Preliminary* Data Summary:
Ohio Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths
***2020 and 2021 data is incomplete.**

Ohio | Department of Health

This preliminary data summary has been developed to provide recent trends in unintentional drug overdose deaths using preliminary 2020 and 2021 vital statistics mortality data. Comparisons are made to finalized mortality data from 2011 to 2019. This summary will be updated monthly as additional mortality data for 2020 and 2021 is received. The previously published [2019 Ohio Drug Overdose Data report] provides more detailed information about finalized data.

Data Notes

Coroners have six months to complete death investigations and report death certificates. Therefore, valid state vital statistics data indicating cause of death for 2021 deaths is incomplete, most notably for recent months. 2020 data has not been finalized and is still considered preliminary.

Mortality data in this summary comes from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Bureau of Vital Statistics. Analysis was conducted by the ODH Violence and Injury Prevention Section. Data presented below includes Ohio residents who died due to unintentional drug overdose (underlying cause of death ICD-10 codes X40-X44).

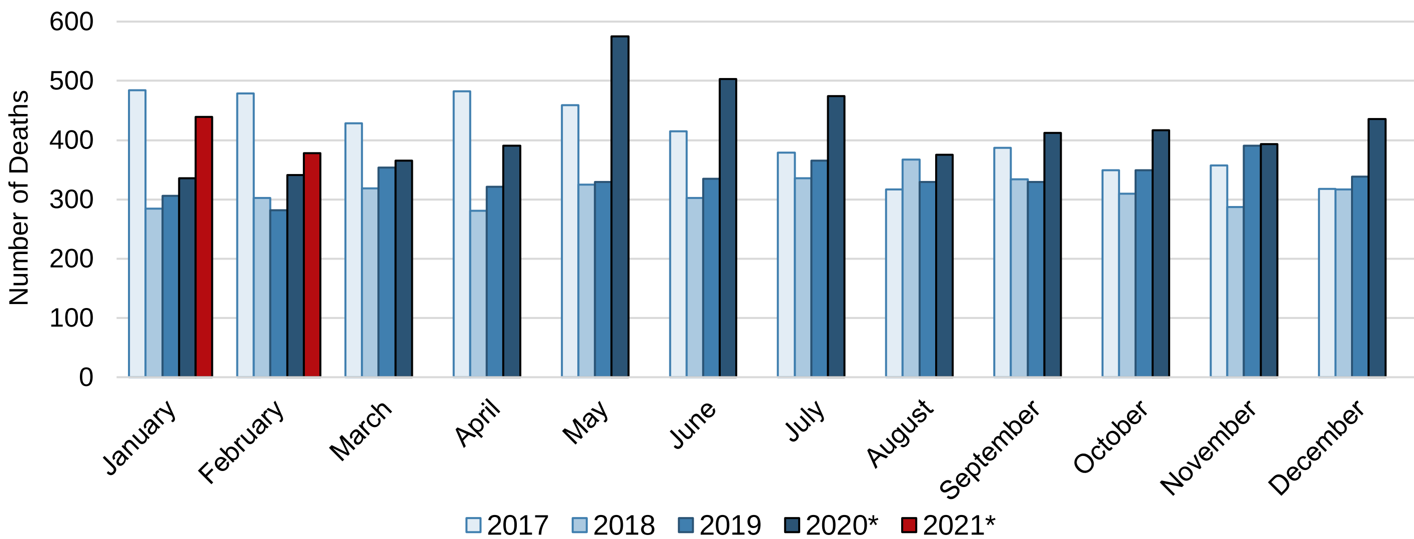
Multiple drugs are usually involved in overdose deaths. Therefore, when classifying deaths according to drug involvement, individual deaths may be reported in more than one drug category (Figures 2-3, 9-10). Fentanyl includes fentanyl and fentanyl analogs (e.g., carfentanil). Psychostimulants include methamphetamine and other psychostimulants with potential for abuse (ICD-10 code T43.6). Natural and semi-synthetic opioids (e.g., oxycodone, hydrocodone) correspond to code T40.2.

*2020 and 2021 preliminary data was updated on Aug. 31, 2021.

Unintentional Drug Overdose

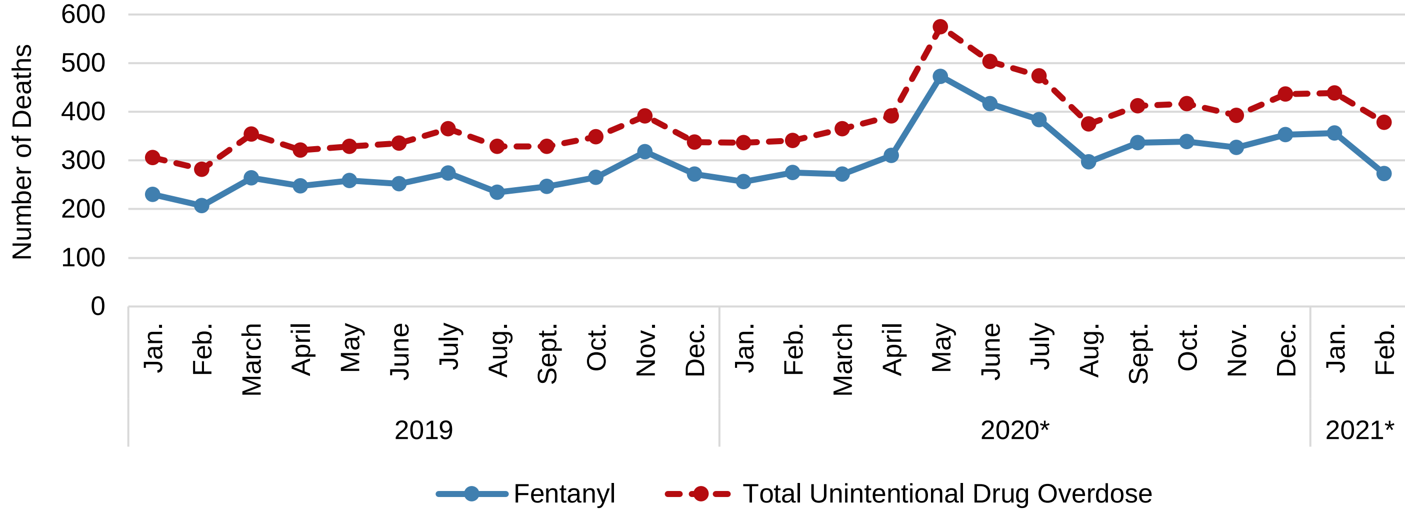
Monthly Trends

Figure 1. Number of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths by Month and Year, Ohio, 2017-2021*



- The figure above shows the number of unintentional drug overdose deaths by month and year and illustrates how overdose deaths fluctuate from month to month.
- May 2020 had the highest number of deaths per month ever recorded in Ohio (575 deaths).
- In comparison to the previous years presented, 2020 had the highest number of deaths for the months of May through December. (2017 had the highest number of deaths for the months of January through April.)
- January 2021 had the highest number of deaths since July 2020.

Figure 2. Number of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Fentanyl by Month, Ohio, 2019-2021*



- The number of unintentional drug overdose deaths in Ohio continue to be driven by fentanyl, often in combination with other drugs.
- Fentanyl-related deaths follow the same pattern as the overall number of unintentional drug overdose deaths. In 2020, fentanyl-related deaths peaked in May, followed by decreases into August.

Figure 3. Number of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Select Drugs by Month, Ohio, 2019-2021*

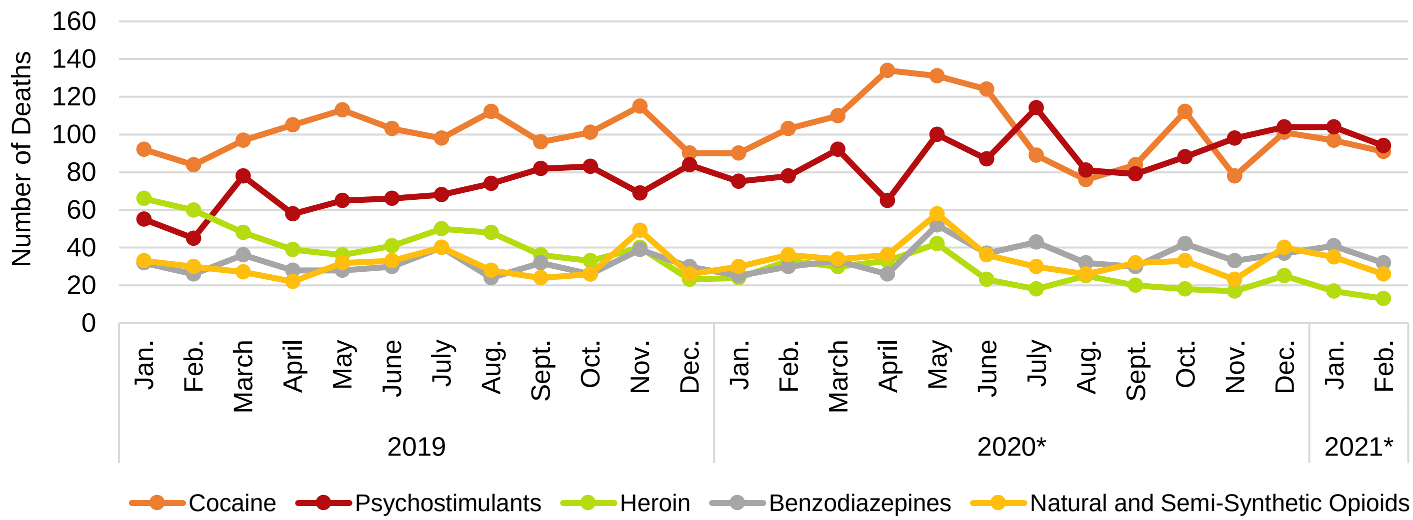


Figure 4. Number of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths Among the White Non-Hispanic Population by Month, Ohio, 2019-2021*

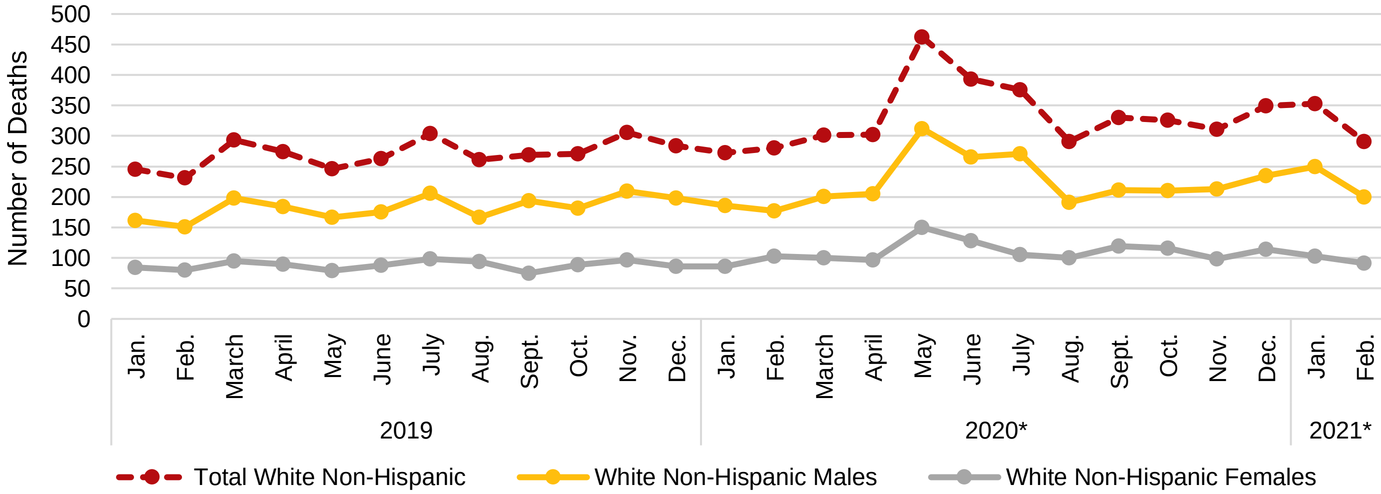


Figure 5. Number of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths Among the Black Non-Hispanic Population by Month, Ohio, 2019-2021*

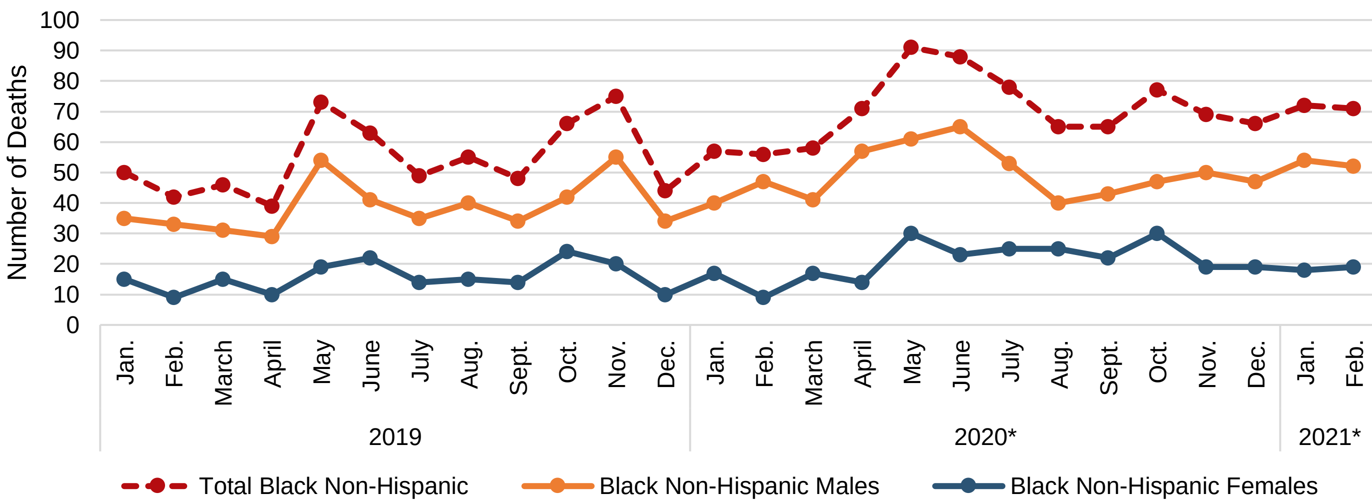
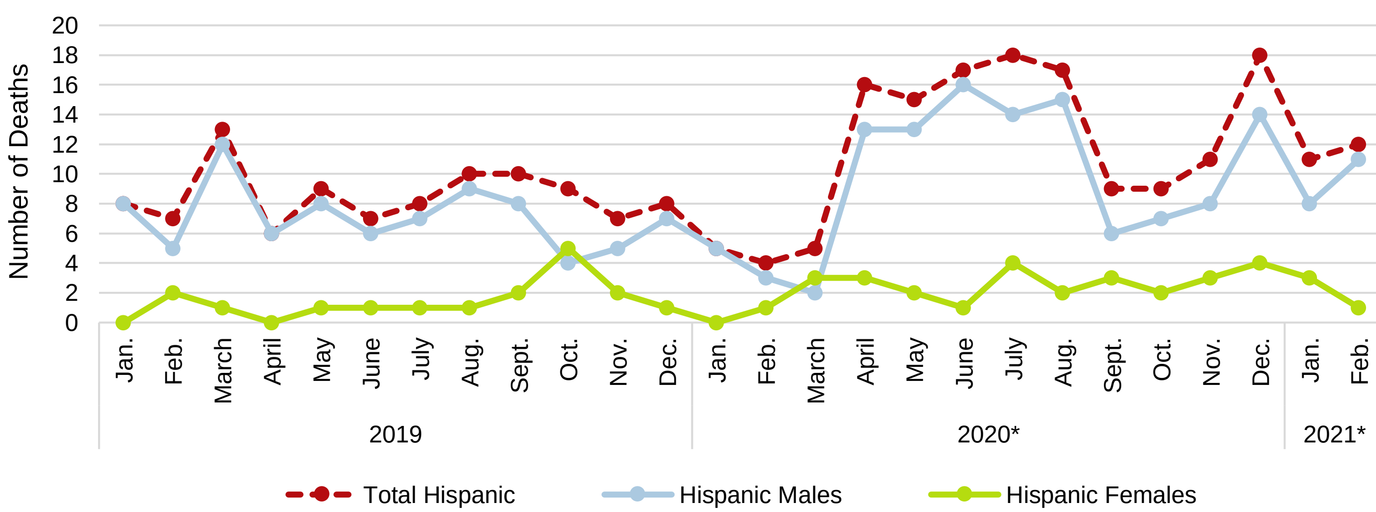
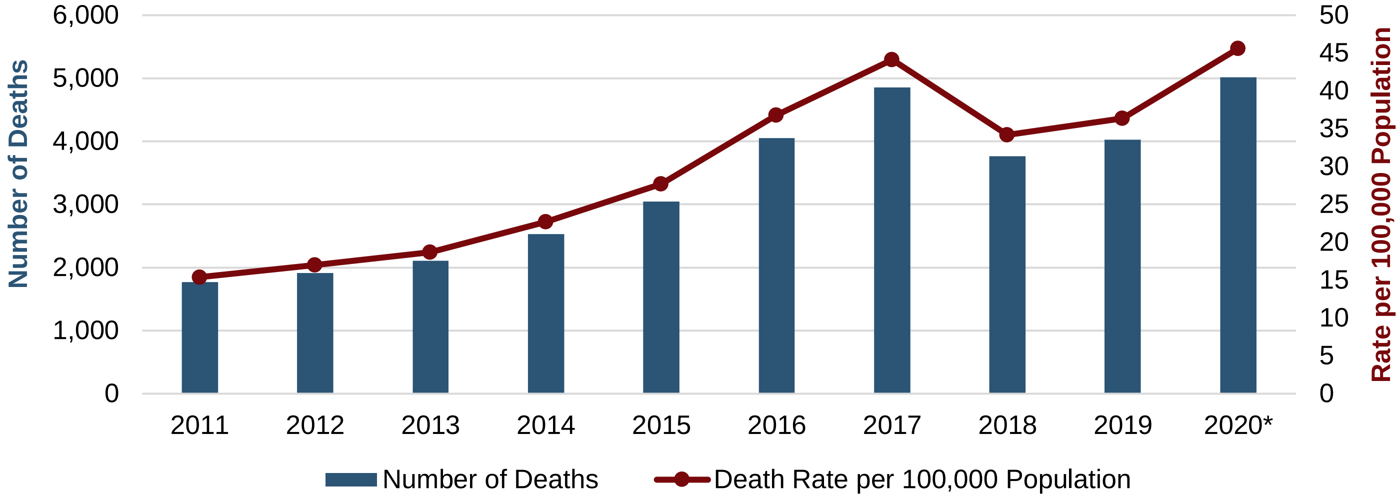


Figure 6. Number of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths Among the Hispanic Population by Month, Ohio, 2019-2021*



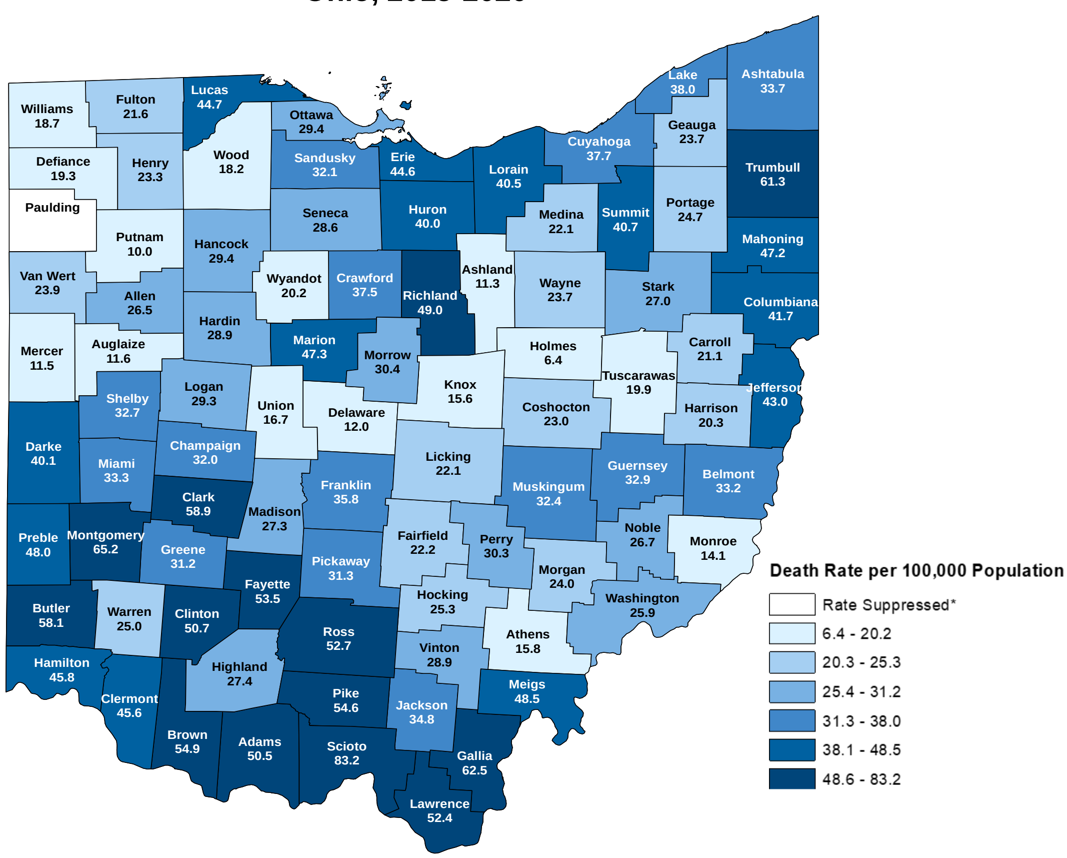
Annual Trends

Figure 7. Number and Age-Adjusted Rate of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths by Year, Ohio, 2011-2020*



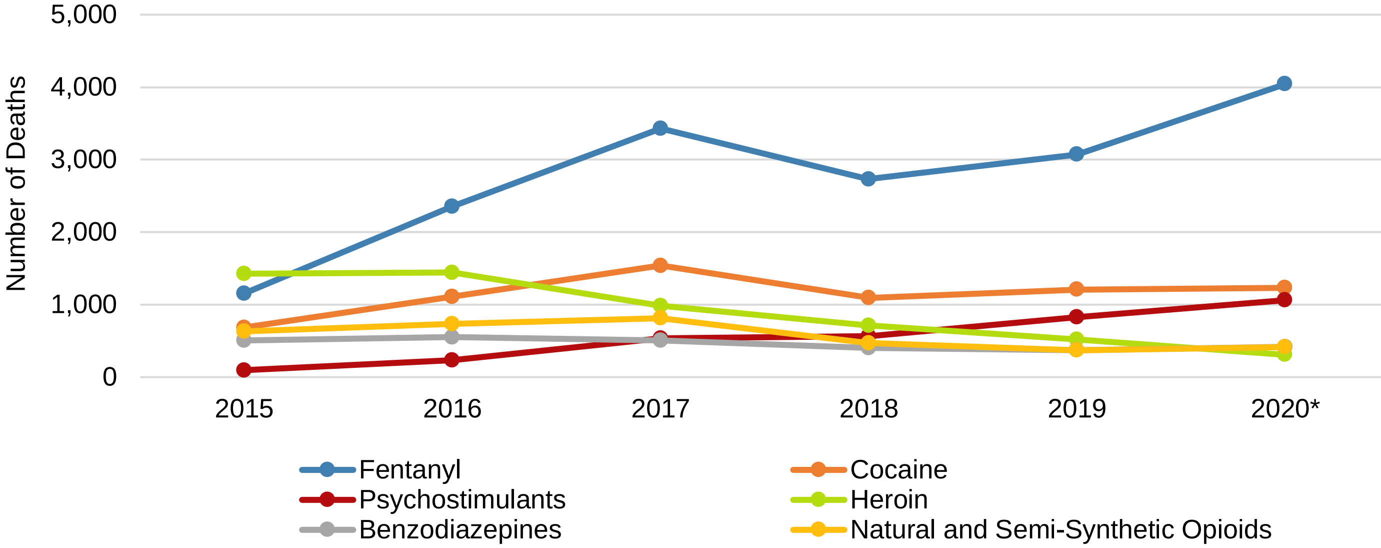
- In 2020, 5,018 Ohioans died from unintentional drug overdoses, which was a 25% increase over the number of overdose deaths in 2019.
- From 2019 to 2020, the overdose death rate also increased by 25% to a rate of 45.6 deaths per 100,000 population.

Figure 8. Average Age-Adjusted Rate of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths by County, Ohio, 2015-2020*



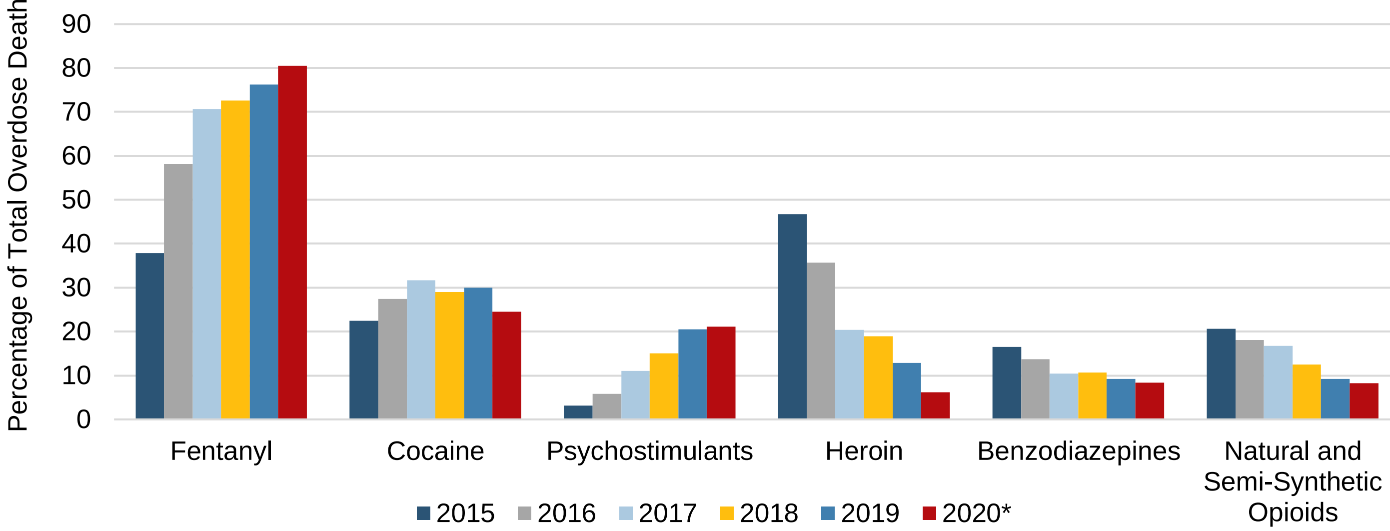
- Scioto County had the highest unintentional drug overdose death rate at 83.2 deaths per 100,000 population, followed by Montgomery County and Gallia County (65.2 and 62.5 deaths per 100,000 population, respectively).

Figure 9. Number of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Select Drugs, Ohio, 2015-2020*



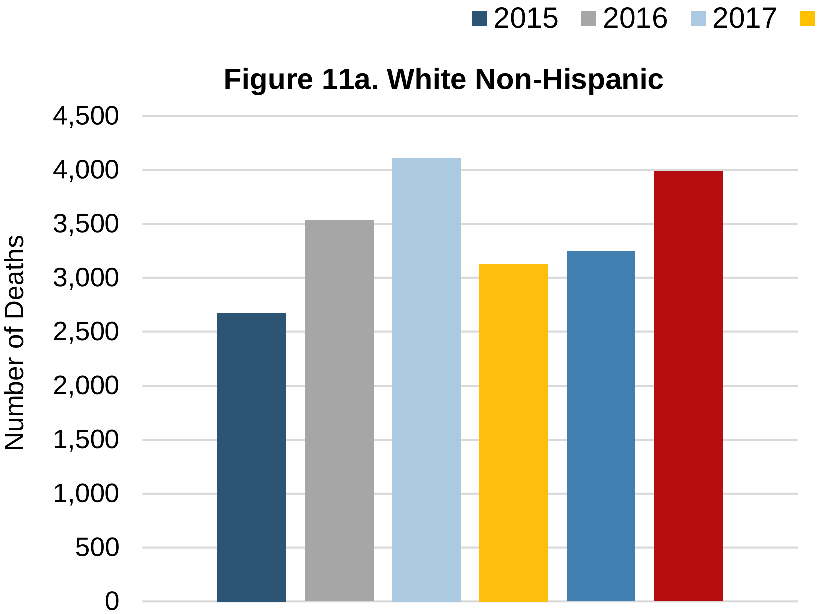
- In 2020, there were 4,041 deaths related to fentanyl, which was a 32% increase over 2019.
- Deaths related to psychostimulants have increased every year since 2015 and in 2020 had the second largest percentage increase (28%) following deaths related to fentanyl (32%).
- Of the drug categories presented above, heroin was the only drug category with a decrease in the number of related deaths in 2020 (-41%).

Figure 10. Percentage of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Select Drugs, Ohio, 2015-2020*



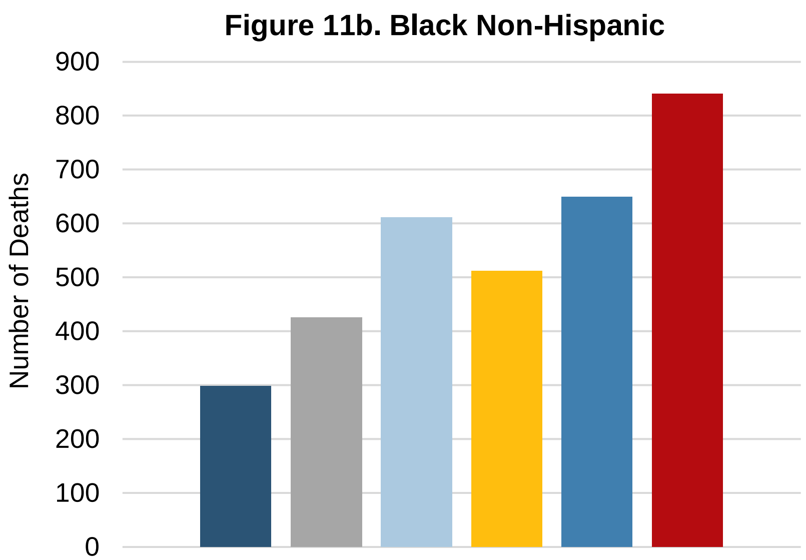
- In 2020, fentanyl was involved in 81% of Ohio unintentional drug overdose deaths.
- In 2020, cocaine was involved in 25% of unintentional drug overdose deaths compared with 30% of deaths in 2019.
- While heroin was involved in nearly 50% of unintentional drug overdose deaths in 2015, only 6% of deaths in 2020 involved heroin.

Figure 11. Number of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths by Race/Ethnicity, Ohio, 2015-2020*



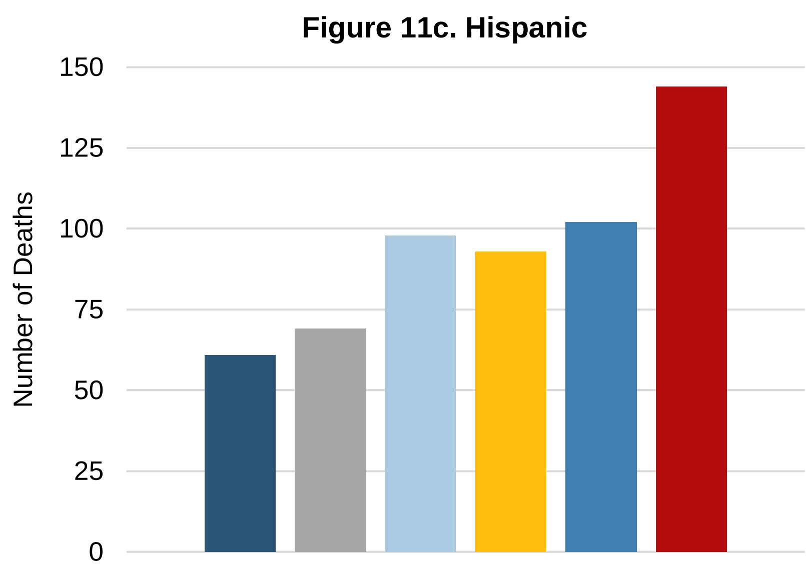
White Non-Hispanic:

- Unintentional drug overdose deaths among the white non-Hispanic population were highest in 2017 (4,109 deaths) and made up 85% of all Ohio drug overdose deaths in that year.
- In 2020, there were 3,993 deaths among white non-Hispanic Ohioans, which was a 23% increase over 2019 (3,247 deaths). White non-Hispanic individuals made up 80% of Ohio drug overdose deaths in 2020, compared with 79% of the total Ohio population.



Black Non-Hispanic:

- Unintentional drug overdose deaths among the Black non-Hispanic population were highest in 2020 (841 deaths). Black non-Hispanic individuals made up 17% of Ohio drug overdose deaths in 2020, compared with 14% of the total Ohio population.
- From 2019 to 2020, unintentional drug overdose deaths among Black non-Hispanic Ohioans increased 29%.

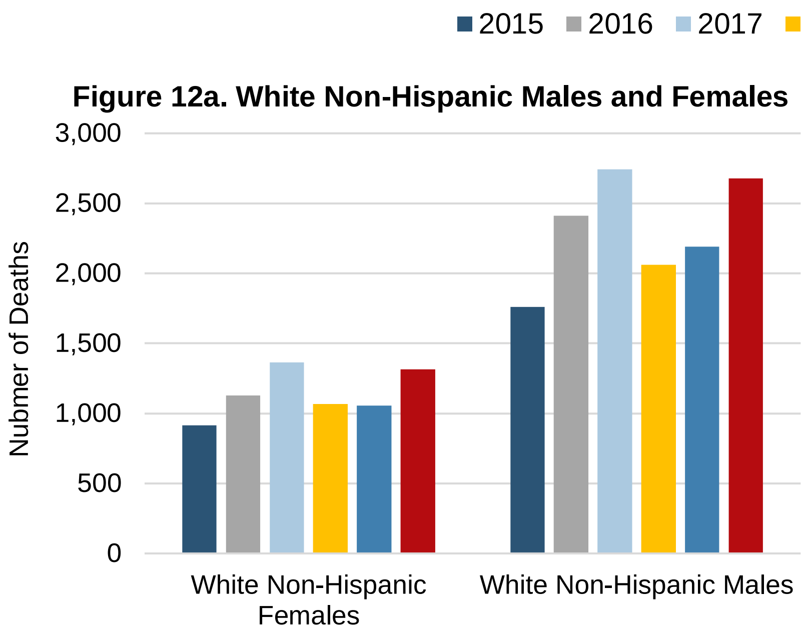


Hispanic:

- Unintentional drug overdose deaths among the Hispanic population were highest in 2020 (144 deaths). Hispanic individuals made up 3% of Ohio drug overdose deaths in 2020, compared with 4% of the total Ohio population.
- The number of unintentional drug overdose deaths among Hispanic Ohioans remained relatively stable from 2017 to 2019. However, from 2019 to 2020, deaths increased 41%.

Figure 12. Number of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, Ohio, 2015-2020*

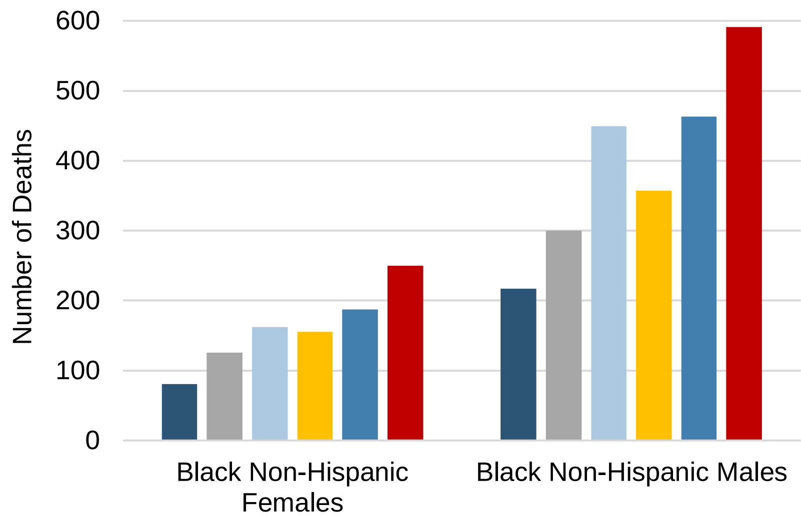
Figure 12a. White Non-Hispanic Males and Females



White Non-Hispanic Males and Females:

- Unintentional drug overdose deaths among white non-Hispanic males and females were highest in 2017 (2,744 and 1,365 deaths, respectively).
- From 2019 to 2020, unintentional drug overdose deaths among white non-Hispanic males and females increased 22% and 25%, respectively.

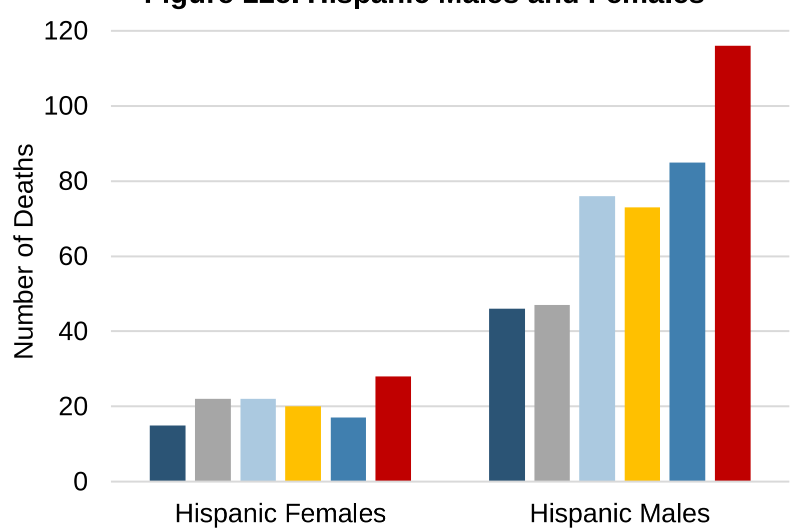
Figure 12b. Black non-Hispanic Males and Females



Black Non-Hispanic Males and Females:

- Unintentional drug overdose deaths among Black non-Hispanic males and females were highest in 2020 (591 and 250 deaths, respectively).
- From 2019 to 2020, unintentional drug overdose deaths among Black non-Hispanic males and females increased 28% and 34%, respectively.

Figure 12c. Hispanic Males and Females



Hispanic Males and Females:

- Unintentional drug overdose deaths among Hispanic males and females were highest in 2020 (116 and 28 deaths, respectively).
- From 2019 to 2020, unintentional drug overdose deaths among Hispanic males and females increased 36% and 65%, respectively.