

# Fatal Unintentional and Undetermined Intent Drug Overdose Report

## Key Findings About Drug Overdose Decedents, 2019 – December 2023\*

- The current monthly report is based on confirmed fatal drug overdose cases from 2019 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of December 2023. Data from 2023 are preliminary and may change due to pending cases. The period of analysis includes January 2020 through November 2023.
- **2023\* data overview:** As of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of November, there were 1,147 overdose-related deaths in 2023, with 111 in January, 128 in February, 107 in March, 117 in April, 130 in May, 107 in June, 116 in July, 112 in August, 113 in September, 90 in October and 96 in November. Approximately 84.5% of these deaths (N=1059) involved fentanyl. Data are subject to change due to pending cases.
- **From January to September 2023,** there were 1044 confirmed unintentional and undetermined intent fatal drug overdoses. January-September numbers are used to annualize numbers/rates for calendar year 2023. Data for 2023 are subject to change because of the processing of pending cases.
- **Comparison between 2022-2023\*:** There were 1,464 confirmed deaths for 2022. Based on annualized data from January-September 2023\*, we project a total of 1,391 overdose deaths in calendar year 2023\*, representing a projected decrease of 73 deaths (5%) compared to 2022.
- **Demographic data for 2023\*:** Males had a higher mortality rate than females in 2023\* (56.3 vs. 18.4 per 100,000 population, respectively). In 2023\*, the mortality rate was highest for the non-Hispanic Black population and for 45–54-year-olds.
- **Place of overdose in 2022 and 2023\*:** Most of the decedents overdosed at a residence (either their own or someone else's) in 2022 (76.0%) and 2023\* (74.2%).
- **Fentanyl-involved drug overdose deaths:** The average percentage of fentanyl- or fentanyl analog-involved deaths was 85% for 2020, 2021 and 2022. Approximately 83.4% of deaths from January-September 2023 involved fentanyl but 2023 data are subject to change due to pending cases.
- **Xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, in drug overdose deaths:** The lethal xylazine/fentanyl combination, first identified in CT in March 2019, continued to be a problem. In preliminary 2023 data, there were 260 deaths (20.8%) involving xylazine and fentanyl. Prior years are as follows: 2020 (N=141;10.2%), 2021 (N=298; 19.8%), and 2022 (N=354, 24.2%).
- **New and emerging substances:** The Injury and Violence Surveillance Unit (IVSU) from the Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to monitor for other new emerging substances which include, but are not limited to, the designer benzodiazepine family and the Nitazene family of substances (novel synthetic opioids).

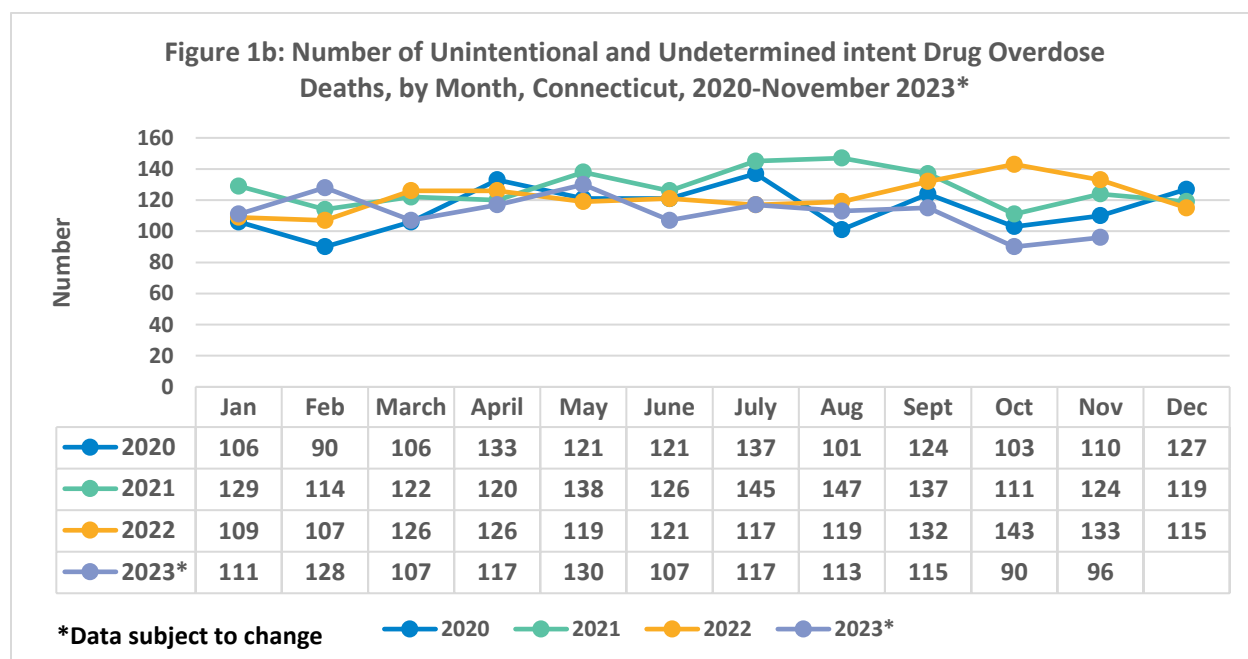
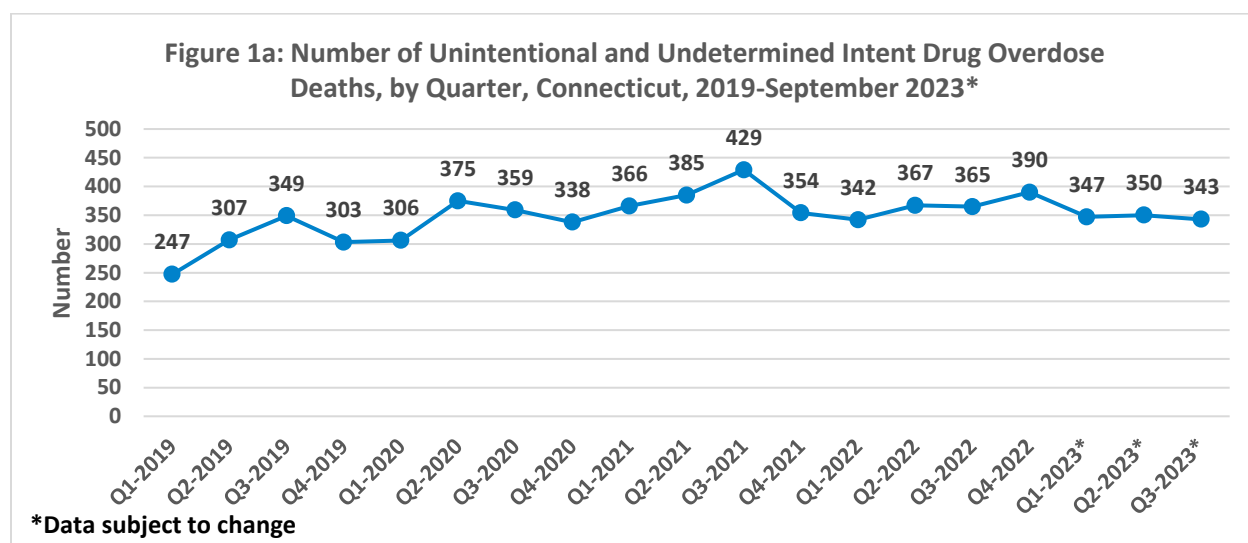
\*Data subject to change due to pending cases.

Updated on 1-21-2024; Data Source: Connecticut Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), per CDC Overdose Data to Action for States grant guidelines for SUDORS data.

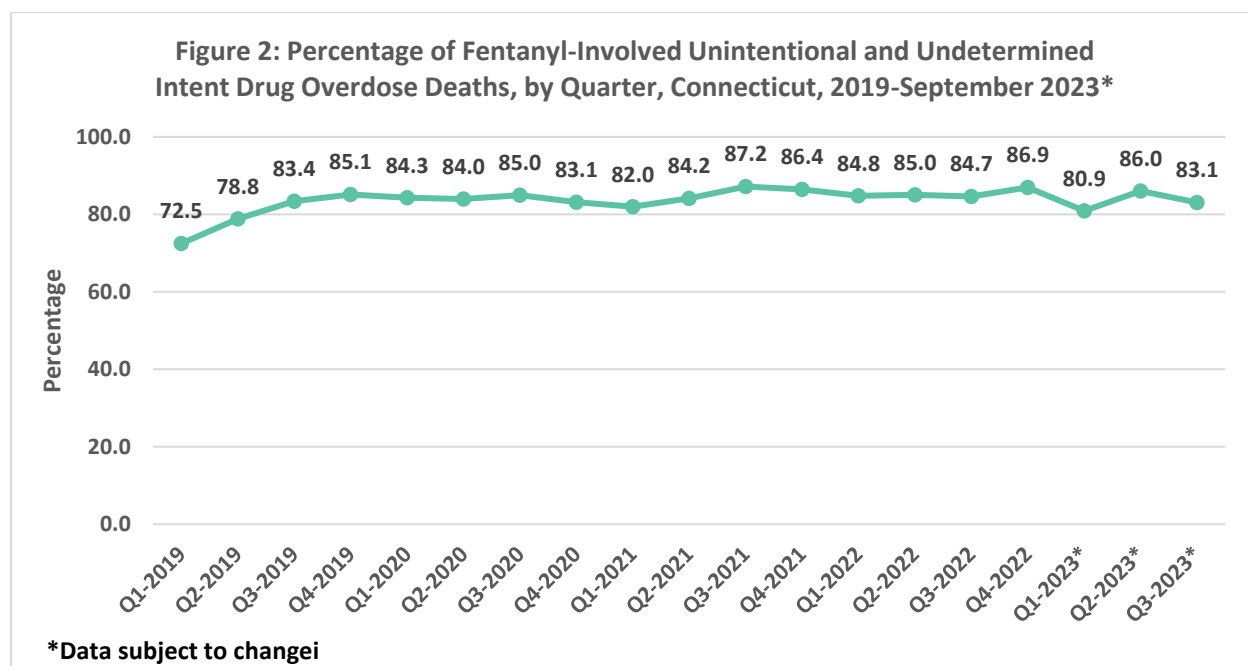
For substance use disorder information visit: <https://www.drugfreect.org>.

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>.

**1: Number of Unintentional and Undetermined Intent Drug Overdose Deaths, Connecticut, 2019-November 2023\*.** There was a 4.3% decrease in drug overdose deaths in 2022 compared to the previous year of 2021. The charts below represent counts of confirmed drug overdose deaths by quarter (Figure 1a) and by month (Figure 1b). Quarterly drug overdose data (Figure 1a) show that for years 2019, 2020 and 2022, Quarter 1 had the lowest number of unintentional and undetermined intent drug overdose deaths within each specific year. Overall, Quarters 2 and 3 were generally the highest each year with the exception of 2022 and 2023\*. In 2022, Quarter 4 had the highest number, however those numbers were substantially lower than the number that occurred during Quarter 3 of 2021. Monthly data (Figure 1b) show that July and August of 2021 had the highest number of deaths. In 2022, the month of October had the highest number of deaths. Data for 2023 may change due to the processing of pending cases.

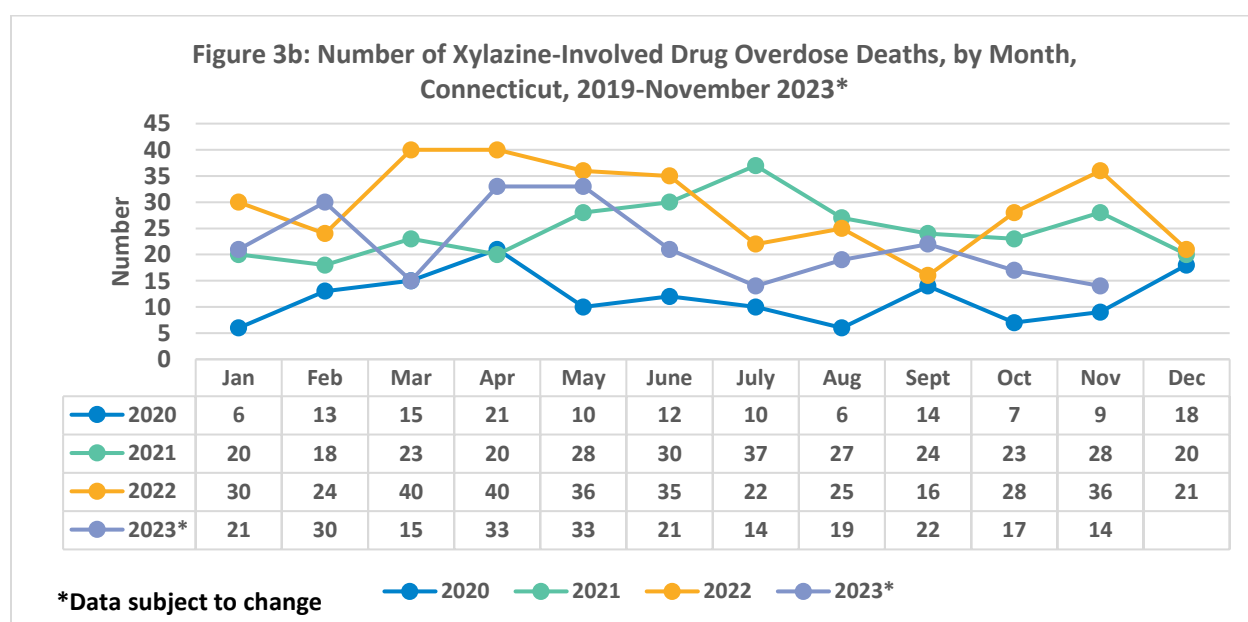
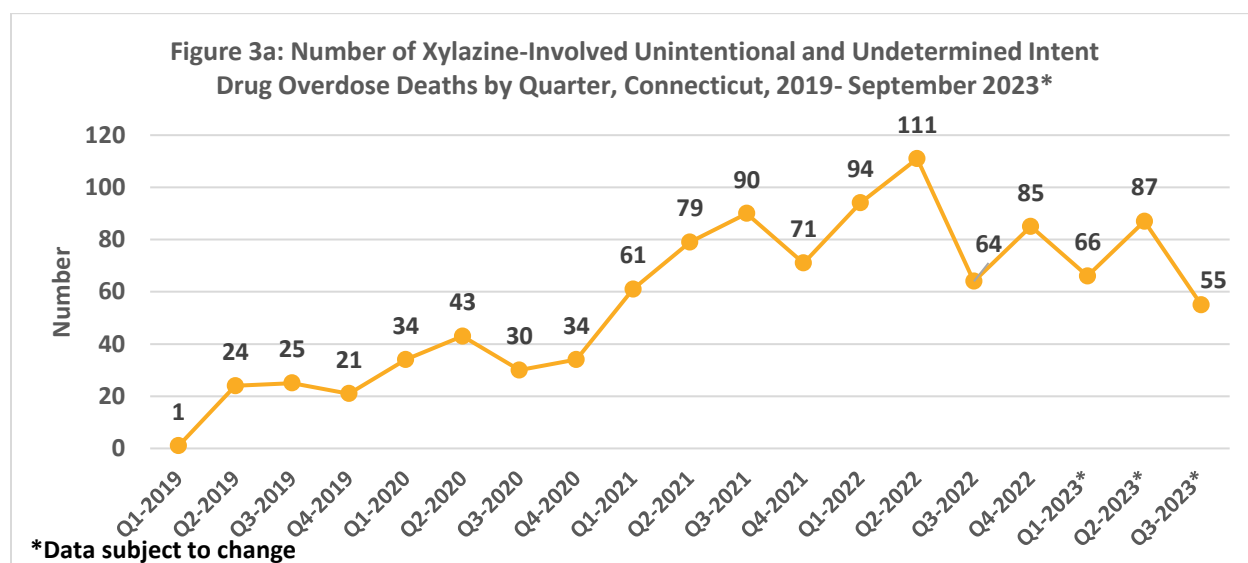


**2: Percentage of Fentanyl-Involved Unintentional and Undetermined Intent Drug Overdose Deaths, Connecticut, 2019-November 2023\***. The average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths remained high between 2019 and November 2023\*. The chart below represents the percentage of fentanyl-involved drug overdose deaths by Quarter (Figure 2). The average percentage of fentanyl- or fentanyl analog-involved deaths was 80% for 2019 and subsequently increased to 85% in 2020, 2021, 2022. As of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of December 2023, 84.5% of the deaths in 2023 involved fentanyl but this data may change due to the processing of pending cases.

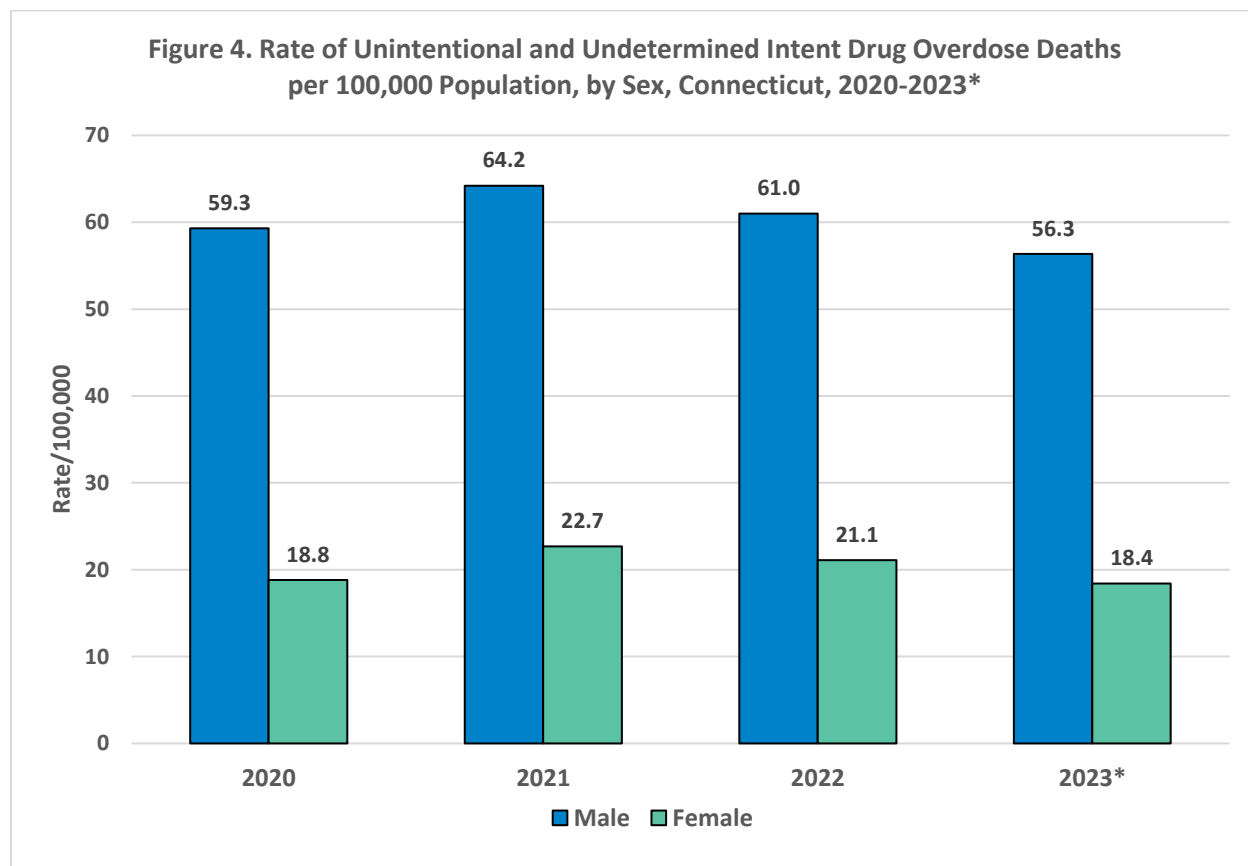


### 3: Number of Xylazine-Involved Unintentional and Undetermined Intent Drug Overdose Deaths, Connecticut, 2019-November 2023\*

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, xylazine first emerged as a novel adulterant in fatal drug overdoses in March 2019. The number of xylazine-involved deaths has increased each year between 2019 and November 2023\*. The charts below represent the number of xylazine-involved drug overdose deaths by quarter (Figure 3a) and by month (Figure 3b). Quarter 2 of 2022 had the highest number of xylazine-involved death; this number dropped substantially during Quarters 3 and 4. By month (Figure 3b), the highest number of xylazine-involved deaths occurred during March and April of 2022 (N=40). Overall, 2023 shows a lower monthly trend compared to 2022, although 2023 data are subject to change due to pending cases.



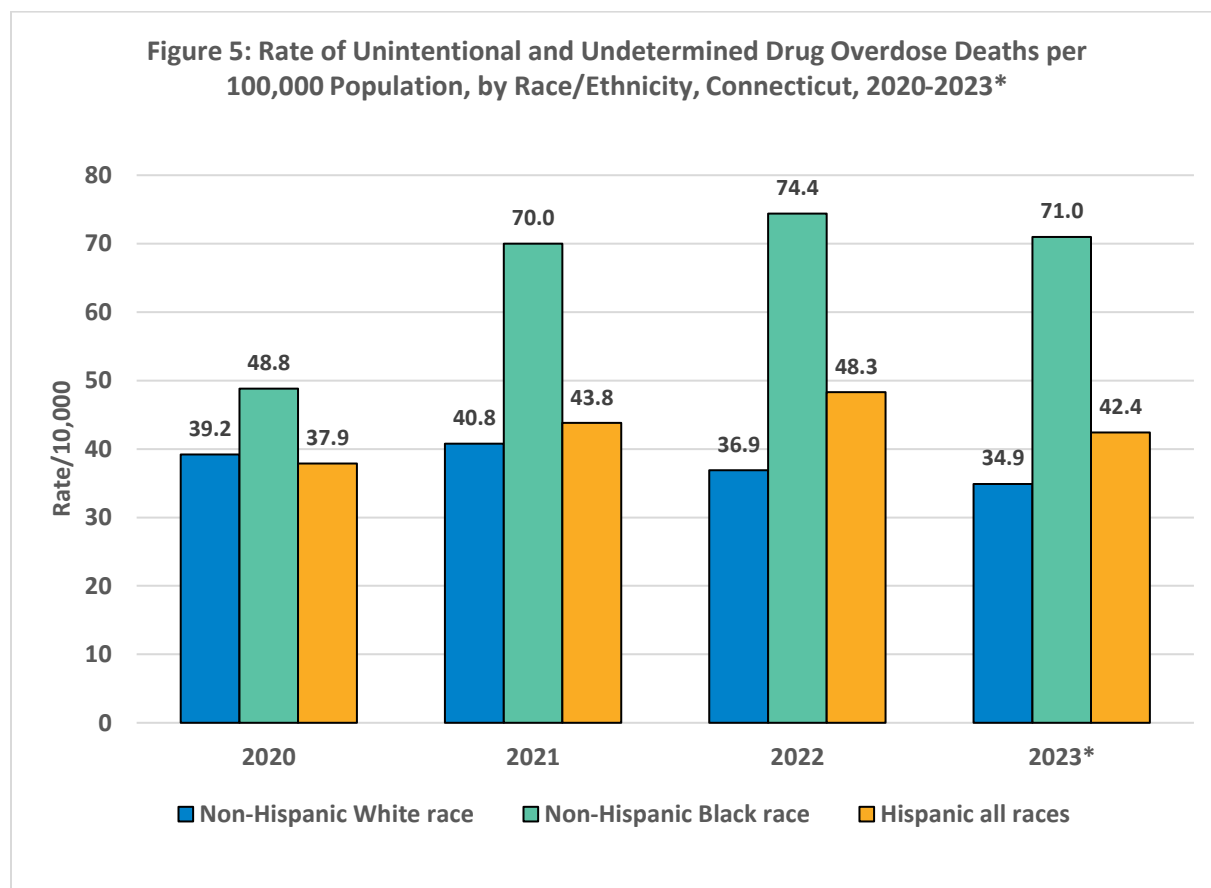
**4: Drug overdose death rates were higher in males compared to females during 2020 through 2023\*.** Rates of unintentional and undetermined intent drug overdose-related deaths were consistently higher among males when compared to females. The bar graph below represents rates of unintentional and undetermined intent drug overdose death by sex (rate per 100,000 sex-specific population) during 2020 through 2023\*.



\*Annualized data based on January-June 2023 numbers. Data are subject to change.

**5: Drug overdose death rates were higher among the non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic populations compared to the non-Hispanic White population.**

Between 2021 to 2023\*, the drug overdose mortality rate increased substantially in the non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic populations compared to 2020. The chart below represents the unintentional and undetermined intent drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by race/ethnicity for years 2020-2023\*.

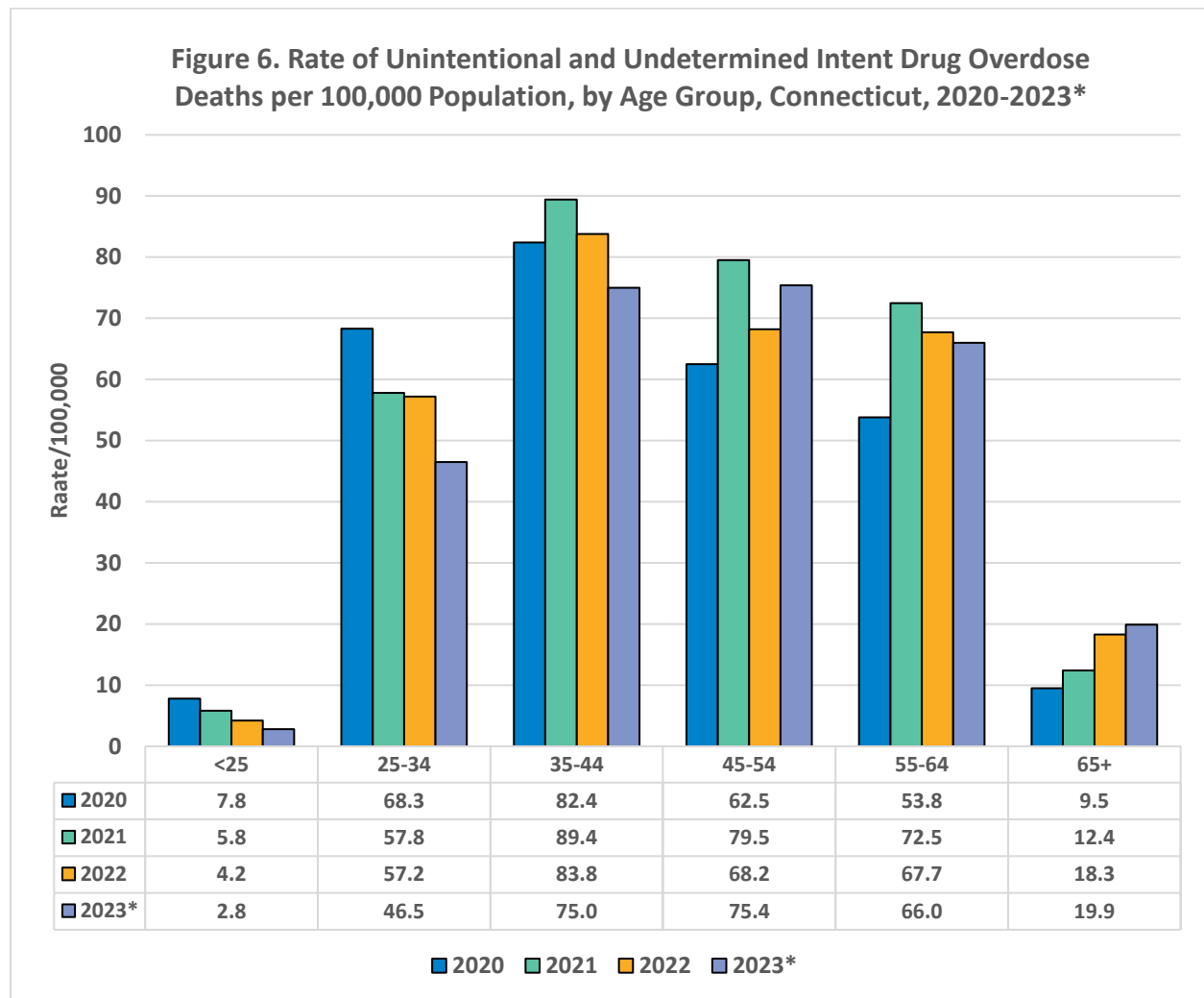


\*Annualized data based on January-June numbers of 2023 and data are subject to change.

Note: Hispanic ethnicity includes all races. Counts for the ‘Other Non-Hispanic’ population, which includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, were lower than 20 and therefore the rates were not calculated.

## 6: Drug overdose death rates were highest in the 35–44-year-old age group in Connecticut, 2020-2023\*.

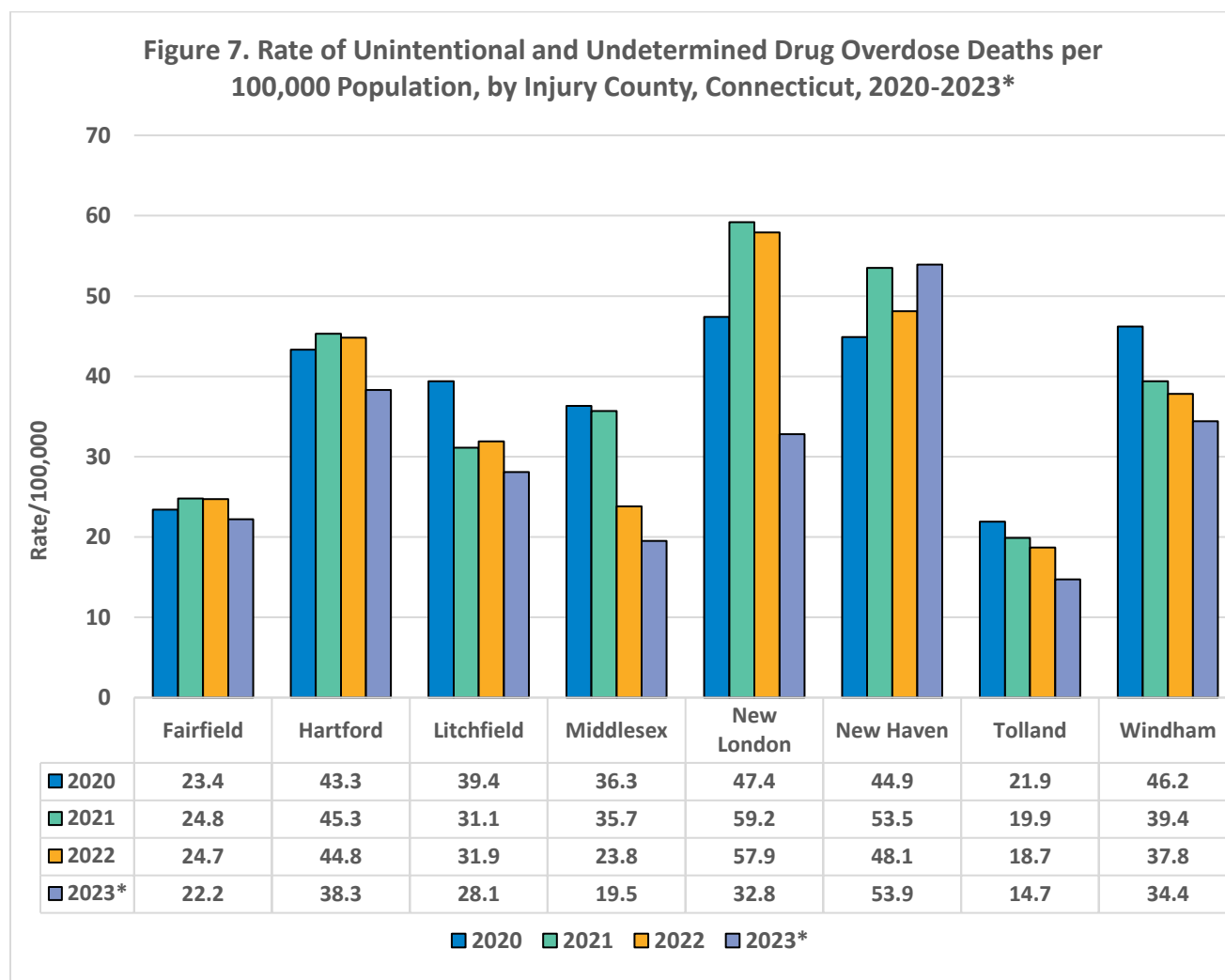
Drug overdose death rates were calculated per 100,000 age-specific population and were highest among the middle-aged, specifically the 35–44, 45–54 and 55–64-year-old age groups in 2020-2023\*. The chart below represents the unintentional and undetermined intent drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by age group, by year for 2020-2023\*. There is an increasing trend in drug overdose death rate from 2020 through 2023\* for the 65+ year-old age group.



\*Annualized data based on January-June 2023 numbers. Data are subject to change.

## 7: Drug overdose death rates in Connecticut, by County of Injury, 2020-2023\*

The chart below represents the unintentional and undetermined intent drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by injury county, for 2020-2023\*. Year 2023 data is annualized based on January-June numbers and this data suggest that across all counties in the state, there is a decrease in the drug overdose death rate in 2023 compared to 2022, with the exception of New Haven County.



\*Annualized data based on January-June 2023 numbers. Data are subject to change.

Last updated 1/16/2024  
 Injury and Violence Surveillance Unit  
 Community, Health, and Prevention Branch