



# Connecticut Department of Public Health

## Drug Overdose Monthly Report

### Fatal Unintentional and Undetermined Drug Overdose Report

#### Key Findings of Drug Overdose Decedents, 2019 - March 2022

- Current monthly report is based on confirmed fatal drug overdose cases for 2019, 2020, 2021 and the 1<sup>st</sup> week of March 2022. Statistics may change for 2021 and 2022 as confirmation of cases occurs periodically. Period of analysis includes January 2019 through the 1<sup>st</sup> week of March 2022.
- From January to the 1<sup>st</sup> week of March 2022, there were 166 confirmed fatal overdoses, with 87% of the cases involving fentanyl, 44 cases with xylazine and 4 cases with para-fluorofentanyl.
- There were 1,535 confirmed deaths for 2021, with a few cases still pending. The total number of fatal drug overdoses for 2020 was 1,378, and it is predicted that 2021 may have about 11.4% increase, compared to the previous year.
- **New and emerging substances:** Lethal combinations of xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, with fentanyl were identified in 2019 and continued through 2020, 2021 and 2022. Para-fluorofentanyl, a fentanyl analog, emerged in 2020 and was present in 13 overdose deaths in that year, 94 in 2021 and 4 deaths in 2022 as of the 1<sup>st</sup> week of March.

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

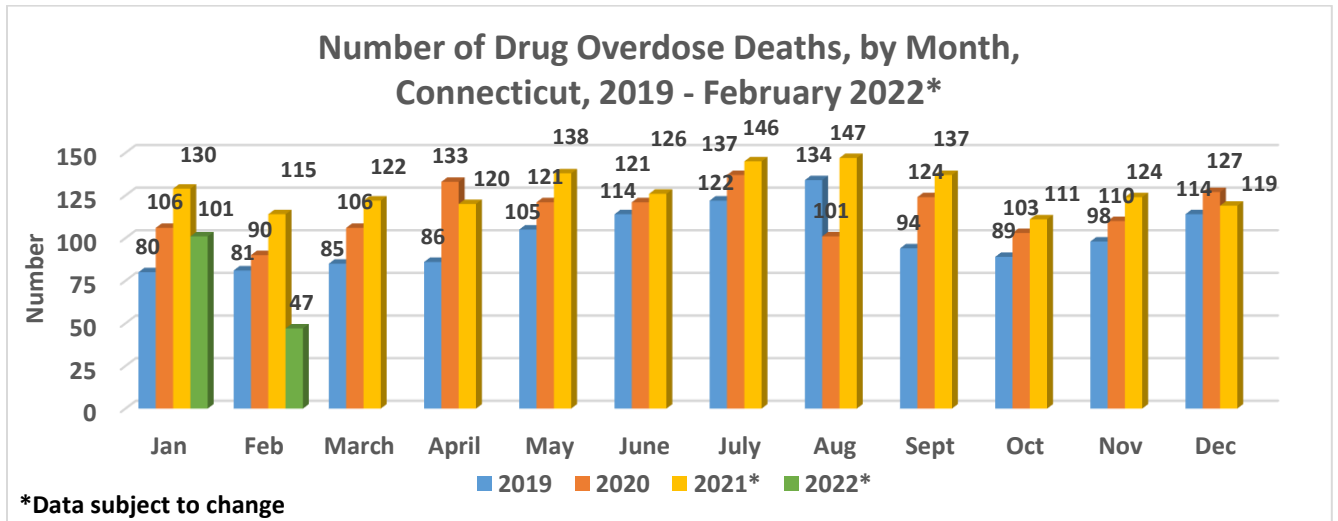
2020 and 2021	2019
There were 1,378 confirmed drug overdose deaths for 2020, with an increase of 14.3% compared to 2019. There were 1,535 confirmed drug overdose deaths for 2021 with an increase of 11.4% compared to the previous year, 2020.	There were 1,202 unintentional and undetermined drug overdose 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. For 2021, there were 295 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- or fentanyl analog-involved deaths was at 85% for both 2020 and 2021.	On average, fentanyl or fentanyl analogs were involved in 82% of the overdose deaths in 2019.

**Updated on 4-12-2022; Data Source: Connecticut Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), per CDC-SUDORS grant guidelines.**

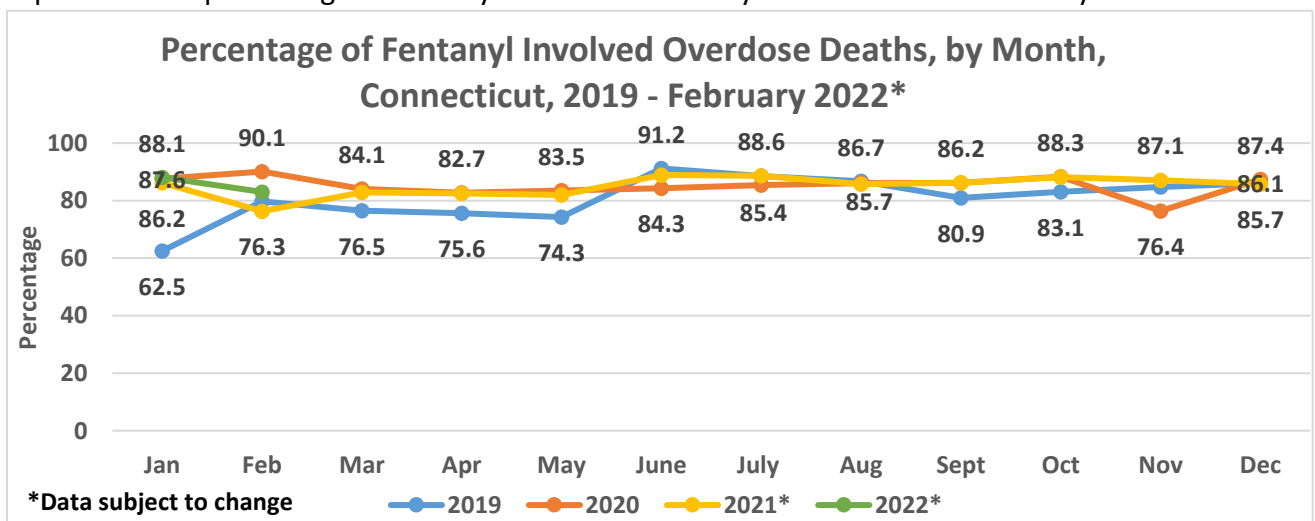
For substance use disorder information visit: <https://www.drugfreect.org>.

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 – February 2022\*:** Compared to 2020, 2021 had an increase of 11.4% in unintentional and undetermined drug overdose deaths in Connecticut. Confirmed drug overdose deaths in 2021 are as follows: January 130, February 115, March 122, April 120, May 138, June 126, July 146, August 147, September 137, October 111, November 124, and December 119. January of 2022 had 101 deaths and February had 47 deaths, and these numbers may increase because of pending cases. The chart below represents the monthly count of confirmed drug overdose deaths from January 2019 through February 2022.

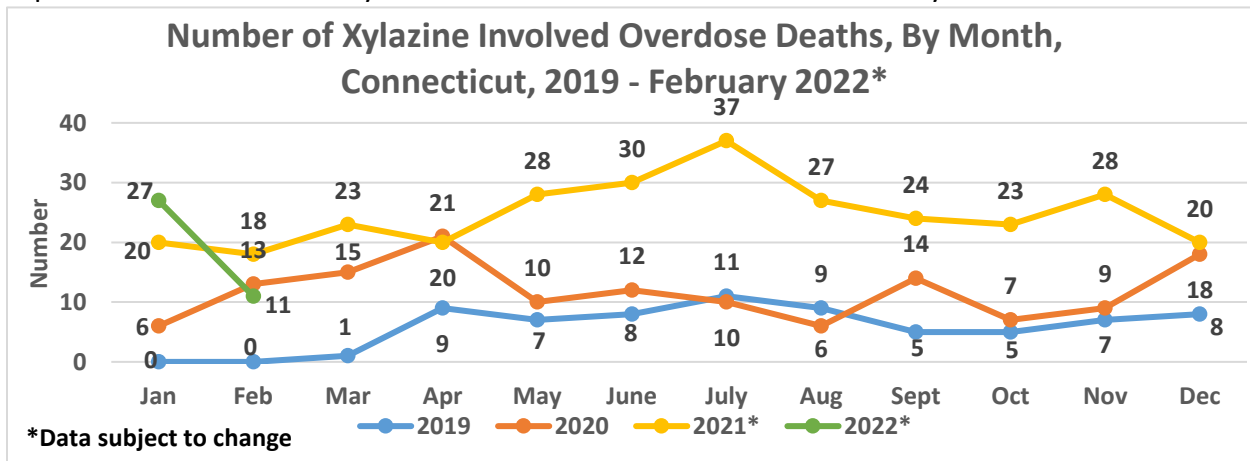


**The percentage of fentanyl-involved overdose deaths continued to be a problem in 2022:** Fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased significantly in 2019 to 82%, compared to the previous years of 2015 to 2018. For 2020 and 2021, the average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths was 85%. For the first two months of 2022, the percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths remained high, 88% in January and 83% in February. The chart below represents the percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths by month for 2019-February 2022.



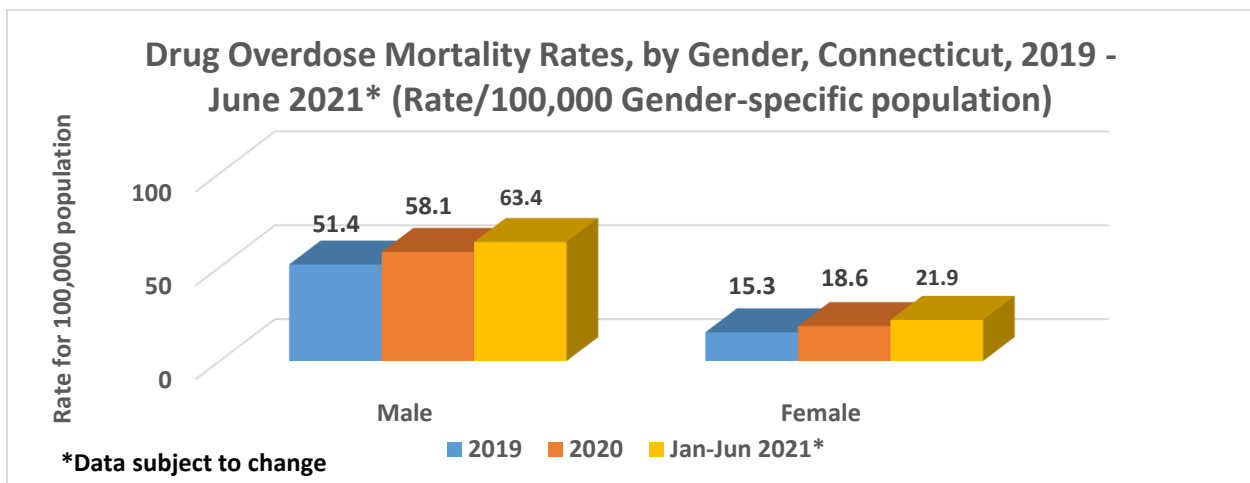
## Xylazine, a veterinary tranquilizer, involved drug intoxication deaths in

**Connecticut, 2019 – February 2022\*:** 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 2022. There were 71 xylazine-involved deaths in 2019, 141 in 2020 and 295 in 2021. Xylazine-involved drug overdose deaths continued in 2022 and there were 27 deaths in January and 11 in February, and these may change because of pending cases. The below chart represents the number of xylazine-involved deaths from 2019- February 2022.

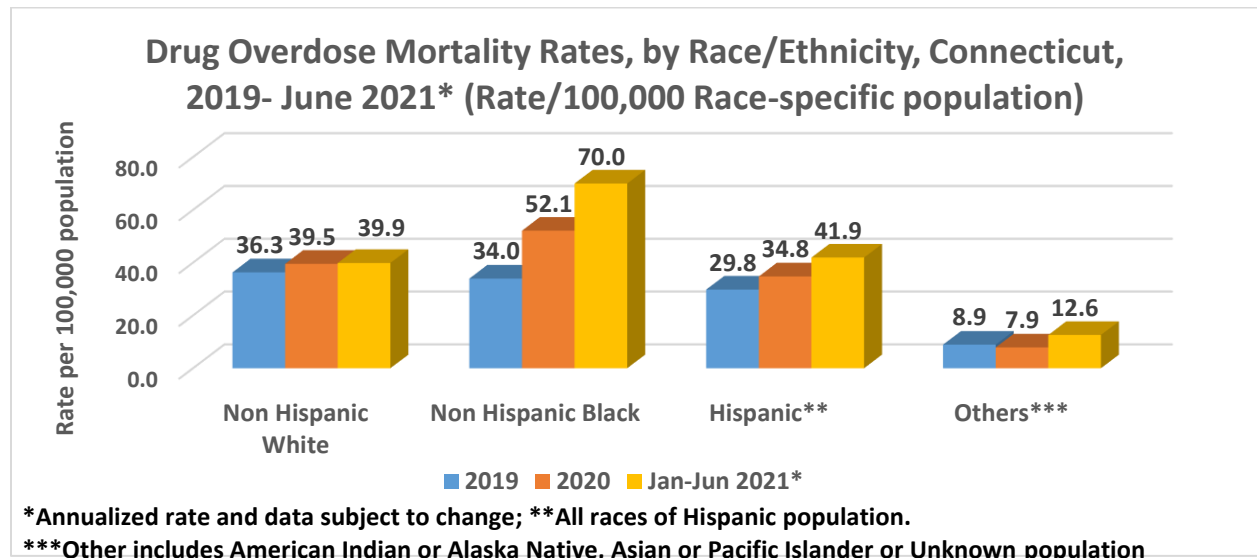


## Drug overdose death rates were higher in males compared to females in 2019 –

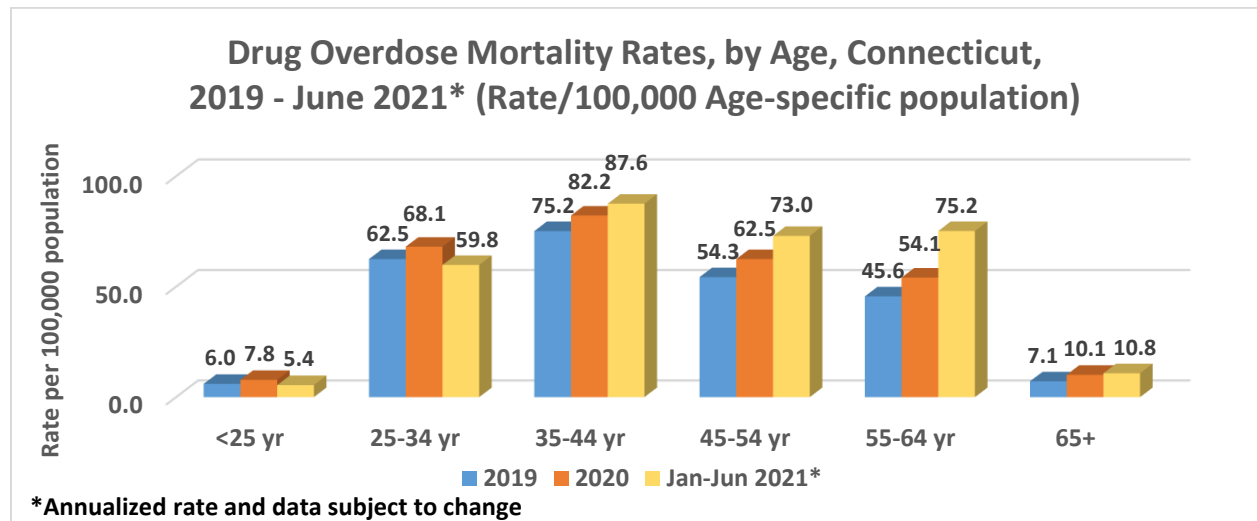
**June 2021\*:** Rates of unintentional and undetermined drug overdose-related death were consistently higher among males when compared to females. The bar graph below represents rates of unintentional and undetermined drug overdose death by gender (rate per 100,000 gender-specific population) for 2019 and June 2021\*.



**Drug overdose death rates were higher among the non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic populations compared to the non-Hispanic White population in 2021\*, Connecticut:** Drug overdose death rates were highest among non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black populations in 2019. However, as of June 2021, the drug overdose mortality rate substantially increased in the non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic populations compared to the previous years. The graph below represents the unintentional and undetermined drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by race/ethnicity for years 2019, 2020 and January-June 2021\*.



**Drug overdose death rates were highest in the 35–44-year-old age group in Connecticut, 2019 – June 2021\*:** 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 45-54 and 55-64 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 Resident County, 2019 – June 2021\*

The graph below represents the unintentional and undetermined drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by resident county, by year. As of June 2021, New London County (54.3) had the highest drug overdose death rate followed by New Haven (50.8) and Hartford (45.1) counties. There was a slight decrease in drug overdose death rates for Fairfield (21.2), Litchfield (31.1), Middlesex (33.2), Tolland (19.9) and Windham (39.4) counties as of June 2021, compared to the previous years. Projected annualized data for 2021 is based on January to June numbers and data is subject to change.

