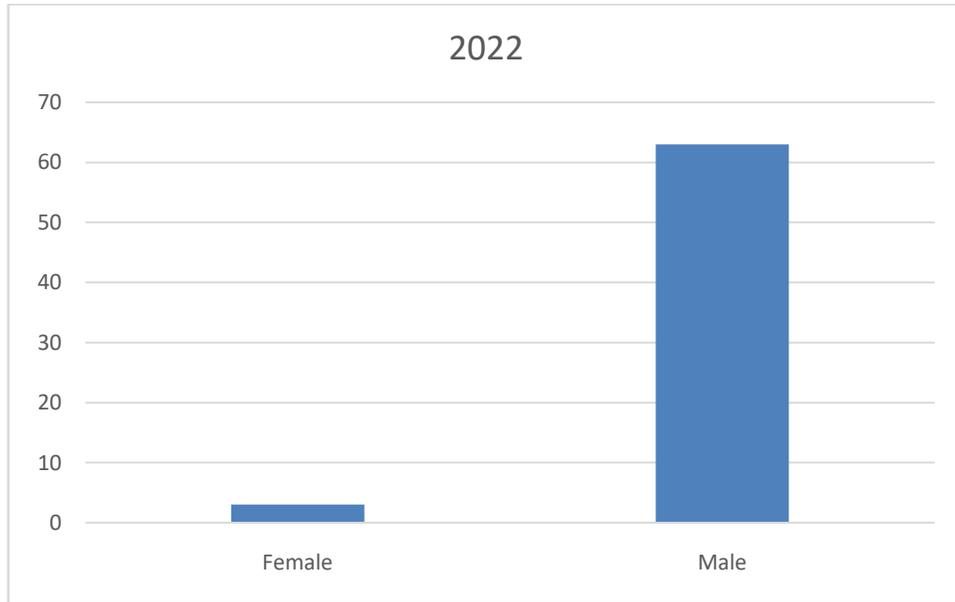
DISTRICT DISTRIBUTION



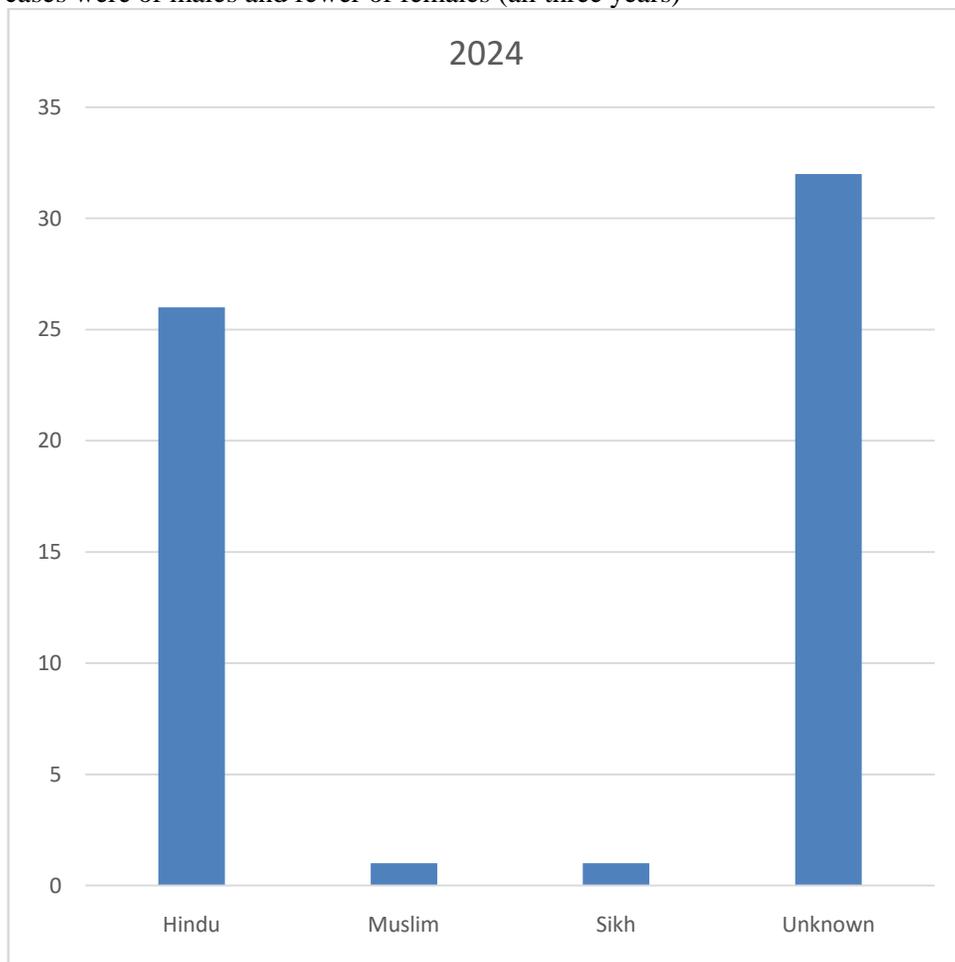


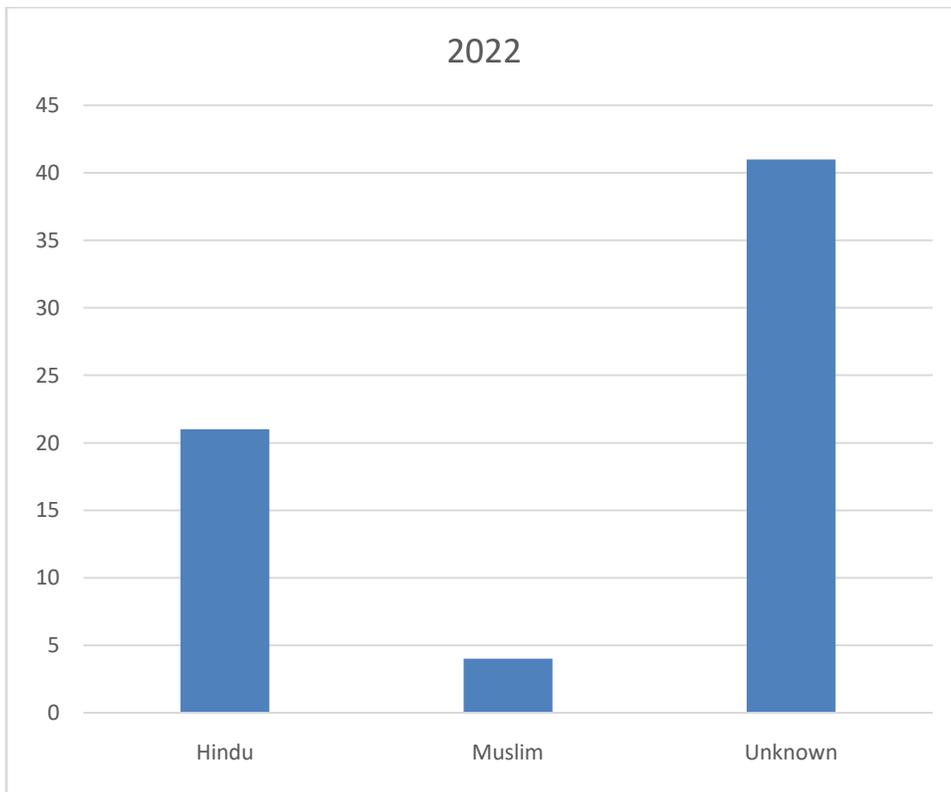
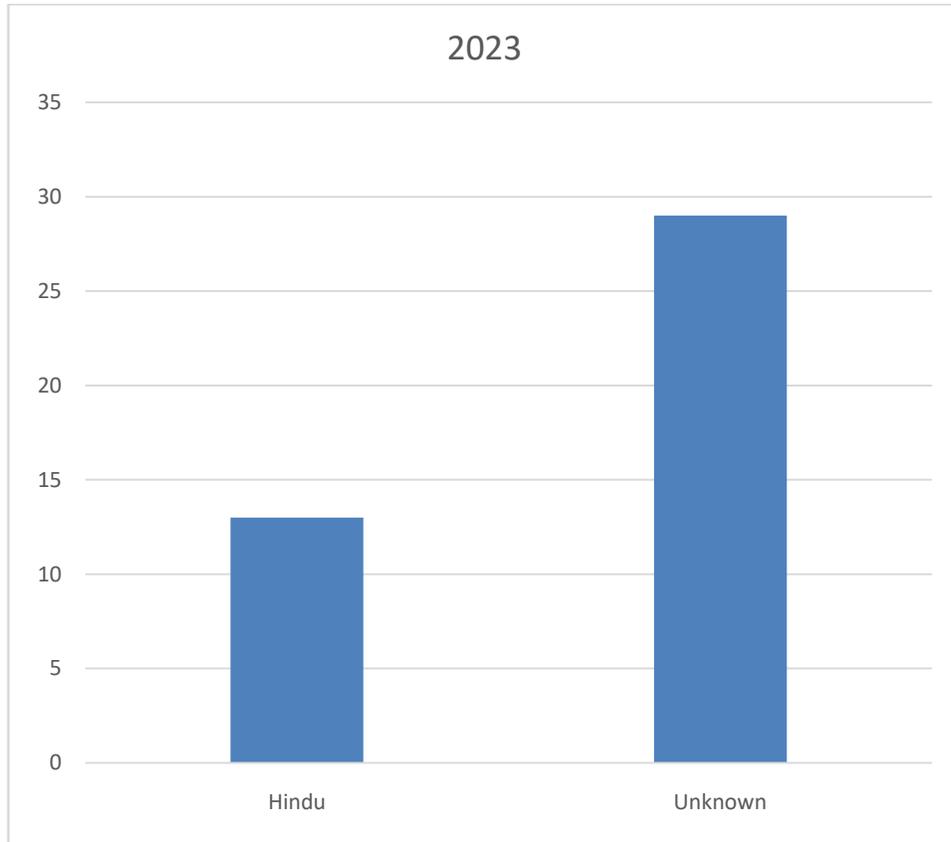
Maximum cases were from Central District 2024&2022 and in 2023; cases were from the New Delhi district.



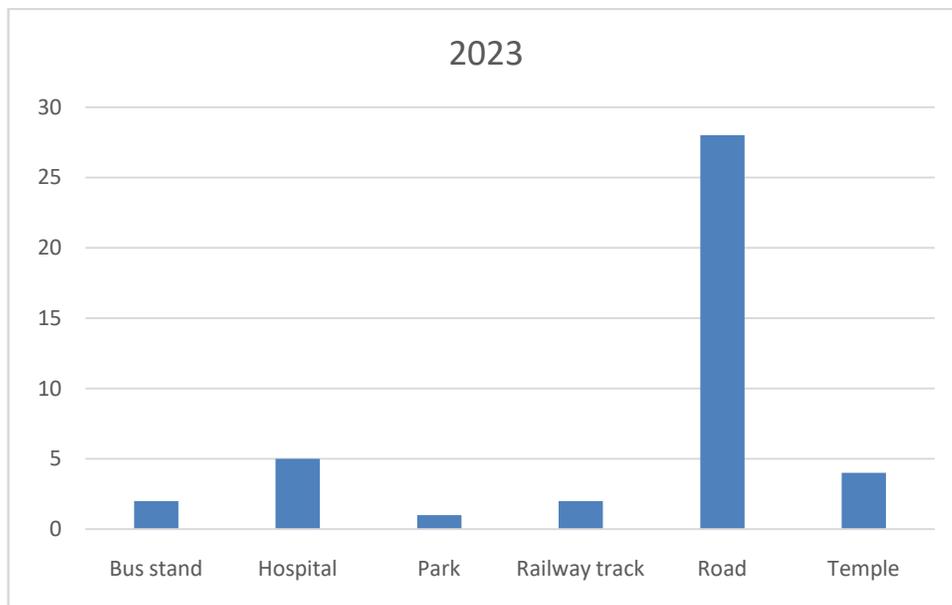
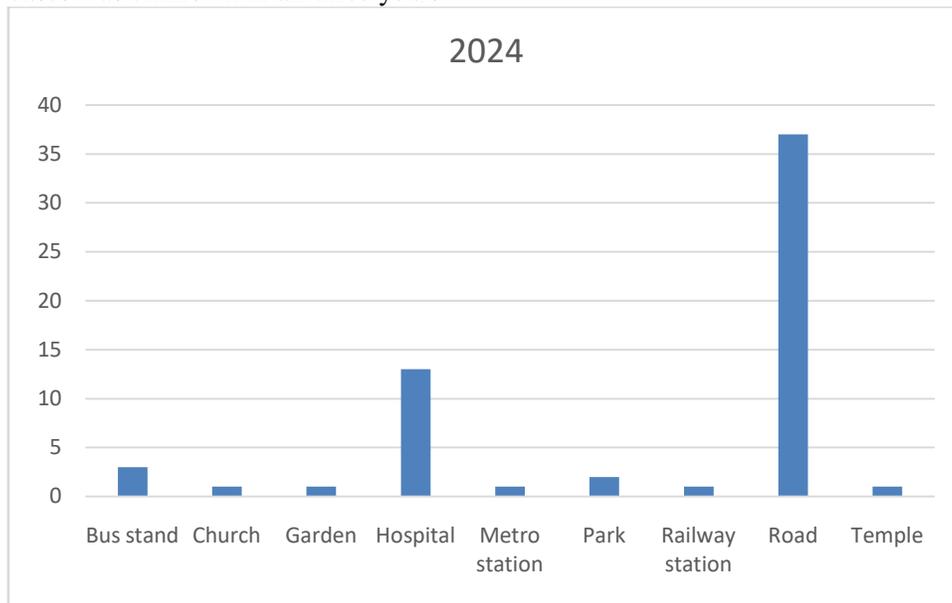


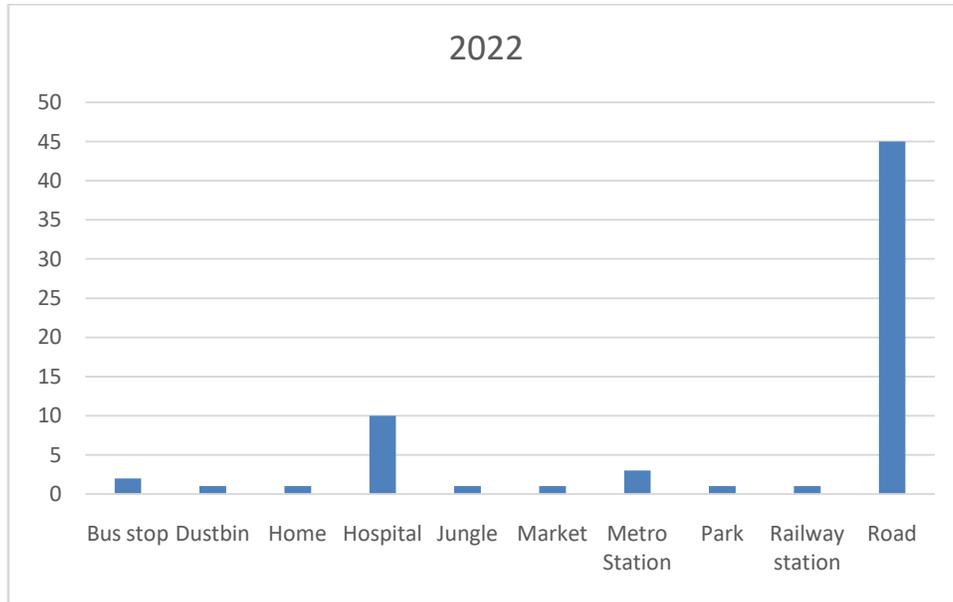
The maximum cases were of males and fewer of females (all three years)



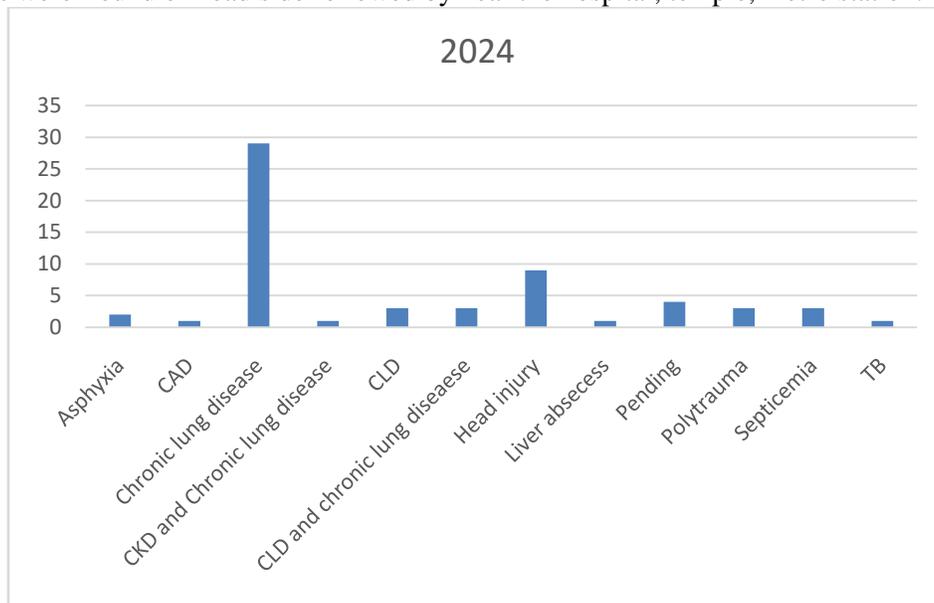


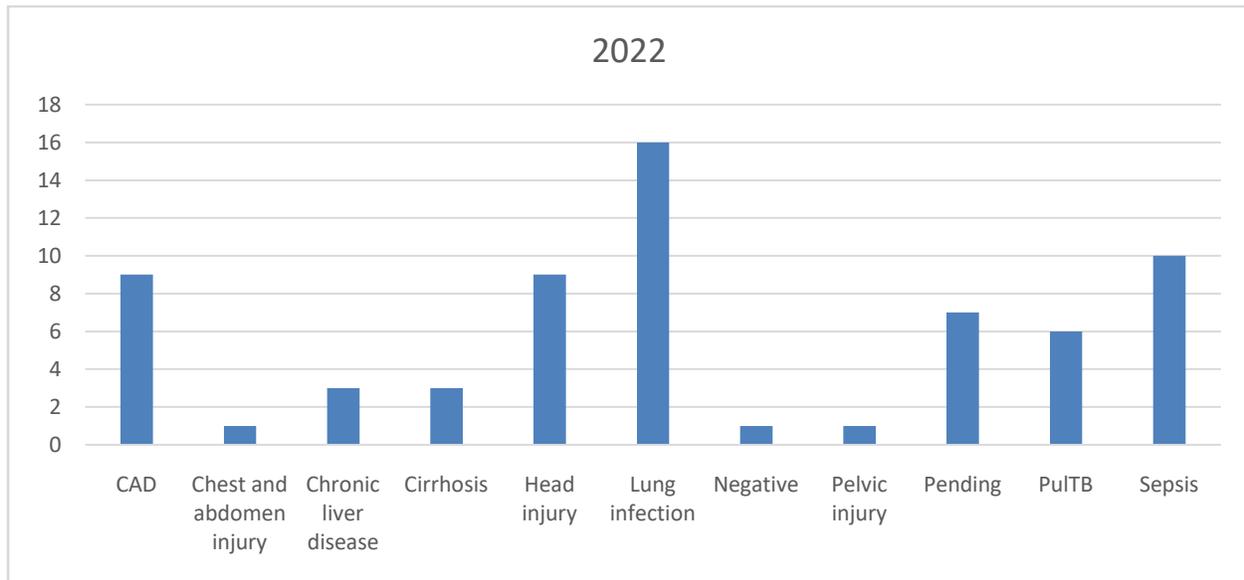
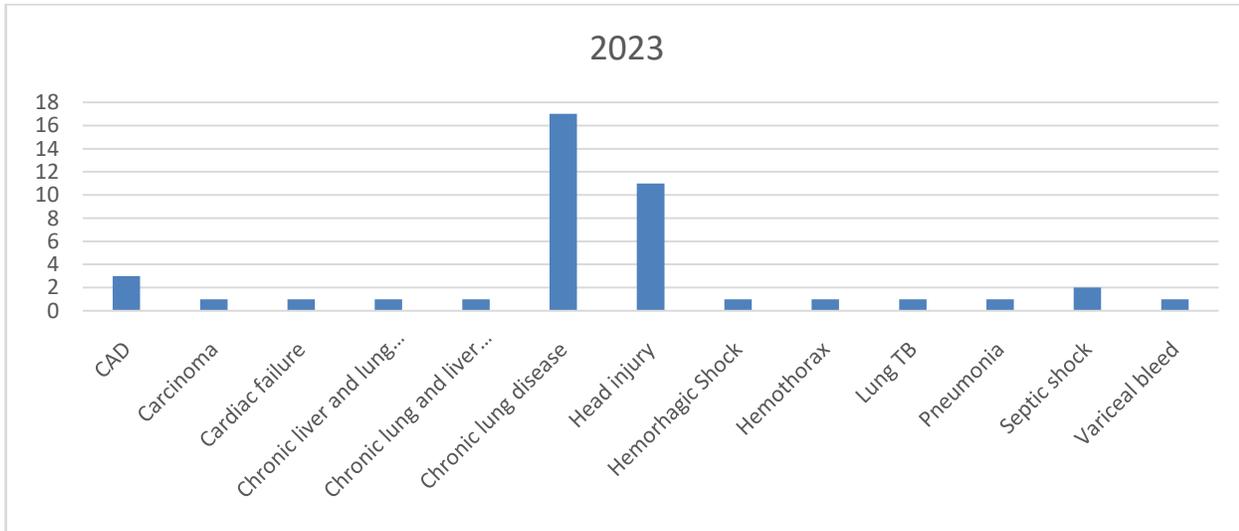
The religion of cases was unknown in all three years.



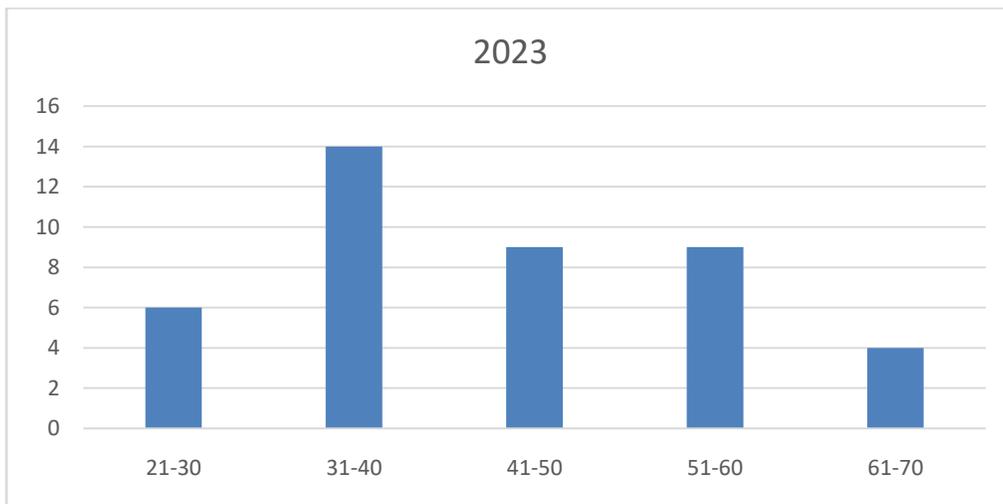
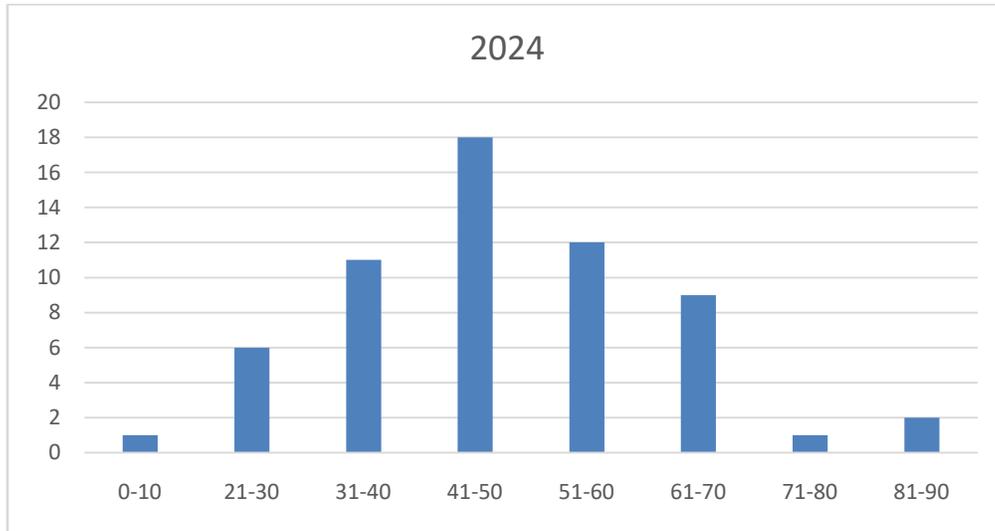


Maximum cases were found on road side followed by near the hospital, temple, metro station.

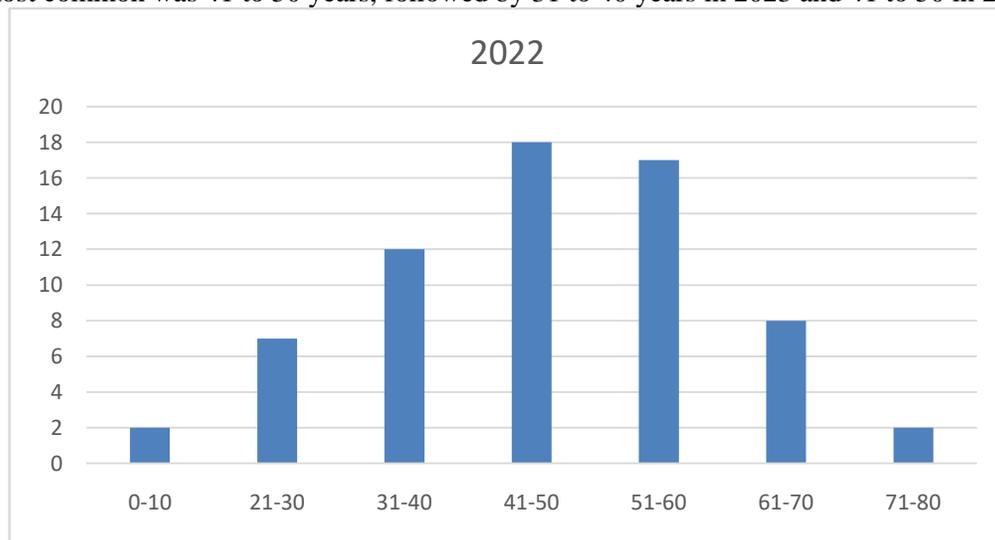


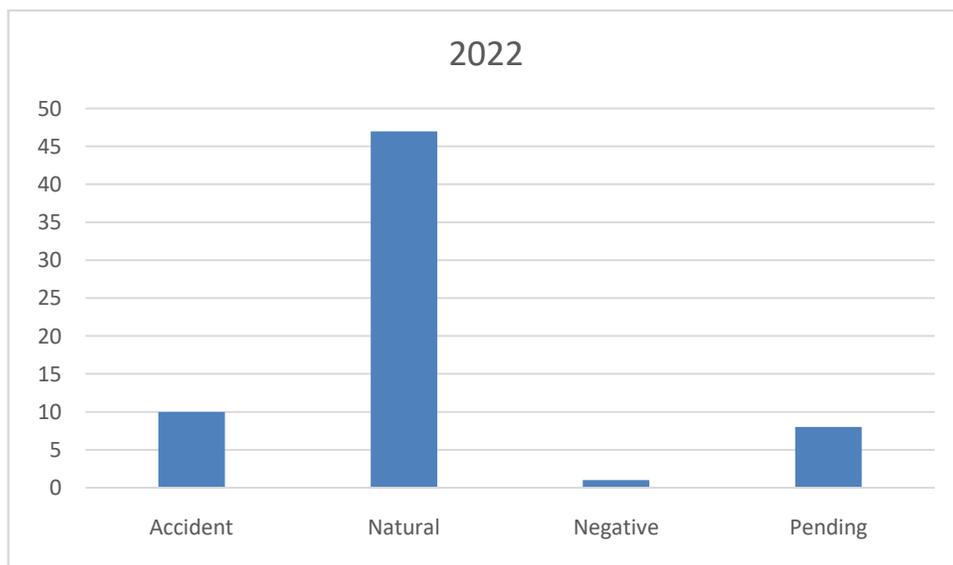
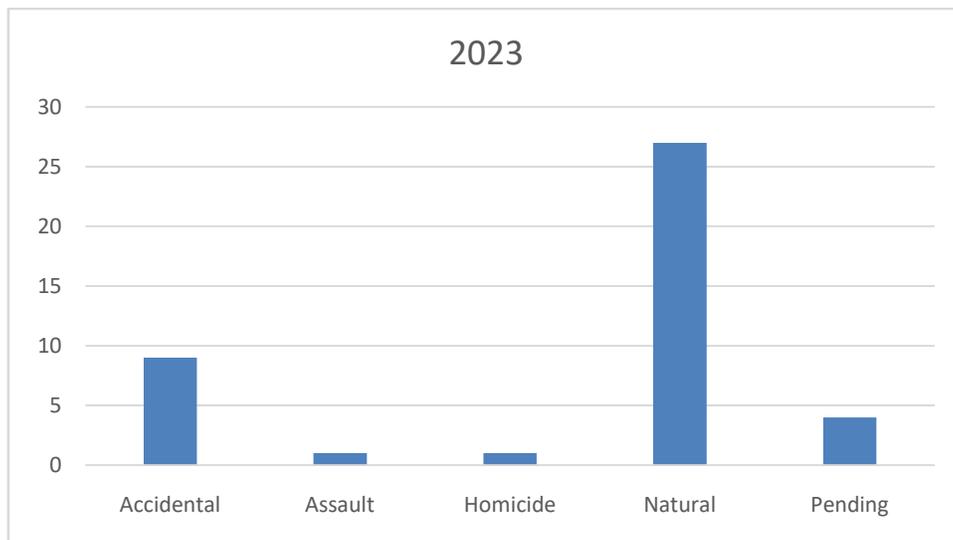
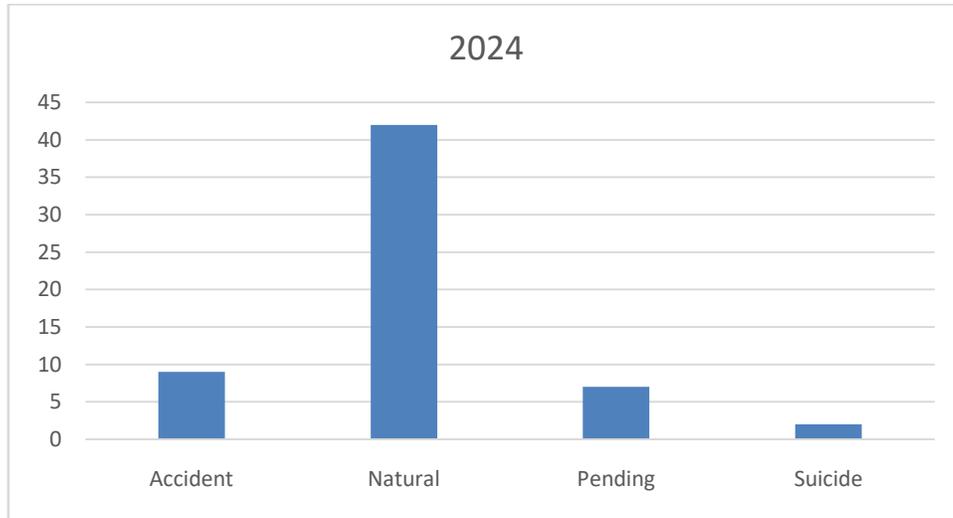


Maximum cases were from lung infection (Chronic Pneumonitis) followed by sepsis, head injury and heart disease

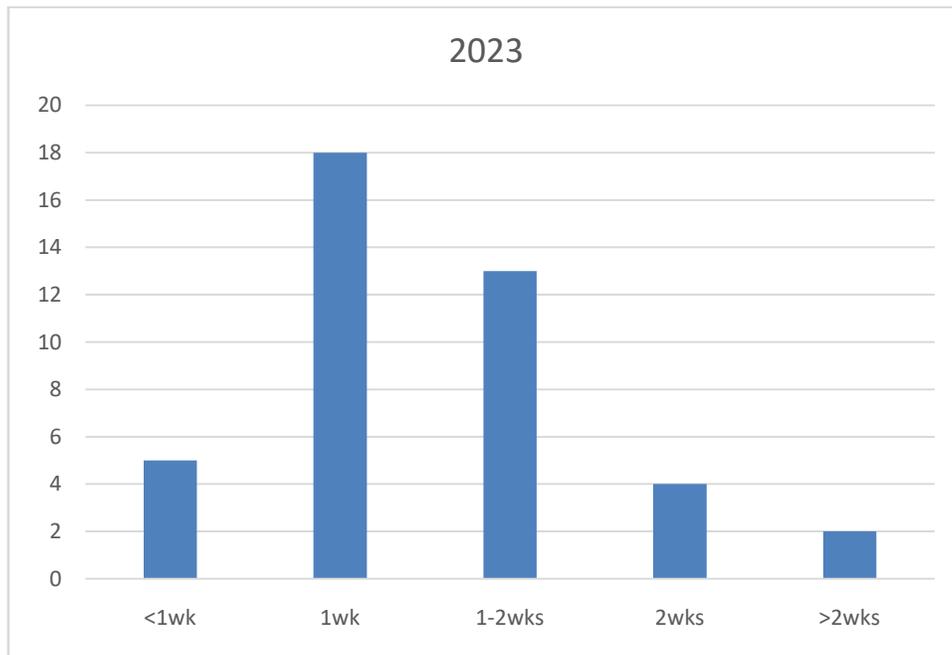
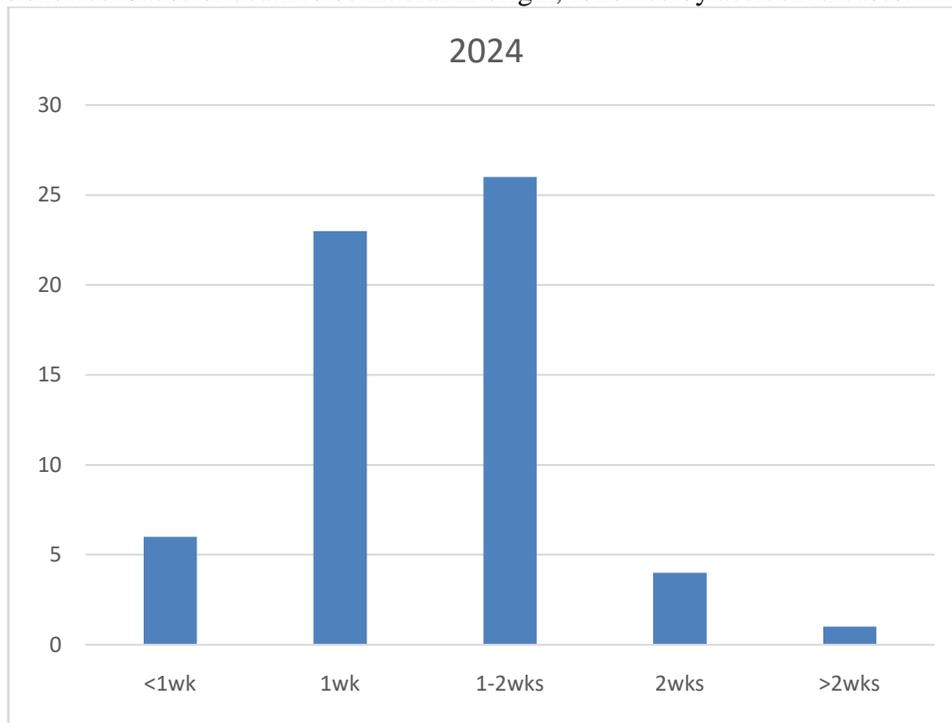


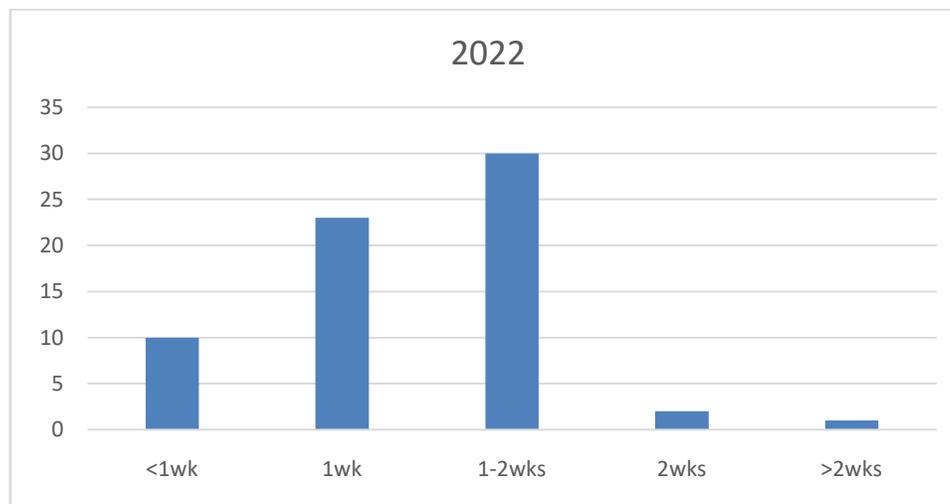
Age group most common was 41 to 50 years, followed by 31 to 40 years in 2023 and 41 to 50 in 2022. e.





Maximum cases showed Cause of death to be natural in origin, followed by accidental cases.





In Maximum cases cause of death was between 1to 2 weeks,

DISCUSSION

Death is usually associated with grief, surprise and sometimes denial. When a person dies it's the right of that person to get decent burial. Burial is the disposition of human remains either by interment or by cremation.

All the unidentified/unclaimed dead bodies were brought in by police and men of the road safety commission. The males to female sex ratio of 7:3; 1 is similar to all previous studies on unidentified/unclaimed bodies where males far outnumbered females. The reason for the male predominance in India was mainly due to their patriarchal society making males to travel to far towns in search of greener pasture but in their new place of abode were usually homeless street dwellers which predispose them to early death. The male dominance in South Africa was due to the fact that major activity leading to unidentified/unclaimed deaths were gang related activities which young males usually indulge in United States of America, homelessness and substance abuse were major risk factors .The male dominance in this study were due to supremacy war among rival cult group characterized by killings, reprisals and kidnapping. Also contributing were young and chieftaincy leadership tussle.

For these unidentified/unclaimed bodies cause of death was not clear. These authors attributed the cause of death to homelessness, poverty, stigma and poor health seeking behavior of these deceased unidentified/unclaimed bodies.

People migrate like skilled & unskilled laborers, beggars & orphans from neighboring villages are migrating to nearby towns for want of livelihood .Increased longevity of life poses several risks such as disownment by dear ones, dementia, disability, displacement and to loss of identity. Because of delay in identifying the bodies these bodies are kept in mortuary for an undue long period. This leads to increase in cost of maintaining and running of the freezers. Delay in conducting PM –obscure the autopsy findings because of decomposition make it difficult to arrive at the exact cause of death.

In all medical colleges the forensic medicine dept. can maintain unknown case registry where all information is stored such as whole body photograph with clothes without clothes with detailed account of injuries at time when the body is checked in.

Unknown bodies are most frequently found in extremes of weather like in June (extreme heat) and December, January (Extreme Cold) which aggravates the preexisting diseases. Older age group is more vulnerable as they are neglected members of family. In majority of the cases cause of death was natural as the unknown dead bodies were gen of beggars, abandoned people with poor hygiene.

Hospital should have psychologist that will also inform the relative on the need to do an early burial to achieve closure and discourage them from allowing the bodies of their loved one to be part of scheduled mass burial. More than 60 percent of the identified but abandoned bodies were less than 40 years old.

The lacuna of the study is had it been the prospective study then more information could be sought from police personnel.

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