



# Connecticut Department of Public Health

## Fatal Unintentional Drug Overdose Report

### Quick Overview of Drug Overdose Decedents, 2019 - August 2020\*

- From January through the middle of August 2020\*, there were 831 confirmed drug overdose deaths and 223 pending cases waiting for toxicology confirmation. The percentage of fentanyl-involved drug overdose deaths continues to be high in 2020.
- In 2019, there were 1,200 unintentional drug overdose related deaths.
- **New and emerging substances:** Lethal combinations of xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, with fentanyl were identified in 2019. The same combination trends for 2020 drug overdose deaths. Flualprazolam, a designer benzodiazepine, has emerged as a new substance in 2020 in combination with fentanyl, resulting in 6 overdose deaths. Carfentanil, a fentanyl analog which is 100 times stronger than fentanyl, was present in 2 overdose deaths in 2020. Prior to 2020, carfentanil was seen in 9 overdose deaths in 2017 in Connecticut.

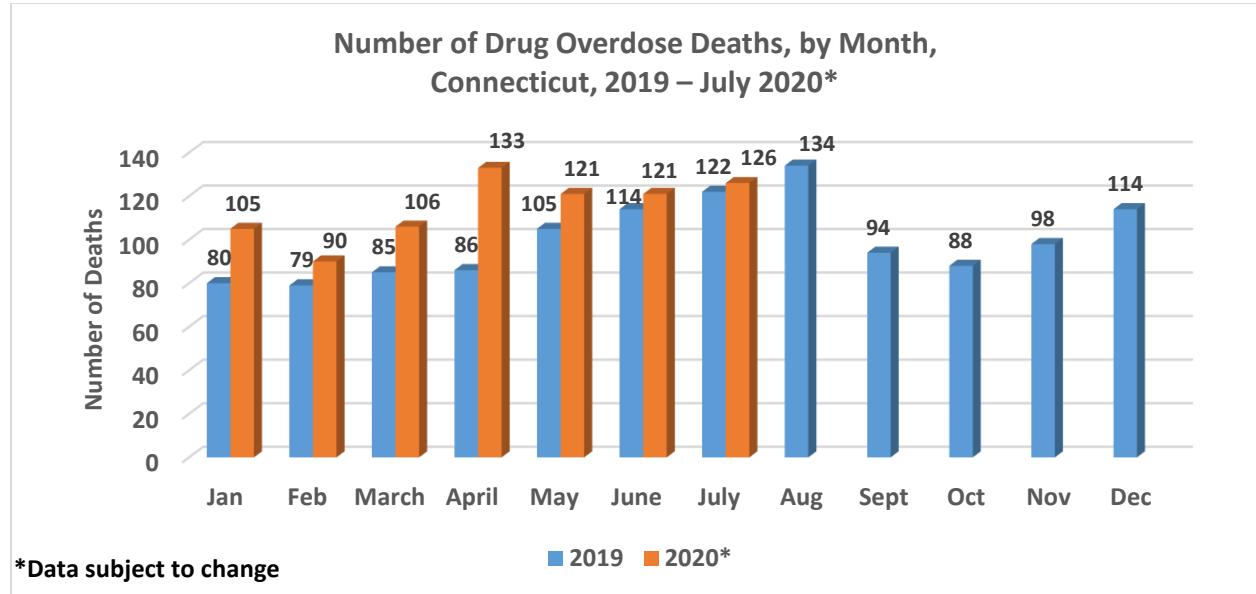
### Monthly Overview of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths (2019 – August 2020\*)

January 1 – August 2020*	2019
There were 831 confirmed drug overdose deaths and 223 cases still pending. There was a 20% increase in drug overdose deaths by July 2020, compared to the same time period in 2019.	There were 1,200 unintentional drug overdose deaths in 2019, with an increase of 18% compared to 2018.
The lethal combination of xylazine and fentanyl continues to be a problem in 2020. There were 89 deaths with xylazine and fentanyl combined. The median number of xylazine-involved deaths was 12.	For the first time in 2019, xylazine/fentanyl combinations were involved in 70 drug overdose deaths. The median number for xylazine-involved deaths was 7.
Fentanyl continues to be a problem in 2020. The average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths was at 85.5% as of August 2020.	On average, fentanyl and/or fentanyl analogs were involved in 82% of the overdose deaths in 2019.
<b>Updated on 9-16-2020; Data Source: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), Connecticut;</b> <b>*Numbers and percentages are subject to change for 2020 data</b>	

For substance use disorder information visit: <https://www.drugfreect.org/> For information on the CT DPH Opioids and Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Program in the Office of Injury and Violence Prevention, visit: <https://www.ct.gov/dph/injuryprevention>

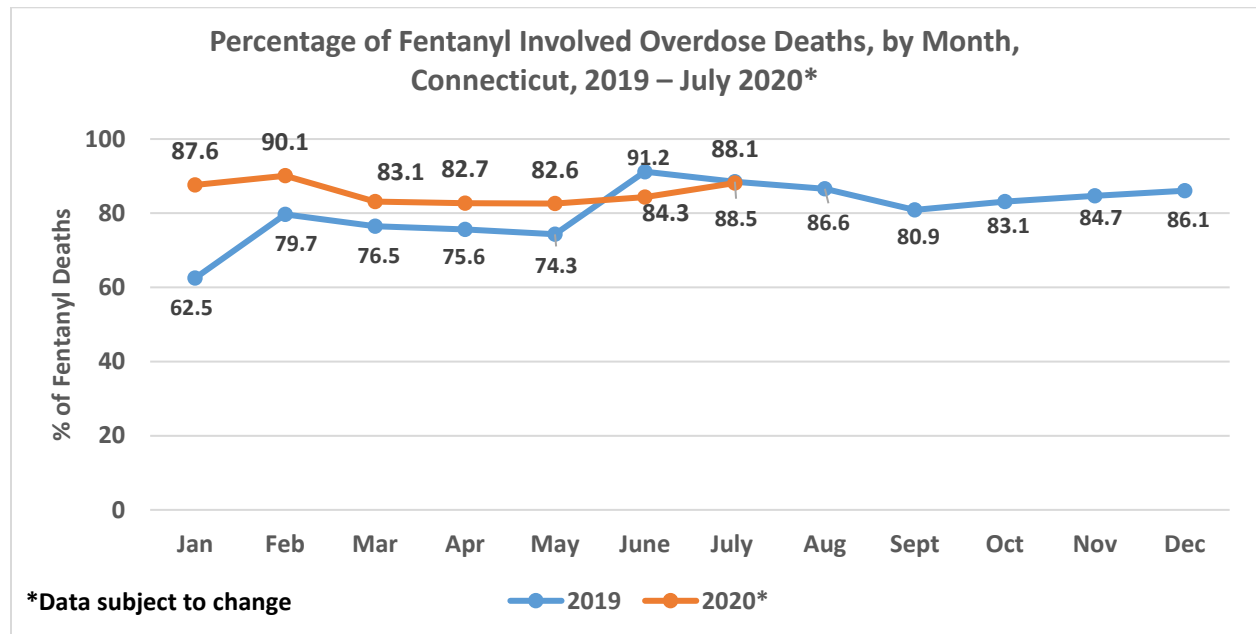
### Unintentional drug overdose deaths, by month, Connecticut, 2019 – July 2020\*:

There was a 20% increase in unintentional drug overdose deaths as of July 2020\* in Connecticut, when compared to the same time frame of January to July of 2019. The chart below represents the monthly count of confirmed drug overdose deaths.



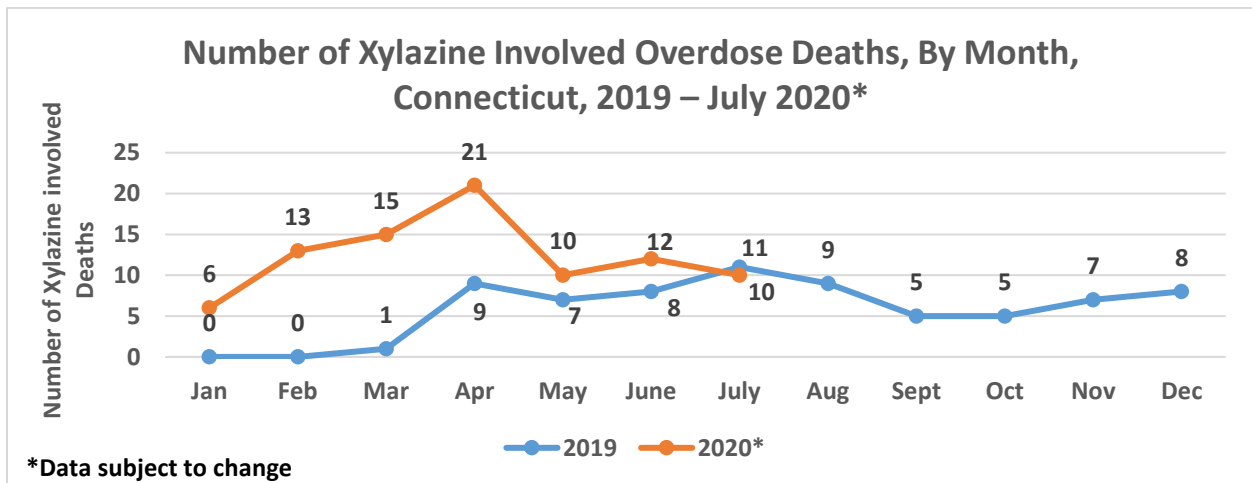
### The percentage of fentanyl-involved overdose deaths continues to be a problem in 2020\*:

Fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased significantly in 2019 to 82%, compared to the previous years of 2015 to 2018. As of August 2020\*, the average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths was 85.5%. The chart below represents the percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths by month.



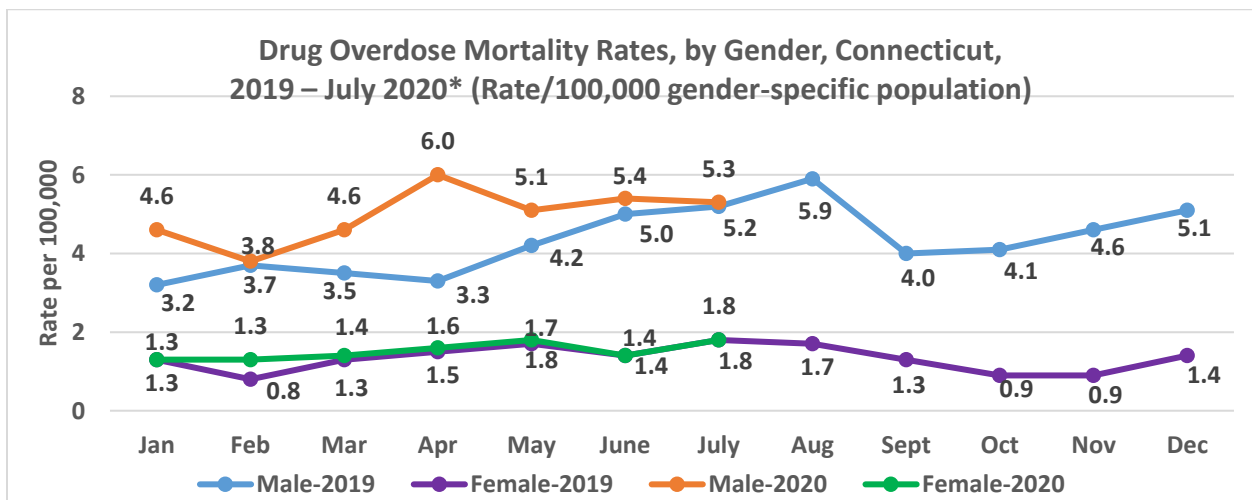
**Xylazine, a veterinary tranquilizer, identified as an emerging novel substance in drug intoxication deaths in Connecticut since 2019 – July 2020\*:**

To enhance drug effects, recreational drugs are often adulterated with other pharmacological agents such as levamisole and xylazine. Xylazine is a veterinary sedative not intended for human use. For the first time in Connecticut, beginning in March 2019, xylazine was identified as a novel and emerging adulterant in fatal drug intoxications when combined with fentanyl and continues to be a problem in 2020 also. In 2019, there were 70 xylazine-involved deaths, and as of the middle of August 2020, there have been 89. Except for one (xylazine + cocaine), all xylazine-involved deaths were combined with fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 100 times more potent than morphine. The below chart represents the number of xylazine-involved deaths by month.



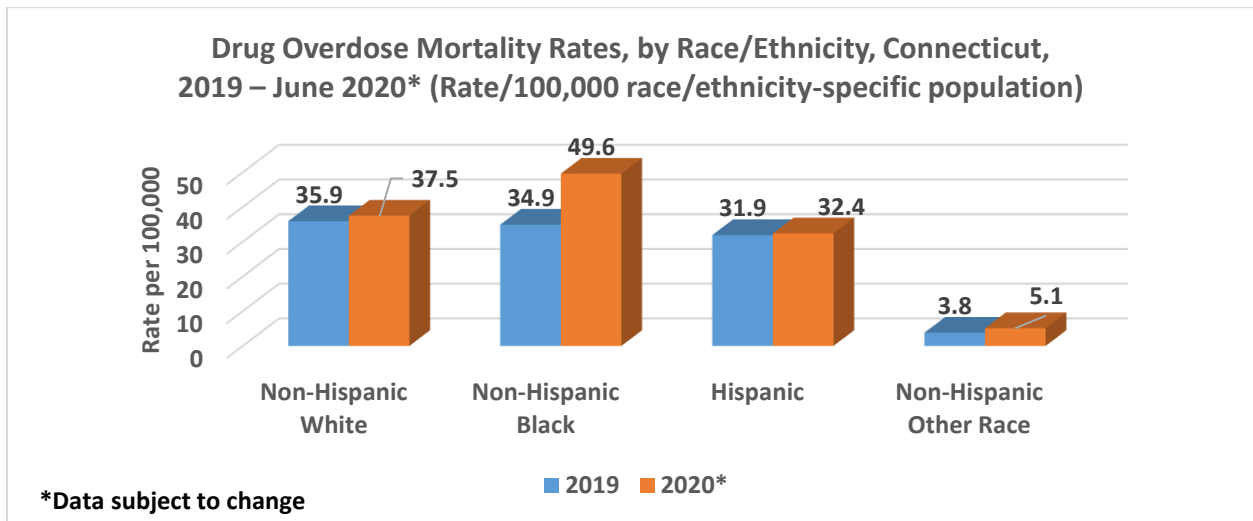
**Drug overdose death rates were higher in males compared to females in 2019 – July 2020\*:**

Rates of unintentional drug overdose-related death were consistently higher among males when compared to females. The line graph below represents rates of unintentional drug overdose death by gender (rate per 100,000 gender-specific population) for this time period.

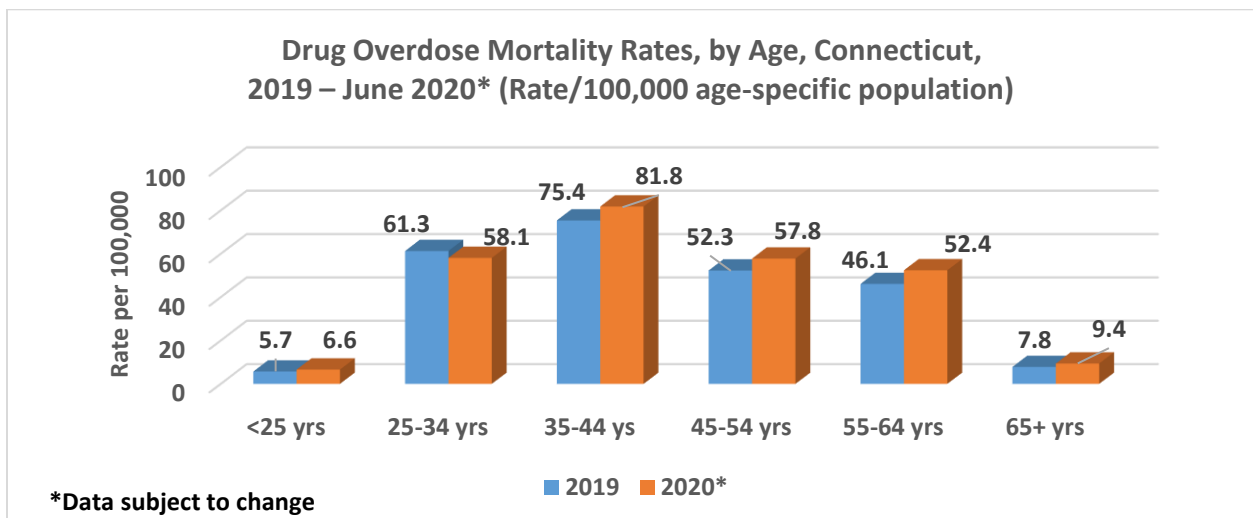


**Drug overdose death rates were higher among the non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black populations compared to the Hispanic population in Connecticut, 2019 – June 2020\*:**

Drug overdose death rates were calculated per 100,000 race/ethnicity-specific population and the rates were highest among non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black populations compared to the Hispanic population. In 2020, the drug overdose mortality rate substantially increased in the non-Hispanic Black population compared to the previous year. The graph below represents the unintentional drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by race/ethnicity for year 2019 and the first half of 2020\* (January – June).



**Drug overdose death rates were highest in the 35-44 year old age group in Connecticut, 2019 – June 2020\*:** Drug overdose death rates were highest among the 35-44 age group. The graph below represents the unintentional drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by age for the specified time period.



**Drug overdose death rates in Connecticut, by County, 2019 – June 2020\*:** The graph below represents the unintentional drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by county, for the specified time period. During this period Litchfield (41.4) county had the highest rate followed by Windham (40.5) county; however, preliminary 2020 (through June) data show a change in New Haven (42.0) county, followed by New London as the counties most affected. Comparison of 2019 to early 2020 data shows Middlesex county as the geographic area with the most increased drug overdose mortality rate compared to other counties.

