



# Connecticut Department of Public Health

## Drug Overdose Monthly Report

### Fatal Unintentional and Undetermined Drug Overdose Report

#### Key Findings of Drug Overdose Decedents, 2019 – May 2021

- Current monthly report is based on confirmed fatal drug overdose cases for 2019, 2020 and January through April 2021. Statistics may change for 2021 as confirmation of cases occurs periodically. Period of analysis includes January 2019 through the 1<sup>st</sup> week of May 2021.
- The final and total number of fatal drug overdoses for 2020 was 1378, with an increase of 14.6% from the previous year, 2019 with 1202 overdose deaths.
- There were 471 confirmed and 313 pending cases for 2021, as of the first week of May.
- **New and emerging substances:** Lethal combinations of xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, with fentanyl were identified in 2019 and continued in 2020. The same combination trends for 2021 also. In 2020, new emerging substances, Flualprazolam, a designer benzodiazepine, in combination with fentanyl resulted in 11 overdose deaths and Eutylone, a synthetic stimulant, resulted in 3 overdose deaths. Para-fluorofentanyl, a fentanyl analog, was present in 13 overdose deaths in 2020 and 34 in 2021 as of the first week of May.

#### Comparative Overview of Unintentional and Undetermined Drug Overdose Deaths (January 2019 – May 2021)

2020 and 2021	2019
There were 1,378 confirmed drug overdose deaths for 2020, with an increase of 14.3% compared to 2019. As of the first week of May, there were 471 confirmed drug overdose deaths for 2021 with 313 pending cases.	There were 1,202 unintentional and undetermined drug overdose deaths in 2019, with an increase of 16.7% compared to 2018.
The lethal combination of xylazine and fentanyl resulted in 141 deaths in 2020 with a median number of 11 and continues to be a problem in 2021 also. Between January and the first week of May 2021, there were 80 deaths involving a fentanyl+ xylazine combination.	For the first time in 2019, xylazine/fentanyl combinations were involved in 71 drug overdose deaths. The median number for xylazine-involved deaths was 7.
The average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths was at 85% for 2020 and 82% for 2021 as of the first week of May.	On average, fentanyl or fentanyl analogs were involved in 82% of the overdose deaths in 2019.

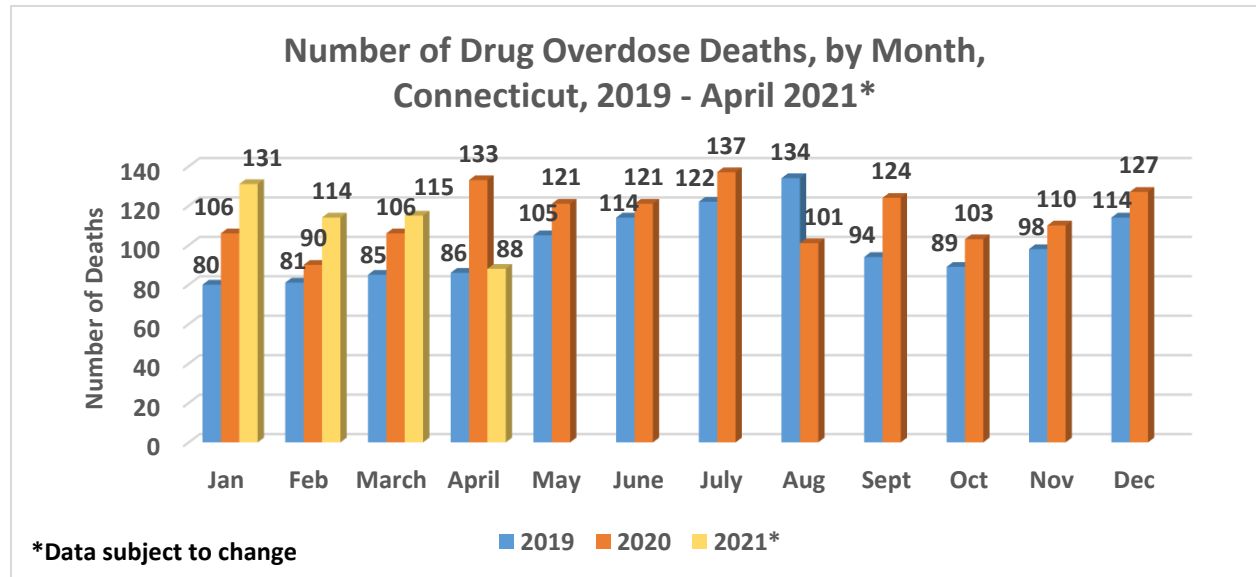
**Updated on 6-14-2021; Data Source: Connecticut Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), per CDC-SUDORS grant guidelines.**

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>

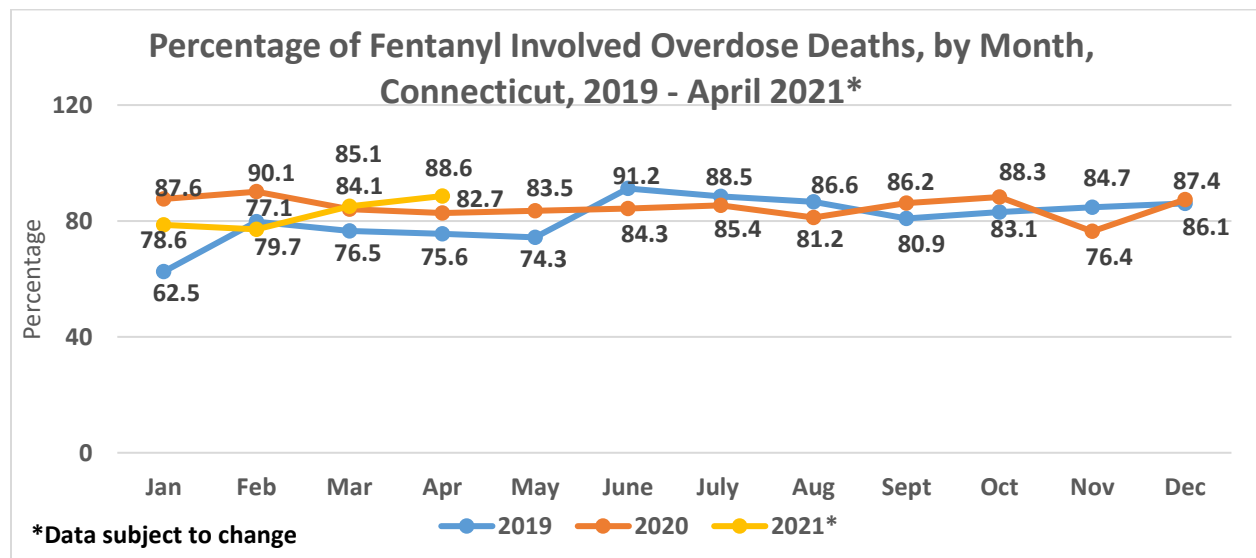
**Unintentional and undetermined drug overdose deaths, by month, Connecticut, 2019 – April 2021\*:**

There was a 14.3 % increase in unintentional and undetermined drug overdose deaths in 2020 in Connecticut, compared to 2019. In 2021, January had 131, February had 114, March had 115 and April had 88 confirmed drug overdose deaths and these numbers may increase as there are 94 cases pending for toxicology confirmation for these four months. The chart below represents the monthly count of confirmed drug overdose deaths.

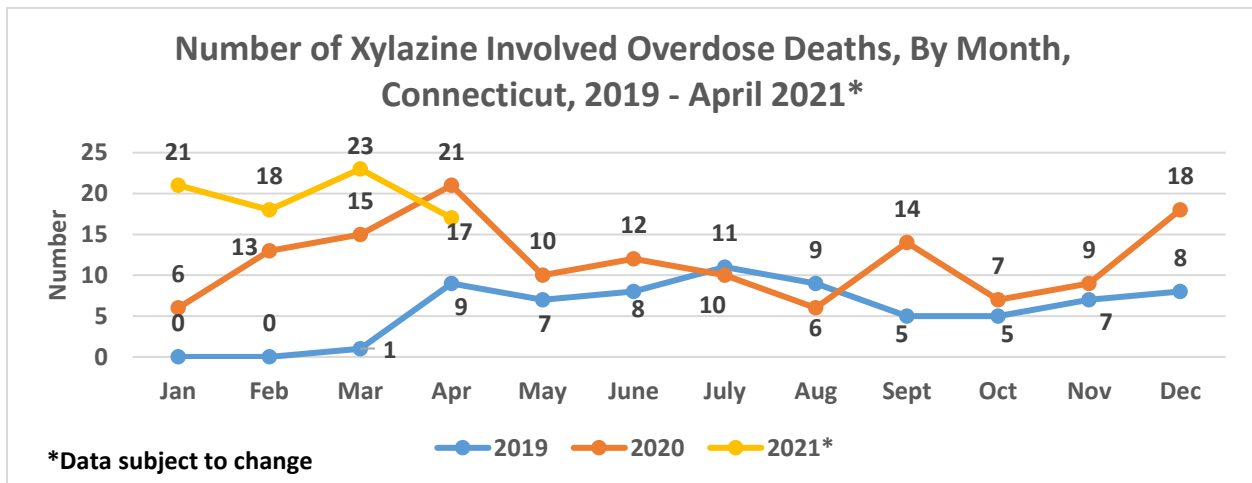


**The percentage of fentanyl-involved overdose deaths continued to be a problem in 2021:**

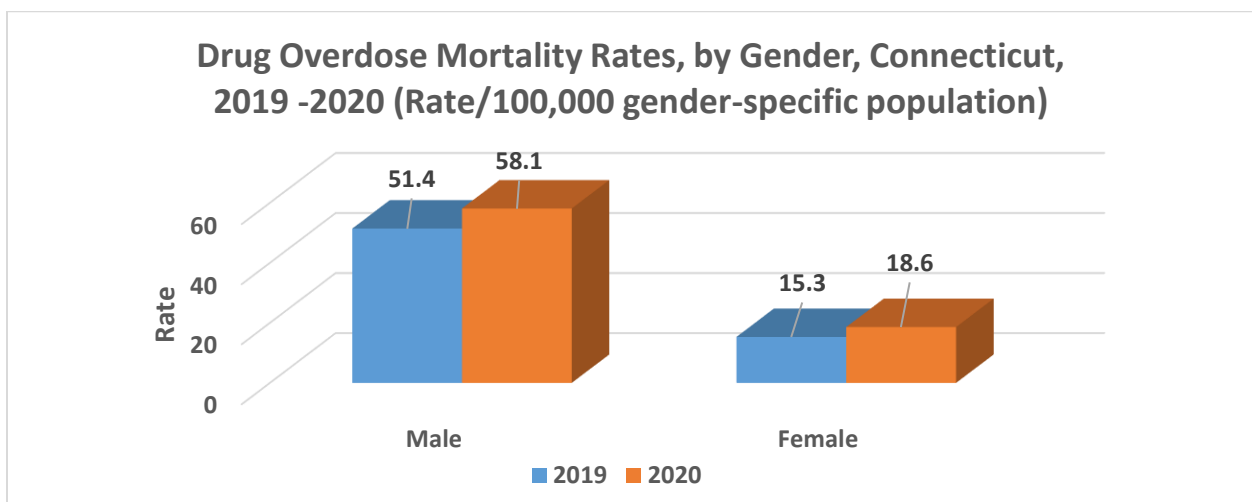
Fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased significantly in 2019 to 82%, compared to the previous years of 2015 to 2018. In 2020, the average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths further increased to 85%. As of the first week of May 2021, the percentage of fentanyl involved deaths was 82% and it may change due to pending cases. 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 – April 2021\*:** To enhance drug effects, recreational drugs are often adulterated with other pharmacological agents such as xylazine, a veterinary sedative not intended for human use. In Connecticut, in March 2019, xylazine was identified as a novel and emerging adulterant in fatal drug intoxications when combined with fentanyl; it continues to be a problem in 2021. There were 71 xylazine-involved deaths in 2019 and 141 in 2020. In 2021, there were 21 xylazine + fentanyl death related events in January 21, 18 in February, 23 in March and 17 in April, for a total of 79 deaths in the first four months and these numbers may change because of pending cases. The below chart represents the number of xylazine-involved deaths by month.

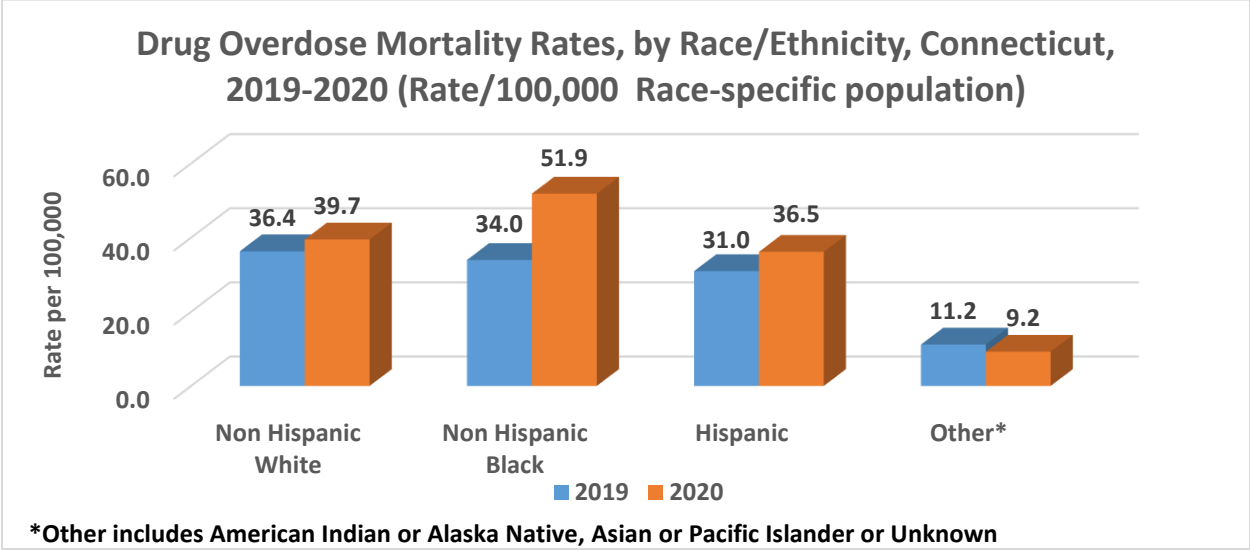


**Drug overdose death rates were higher in males compared to females in 2019 – 2020:** Rates of unintentional and undetermined drug overdose-related death were consistently higher among males when compared to females. The bar graph below represents rates of unintentional and undetermined drug overdose death by gender (rate per 100,000 gender-specific population) for 2019 and 2020.



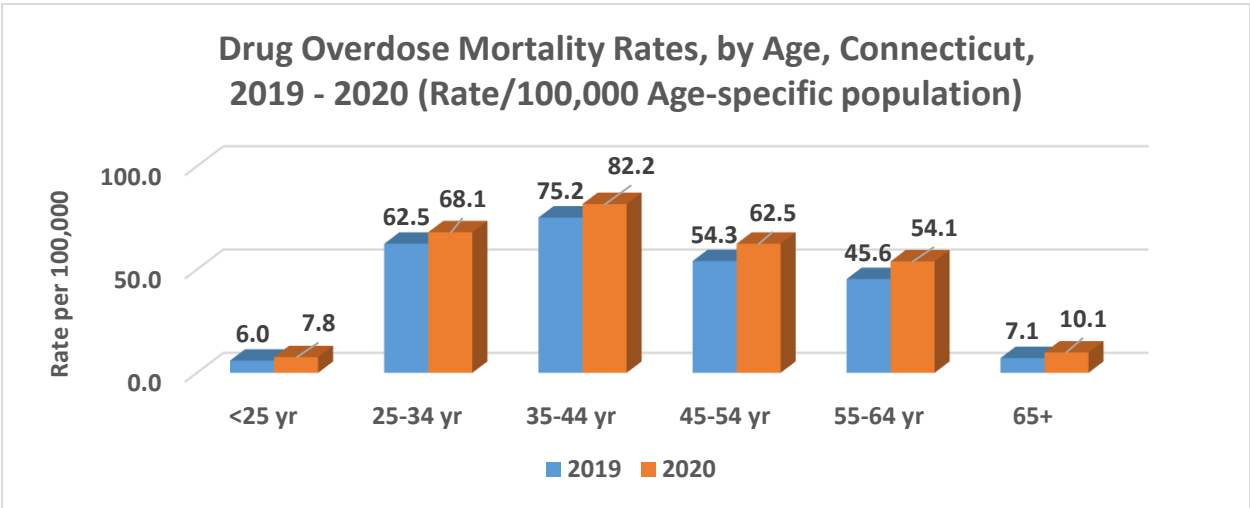
**Drug overdose death rates were higher among the non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black populations compared to the Hispanic population in Connecticut, 2019 – 2020:**

Drug overdose death rates were highest among non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black populations compared to the Hispanic population during 2019 and 2020. However, 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 and undetermined drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by race/ethnicity for years 2019 and 2020.



**Drug overdose death rates were highest in the 35-44 year old age group in Connecticut, 2019 – 2020:**

Drug overdose death rates were calculated per 100,000 age specific population and they were highest among the 35-44 year age group followed by 25-34 and 45-54 year age groups. The graph below represents the unintentional and undetermined drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by age, by year.



**Drug overdose death rates in Connecticut, by County, 2019 – 2020:** The graph below represents the unintentional and undetermined drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by county, by year. During this period, New Haven County (44.8) had the highest rate followed by New London County (41.9), Windham County (40.2), Litchfield County (38.8), Hartford County (37.3), and Middlesex County (39.4). In 2020, the lowest overdose death rate was seen in Fairfield County (22.0) followed by Tolland County (25.2). Overall, except Litchfield County, all other counties had an increase in drug overdose death rate in 2020, when compared to 2019.

