



# Connecticut Department of Public Health

## Drug Overdose Monthly Report

### Fatal Unintentional and Undetermined Intent Drug Overdose Report

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

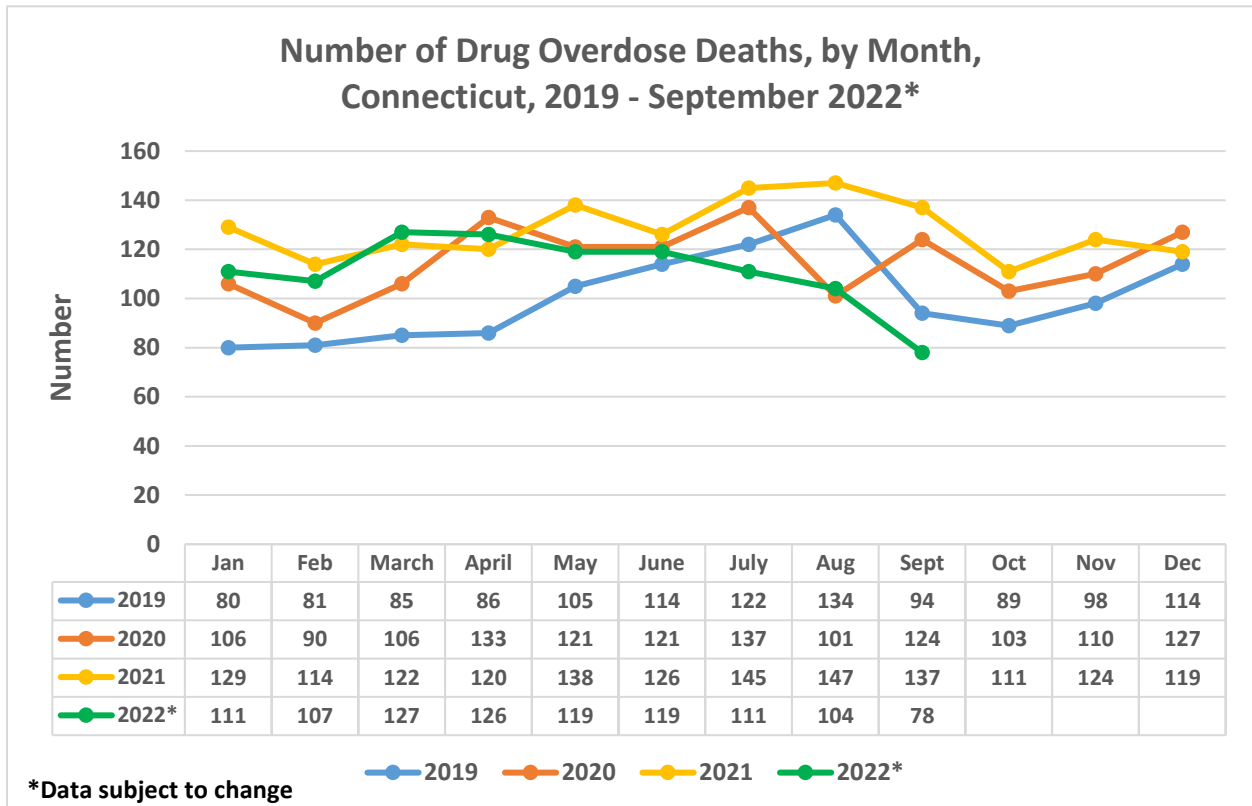
- Current monthly report is based on confirmed fatal drug overdose cases for 2019, 2020, 2021 and January to the 1<sup>st</sup> week of October 2022. Statistics may change for 2022 as confirmation of cases occurs periodically. Period of analysis includes January 2019 through September 2022.
- **2022 data overview:** From January to the 1<sup>st</sup> week of October 2022, there were 1016 confirmed fatal overdoses, with 84.6% (N=860) of the cases involving fentanyl, and 25.4% (N=258) of the cases involving xylazine. Gabapentin was involved in 11.1% (N=113) of the cases.
- **Opioids in drug overdose deaths:** In 2021, 93% of overdose deaths involved an opioid (e.g., fentanyl, heroin, or a prescription opioid pain reliever).
- **Comparison between 2019-2021:** There were 1,531 confirmed deaths for 2021 with an increase of 11.4% compared to the previous year, 2020 (N=1374). Compared to 2019 (N=1202), drug overdose deaths increased 27.7% in 2021.
- **Demographic data for 2021:** Males had a higher mortality rate than females in 2021 (64.2 vs. 22.7 per 100,000 population, respectively). In 2021, the mortality rate was highest for non-Hispanic Black males and for 35–44-year-olds.
- **Place of death:** Around 60% of decedents died at a residence (either their own or someone else's) in 2021.
- **Fentanyl-involved drug overdose deaths:** The average percentage of fentanyl- or fentanyl analog-involved deaths was 85% for 2020 and 2021, compared to 82% in 2019.
- **Xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, identified in drug overdose deaths:** For the first time in 2019, xylazine/fentanyl combinations were involved in 71 drug overdoses, and the same lethal combination continued to be a problem in 2020 (N=141), 2021 (N=295) and 2022 (N=258).
- **New and emerging substances:** Para-fluorofentanyl, a fentanyl analog, emerged in 2020 and was present in 13 overdose deaths that year, 94 in 2021 and 29 in 2022 as of the 1<sup>st</sup> week of October. There were five overdoses involving Flualprazolam in 2021 and four in 2022, which is a nonregistered drug in the benzodiazepine family and constitutes a new psychoactive substance. There were three overdoses involving Flubromazolam (benzodiazepine derivative reputed to be highly potent) and one involving carfentanil, in 2021. We continue to monitor for new emerging substances.

Updated on 11-14-2022; 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>.

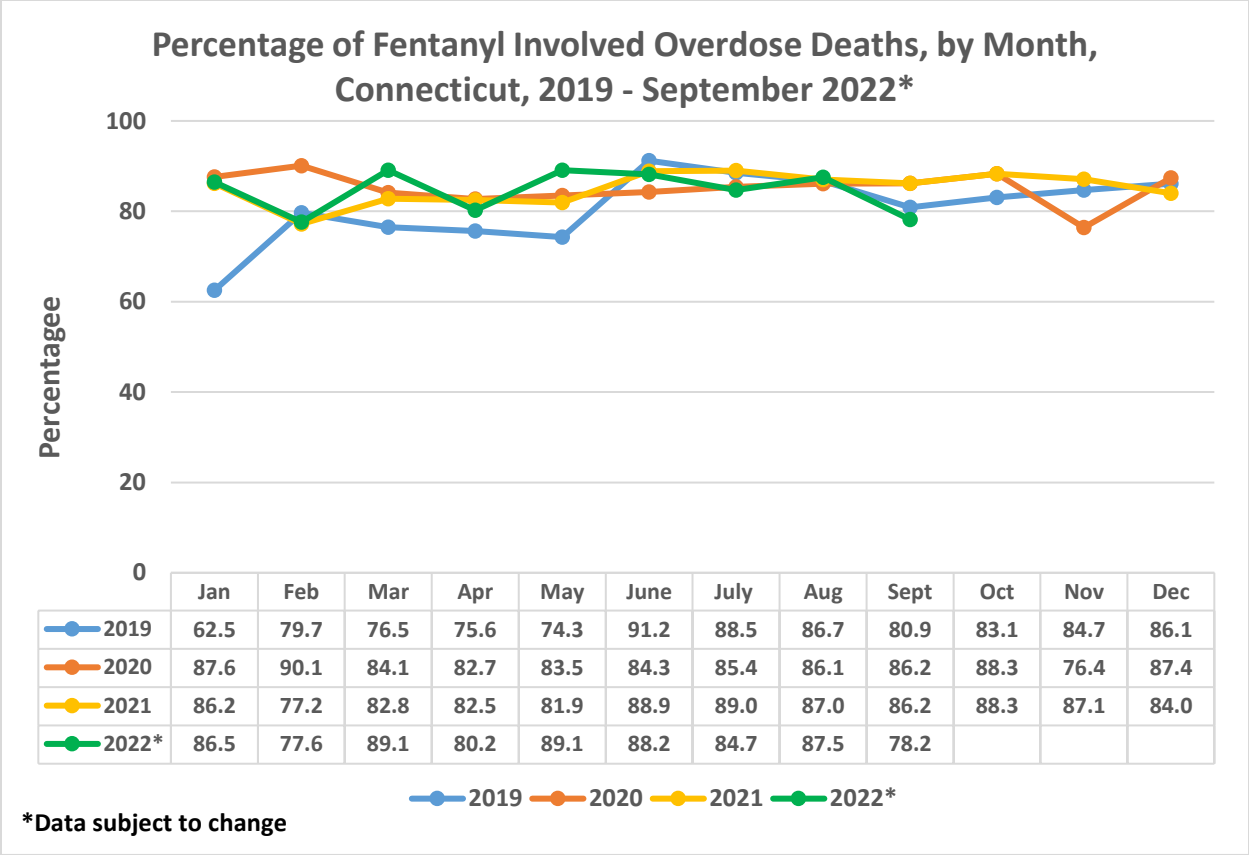
For information on the CT DPH Opioids and Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Program in the Office of Injury and Violence Prevention, visit: <https://www.ct.gov/dph/injuryprevention>.

**Unintentional and undetermined drug overdose deaths, by month, Connecticut, 2019 – September 2022\*.** Compared to 2020, 2021 had an increase of 11.4% in unintentional and undetermined drug overdose deaths in Connecticut. The chart below represents the monthly count of confirmed drug overdose deaths from January 2019-September 2022. Year 2022 numbers may increase due to the processing of pending cases.



**The percentage of fentanyl-involved overdose deaths continues to be a problem in 2022.**

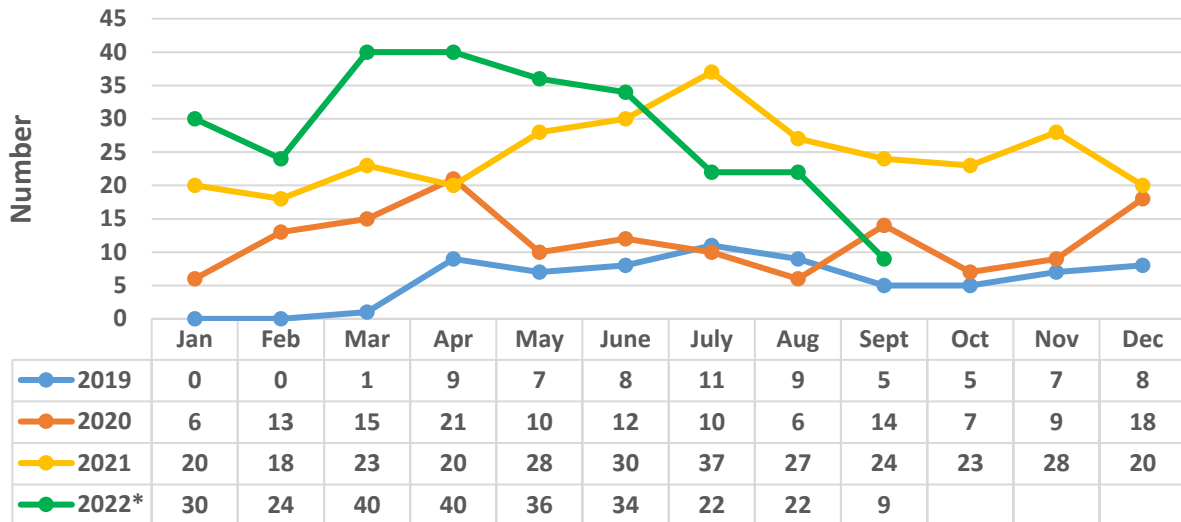
Fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased significantly in 2019 to 82%, compared to the previous years of 2015 to 2018. For 2020 and 2021, the average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths was 85%. For 2022, the percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths remains high; 86.5% in January, 77.6% in February, 89.1% in March, 80.2% in April, 89.1% in May, 88.2% in June, 84.2% in July, 89.6% in August and 78.2% in September with an average of 84.6% in 2022. The chart below represents the percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths by month during January 2019-September 2022.



### Xylazine involved drug intoxication deaths in Connecticut, 2019 – September 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 continue to be high in 2022, with 30 deaths in January, 24 in February, 40 in March, 40 in April, 36 in May, 34 in June, 22 in July, 22 in August and 9 in September with an overall total of 258. These may increase due to the processing of pending cases. The below chart represents the number of xylazine involved deaths from January 2019-September 2022.

**Number of Xylazine Involved Overdose Deaths, by Month, Connecticut, 2019 - September 2022\***

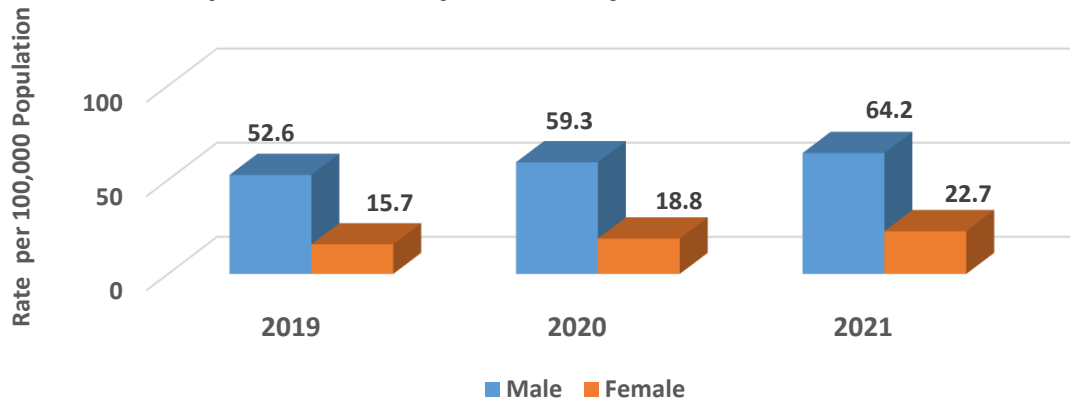


\*Data subject to change      ● 2019    ● 2020    ● 2021    ● 2022\*

**Drug overdose death rates were higher in males compared to females for 2019 to 2021.**

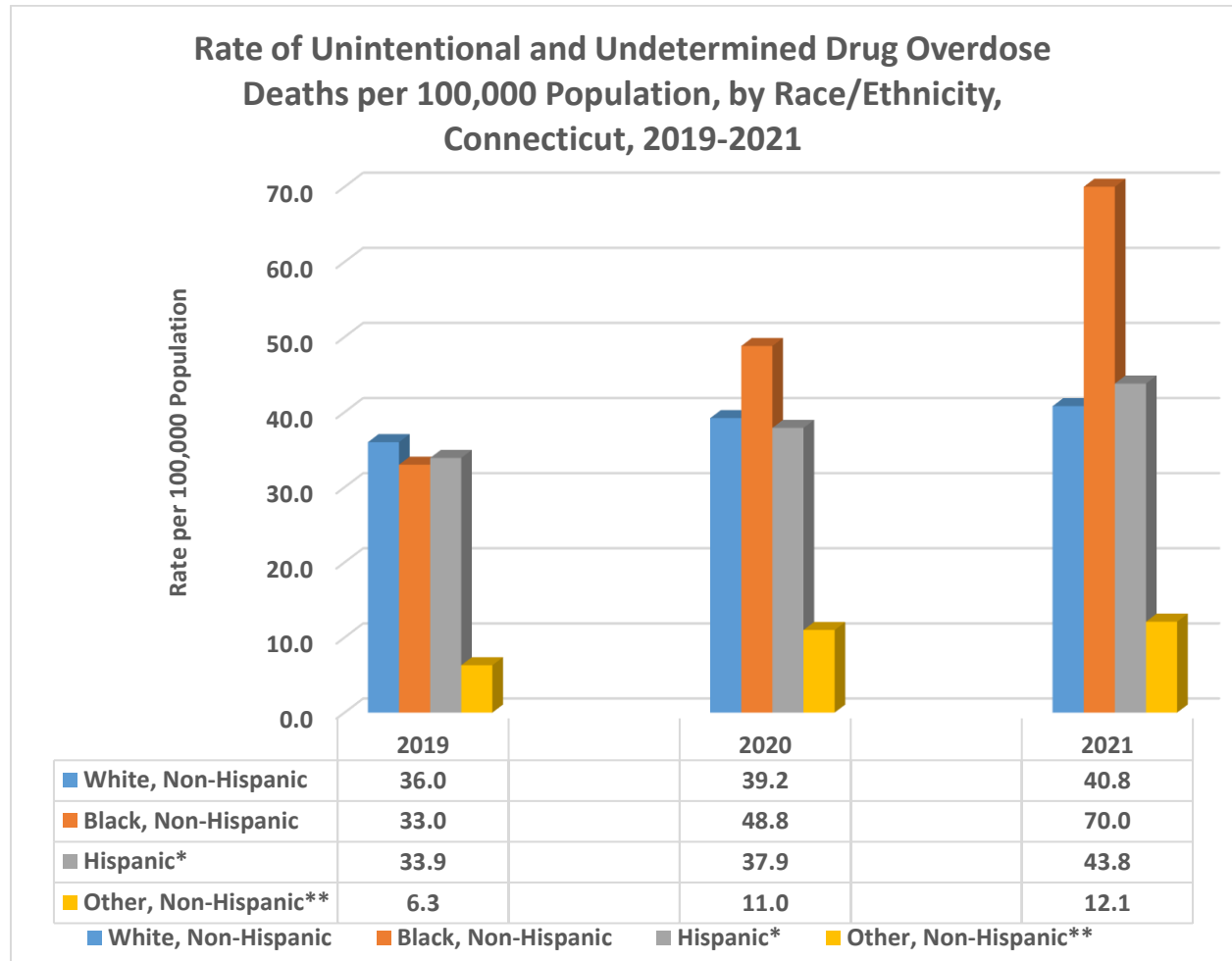
Rates of unintentional and undetermined drug overdose-related death were consistently higher among males when compared to females. The bar graph below represents rates of unintentional and undetermined drug overdose death by sex (rate per 100,000 sex-specific population) between 2019 to 2021.

**Rate of Unintentional and Undetermined Drug Overdose Deaths per 100,000 Population, by Sex, Connecticut, 2019-2021**



**Drug overdose death rates were higher among the non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic populations compared to the non-Hispanic White population in 2021.**

Drug overdose death rates were highest among non-Hispanic Whites followed by Hispanic population in 2019. However, in 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 2021.

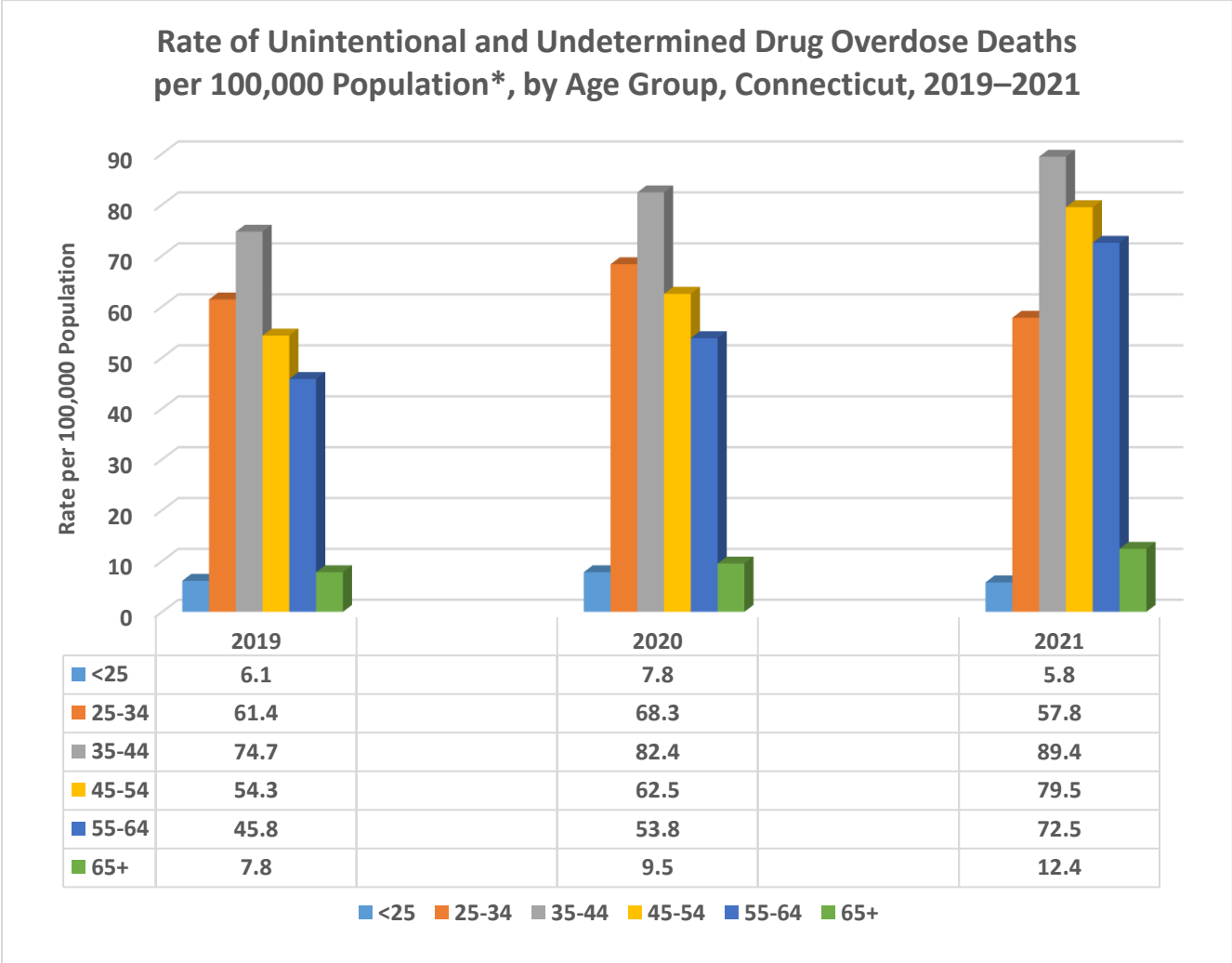


\*All races of Hispanic population.

\*\*Other includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander or Unknown population

**Drug overdose death rates were highest in the 35–44-year-old age group in Connecticut, 2019 – 2021.**

Drug overdose death rates were calculated per 100,000 age-specific population and were highest among the 35–44-year age group, followed by 45-54 and 55-64-year age groups in 2021. The graph below represents the unintentional and undetermined drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by age, by year for 2019-2021.



## Drug overdose death rates in Connecticut, by Injury County, 2019 – 2021.

The graph below represents the unintentional and undetermined drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by injury county, by year. In 2021, New London County (59.2) had the highest drug overdose death rate followed by New Haven (53.5), and Hartford (45.3) counties. There was a slight decrease in drug overdose death rates for Litchfield (31.1), Middlesex (35.7), Tolland (19.9) and Windham (39.4) counties in 2021 compared to the previous year, whereas Fairfield County (24.8) had a slight increase.

