



**Public Health**  
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Wayne County Health Department

**Wayne County**  
**2022 Overdose Death Summary Report**  
**Wayne County Health Department**  
**September 1, 2023**

## **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 five years pre-pandemic (2015-2019) to the years 2020, 2021 and 2022.

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. All three years of the pandemic, 2020, 2021 and 2022 saw above average deaths 34, 40 and 37 respectively. See Chart 1.

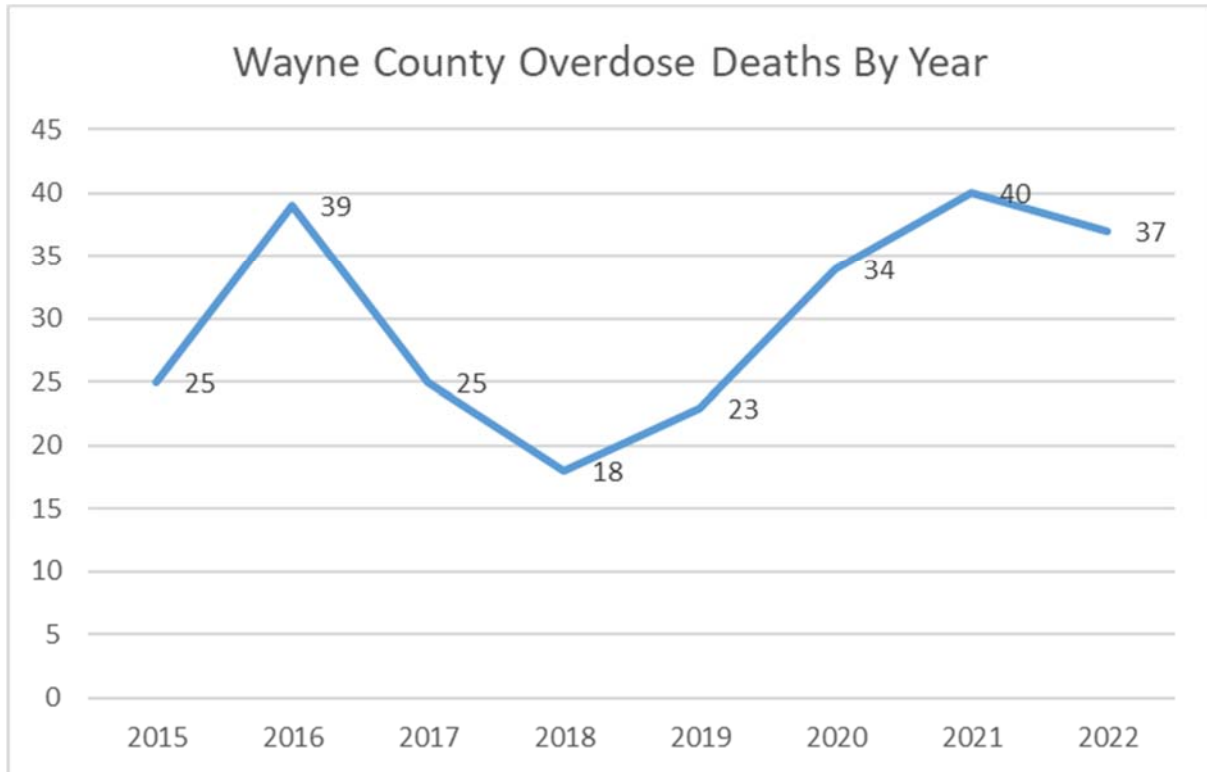


Chart 1 Overdose Deaths per year. Wayne County Health Department Vital Statistics

## 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 three years of the pandemic. Although we did see an increase in the number of females yearly over the course of the pandemic.

See Table 1.

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

Sex	2022		2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Males	23	62%	27	68%	24	71%	88	68%
Females	14	38%	13	33%	10	29%	42	32%
<b>Total</b>			<b>40</b>		<b>34</b>		<b>130</b>	

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 the pandemic years. See Table 2. However, there was an increase in death rates amongst 25-44 year old groups in the pandemic period.

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

Age	2022		2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
0 to 14	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
15 to 24	3	8%	3	8%	3	8%	8	6%
25 to 34	12	32%	11	28%	12	30%	35	27%
35 to 44	12	32%	15	38%	9	23%	32	25%
45 to 54	3	8%	5	13%	7	18%	24	18%
55 to 64	4	11%	5	13%	3	8%	25	19%
65+	3	8%	1	3%	0	0%	6	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>		<b>40</b>		<b>34</b>		<b>130</b>	

## 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 during the pandemic years. See Table 3.

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

Race/ethnicity	2022		2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
White, non-Hispanic	33	89%	37	93%	29	85%	122	94%
Black	2	5%	1	3%	2	6%	5	4%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Hispanic	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
White with unknown ethnicity	1	3%	1	3%	3	9%	3	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>		<b>40</b>		<b>34</b>		<b>130</b>	

## 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, the death rates for those who did not graduate high school increased in 2021 and 2022, 33 percent and 27 percent respectively, compared to 18% for pre-pandemic drug overdose deaths.

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

Education	2022		2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Did not Graduate from High School	10	27%	13	33%	8	24%	24	18%
High School Graduate or GED	20	54%	22	55%	23	68%	84	65%
Some College	4	11%	2	5%	2	6%	15	12%
College Graduate or Higher	2	5%	3	8%	1	3%	5	4%
Unknown	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>		<b>40</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>130</b>	

**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 2022, while Wooster kept its 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. While Wooster overdose death rates were typical for 2022, the balance of the overdose deaths last year were more spread out and not as concentrated in Rittman and Orrville.

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

Zip Code	2022		2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
44214 Burbank	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%
44216 Clinton	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%
44217 Creston	2	5%	0	0%	1	5%	6	5%
44230 Doylestown	2	5%	2	5%	0	0%	13	10%
44270 Rittman	2	5%	4	10%	4	19%	16	12%
44276 Sterling	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	1	1%
44287 West Salem	1	3%	4	10%	1	5%	5	4%
44606 Apple Creek	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	3	2%
44618 Dalton	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%
44627 Fredricksburg	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
44645 Marshallville	0	0%	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%
44667 Orrville	3	8%	4	10%	9	43%	12	9%
44676 Shreve	2	5%	2	5%	0	0%	3	2%
44677 Smithville	0	0%	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%
44691 Wooster	19	51%	21	53%	14	67%	64	49%
Unknown			1	3%	3	14%	2	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>		<b>40</b>		<b>34</b>		<b>130</b>	

**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. In 2022, while fentanyl still was present in most of the deaths, methamphetamine continues to be increasingly found in the decedents as well.

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

Drugs Class	2022		2021*		2020*		2015-2019	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Fentanyl	30	75%	32	80%	21	62%	48	37%
Methamphetamine	18	45%	15	38%	13	38%	30	23%
Carfentanil	0	0%	0	0%	4	12%	21	16%
Alcohol	5	13%	2	5%	4	12%	14	11%
Other drugs	3	8%	7	18%	4	12%	14	11%
Opioids	0	0%	4	10%	3	9%	26	20%
Multiple unspecified drugs	2	5%	0	0%	3	9%	2	2%
Benzodiazepines	0	0%	2	5%	2	6%	16	12%
Marijuana/THC	0	0%	7	18%	2	6%	2	2%
Heroin	0	0%	1	3%	1	3%	10	8%
Cocaine	3	8%	2	5%	1	3%	15	12%
<b>Total**</b>	<b>40</b>		<b>40</b>		<b>34</b>		<b>130</b>	

\*\* 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.

One of the last implications is the reemergence of methamphetamine along with the surge in fentanyl. While fentanyl was found in the system of many people who

died of overdose pre-pandemic, methamphetamine in the decedents has doubled in 2022 from 2015-2019.

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 as we continue to come out of the pandemic.