



Public Health
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Wayne County Health Department

Wayne County
2021 Overdose Death Summary Report
Wayne County Health Department
July 15, 2022

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to take a deeper dive into the drug overdose problem in Wayne County by looking at various demographics and descriptors of those that have died of drug overdose. This report also compares the data pre-pandemic to the years 2020 and 2021.

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the entire population in many ways. Some of those are concrete in the death and disease that can be directly attributed to people acquiring Covid-19. And while one may not ever be able to attribute deaths from drug overdoses directly to the pandemic, it can be reasonably ascertained that the pandemic had a part to play. Early on during the pandemic, from the shutting down much of society to the recommendation of limiting travel when things started to open up, this certainly caused a great degree of isolation in many that created an environment conducive to initiation of drug use, continued use or even relapse. Access to in-person care was also limited and a greater reliance on telemedicine occurred as a function of risk reduction when it came to Covid-19. These changes in society by necessity to prevent the spread of Covid-19 perhaps contributed to a higher risk of overdose and death from overdose.

NUMBER OF OVERDOSE DEATHS

Overdoses and overdose deaths have increased throughout the Covid-19 pandemic all over the country and Wayne County is no different. If you look at the five years before the pandemic, 2015-2019, the average overdose deaths per year pre-pandemic was 26. This also includes 2016, when fentanyl and carfentanil proliferated throughout the

country, where we had 39 overdose deaths. Both 2020 and 2021 saw above average deaths 34 and 40 respectively. See Chart 1.

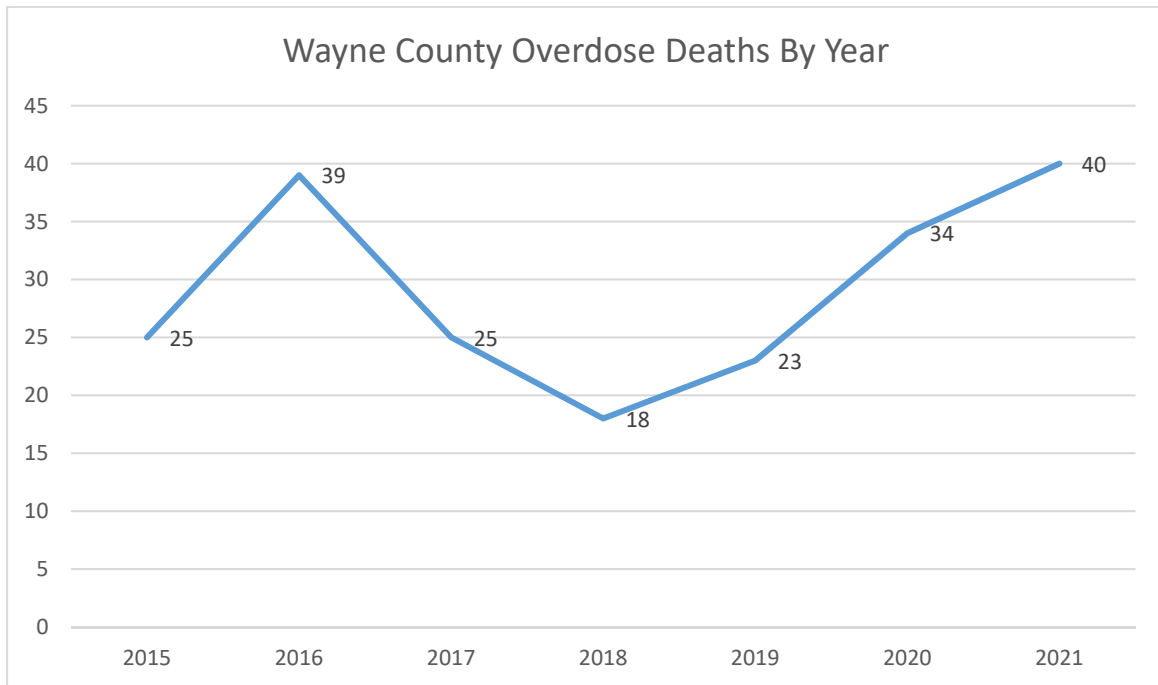


Chart 1 Overdose Deaths per year. Wayne County Health Department Vital Statistics

AGE and SEX

In examining overdose deaths by sex, more men died from overdose than women at a rate of almost 2 to 1. According to the 2020 Census, 49.9% of Wayne County residents were women. So a disproportionate number of overdose deaths were men. This trend did not change pre-pandemic to the previous two years of the pandemic. See Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Overdose Deaths among Wayne County Residents by Sex

Sex	2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Males	27	68%	24	71%	88	68%
Females	13	33%	10	29%	42	32%
Total	40		34		130	

Over 50 percent of Wayne County residents that died from overdose are between the ages of 25 and 44. This has remained relatively unchanged from pre-pandemic to now. See Table 2. However, there has been an increase in those 35 to 44 years of age who died in 2021. This increase in this age group resulted in 66% of overdose deaths in

2021 were between the ages of 25 to 44. This is up from 52% in 2020 and 53% average for years 2015-2019.

Table 2. Number of Overdose Deaths among Wayne County Residents by Age

Year	2021*		2020*		2015-2019 Average	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Age						
0 to 14	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
15 to 24	3	8%	3	8%	1.6	6%
25 to 34	11	28%	12	30%	7	27%
35 to 44	15	38%	9	23%	6.4	25%
45 to 54	5	13%	7	18%	4.8	18%
55 to 64	5	13%	3	8%	5	19%
65+	1	3%	0	0%	1.2	5%
Total	40		34		26	

RACE AND ETHNICITY

According to the 2020 Census, Wayne County is over 95% white, less than 2% Black, 1% Asian. In terms of ethnicity, 2.2% of Wayne County is Hispanic. While there was very little change from pre-pandemic levels of overdose deaths when race and ethnicity as Wayne County will typically see 1 Black or 1 Hispanic or both overdose death(s) per year, it is still an over representation of each of these populations. See Table 3.

Table 3. Number of Overdose Deaths among Wayne County Residents by Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
White, non-Hispanic	37	93%	29	85%	122	94%
Black	1	3%	2	6%	5	4%
Asian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Hispanic	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
White with unknown ethnicity	1	3%	3	9%	3	2%
Total	40		34		130	

EDUCATION

Table 4 below is a summary of the level of education of each of the decedents who have died from drug overdose. Those with a high school level of education or less account for almost 90% of drug overdose deaths. This trend has not changed much from the 5 years preceding the pandemic. However, within those groups, those who did not graduate high school increased in 2021 to one-third of all drug overdose deaths from 18% for pre-pandemic drug overdose deaths.

Table 4. Number of Overdose Deaths among Wayne County Residents by Education

Education	2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Did not Graduate from High School	13	33%	8	24%	24	18%
High School Graduate or GED	22	55%	23	68%	84	65%
Some College	2	5%	2	6%	15	12%
College Graduate or Higher	3	8%	1	3%	5	4%
Unknown	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%
Total	40		34	0	130	

COMMUNITY DIFFERENCES

The built environment can sometimes be a determining factor for many risky behaviors. The cities and included zip code areas of Wooster, Rittman and Orrville account for a majority of drug overdose deaths in Wayne County. The three cities and their surrounding areas accounted for 70% of deaths pre-pandemic. In 2020, the percentage raised to 79% and in 2021 came down closer to pre pandemic rates at 73%. In 2020, there was an unusual number of deaths in Orrville. In 2021, we saw an increase in Wooster and also unexpected increase in West Salem with 4 deaths. See Table 5.

Table 5. Number of Overdose Deaths among Wayne County Residents by Zip Code

Zip Code -Location	2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
44214 Burbank	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%
44216 Clinton	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%
44217 Creston	0	0%	1	3%	6	5%
44230 Doylestown	2	5%	0	0%	13	10%
44270 Rittman	4	10%	4	12%	16	12%
44276 Sterling	1	3%	0	0%	1	1%
44287 West Salem	4	10%	1	3%	5	4%
44606 Apple Creek	0	0%	0	0%	3	2%
44618 Dalton	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%
44627 Fredericksburg	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
44645 Marshalville	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%
44667 Orrville	4	10%	9	26%	12	9%
44676 Shreve	2	5%	0	0%	3	2%
44677 Smithville	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%
44691 Wooster	21	53%	14	41%	64	49%
Unknown	1	3%	3	9%	2	2%
Total	40		34		130	

DRUG TYPE

Below is a summary of types of drugs found in the decedents toxicology reports at the time of death. Many victims had multiple drugs in their system at the time of death so if you add the numbers in Table 6 below, it will far exceed the number of deaths. Fentanyl had been found in the decedents at a rate twice as much in 2021 as was found in the decedents pre-pandemic. In the years 2015-2019, 37% of decedents had fentanyl in their system. In 2021, 80% of those who died had fentanyl in their system.

Methamphetamine rates have been relatively unchanged from pre-pandemic through 2021. However, 2021 saw an increase in marijuana to 7 people. There were only 4 people who died of drug overdose in the previous six years that had marijuana/THC in their system.

Table 6. Number of Overdose Deaths among Wayne County Residents by Drug Class.

Drugs Class	2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Fentanyl	32	80%	21	62%	48	37%
Methamphetamine	15	38%	13	38%	30	23%
Carfentanil	0	0%	4	12%	21	16%
Alcohol	2	5%	4	12%	14	11%
Other drugs	7	18%	4	12%	14	11%
Opioids	4	10%	3	9%	26	20%
Multiple unspecified drugs	0	0%	3	9%	2	2%
Benzodiazepines	2	5%	2	6%	16	12%
Marijuana/THC	7	18%	2	6%	2	2%
Heroin	1	3%	1	3%	10	8%
Cocaine	2	5%	1	3%	15	12%
Total**	40		34		130	

** Number of overdoses add up to more than the sum due to multiple drugs being present.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

We can take several things away from the data presented. Some of these implications could certainly be true of both the five years prior to the pandemic and the two complete years of the pandemic. Some of these considerations are true of the years of the pandemic and not so much prior. Below are considerations for community planning and outreach going forward.

In general, the number of overdose deaths are trending upward. Wayne County needs to continue to continue awareness of the drug problem in Wayne County. These jump in numbers may be attributed to the pandemic and we may not know if these numbers will continue post pandemic. Even if the numbers do go down, we know there were drug overdose deaths pre-pandemic.

We also know that men more than women die of drug overdose. Also those between the ages of 25-44 are most often the victims. And while we do not see large numbers from Black or Hispanic populations, they are still overrepresented in drug overdose deaths in Wayne County. And while we know addiction can reach people from all walks of life, the more educated you are the less likely you are to die from a drug overdose.

And while the cities of Wooster, Rittman and Orrville are overrepresented, it does not mean more rural areas of the county are immune. Areas like West Salem, Shreve and Doylestown have also seen drug overdose deaths.

One of the last implications is the surge of fentanyl. While fentanyl was found in the system of many people who died of overdose pre-pandemic, its rates have doubled in 2021 from 2015-2019. We have also seen a major increase in marijuana/THC. An implication here is the addition of fentanyl to marijuana and other drugs perhaps unknowingly.

While these implications are not indicative of all the factors surrounding substance use disorder, these can be used to target messaging to groups of people who are at greater risk of death from a drug overdose coming out of the pandemic.