



## Washtenaw County Health Department

### For Immediate Release

Contact: Susan Ringler Cerniglia, MPH  
Public Information Officer  
Washtenaw County Health Department  
[ringlers@washtenaw.org](mailto:ringlers@washtenaw.org)  
734-544-6759 or cell 734-678-7010

### **Opioid Deaths, Non-Opioid Drug Overdose Deaths Continue Increasing in Washtenaw County** *Fentanyl, cocaine, and other substances involved in majority of overdose deaths*

YPSILANTI, Mich., Sept. 12, 2023 – The Washtenaw County Health Department has released a new [Opioid Report](#) detailing recent local drug overdose data trends. Though Washtenaw County has had lower drug overdose death rates than Michigan and the U.S. since 2019, local deaths are increasing.

In Washtenaw County, there has been a 33% increase in all drug overdose deaths from 2020 to 2022. The proportion of local opioid deaths that involved fentanyl, non-opioid substances, stimulants like cocaine, and xylazine also continued to increase.

“Our analysis shows opioid overdose deaths and drug overdose deaths overall increased locally, and while African Americans were already overrepresented in opioid-related deaths in 2021, the death rate increased by 80% in 2022,” says Kaitlin Schwartz, MPH, epidemiologist with Washtenaw County Health Department.

Most residents who died of an opioid overdose were white (61%), male (65%), and between 25-54 years old (75%). The number of Black/African American residents who died from an opioid overdose increased from 15 individuals in 2021 to 27 in 2022 (an 80% increase). During this same time, the percent of white residents decreased by 22%.

The number of female residents who died of an opioid-related overdose increased from 23 in 2021 to 28 in 2022. Median age of those who died of an opioid overdose increased from 40 years in 2021 to 44 in 2022.

“Opioid-related deaths involving fentanyl, mixed drugs, stimulants, and xylazine, also continued to increase from 2021 to 2022,” continues Schwartz.

Eighty-six percent of opioid overdose deaths among Washtenaw County residents in 2022 involved fentanyl. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that can be up to 50 to 100 times more potent than heroin.

Most local opioid-related deaths involved other substances (75% in 2022), which represents a 22% increase over the last year. Additionally, 63% of all opioid overdose deaths involved stimulants, most often cocaine, followed by methamphetamine.

Xylazine, a non-opioid tranquilizer not approved for human use, is also emerging among overdose deaths in Washtenaw. It is often added to illicit opioids, especially fentanyl. Opioid overdose deaths that were known to involve xylazine doubled in 2022 to 8 deaths (10%) compared to 4 (5%) in 2021.

Washtenaw County Health Department  
555 Towner Street • Ypsilanti, MI 48198  
Phone: 734-544-6700 • Fax: 734-544-6705  
[washtenaw.org/health](http://washtenaw.org/health)



Environmental Health Division  
705 N Zeeb Road • Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
Phone: 734-222-3800 • Fax: 734-222-3930  
[washtenaw.org/envhealth](http://washtenaw.org/envhealth)

“The majority of opioid-related deaths continue to involve more than just opioids,” according to Schwartz. “Anyone who uses substances and their family, friends, or acquaintances should be aware of resources like naloxone and know how to use them.”

Additional data is available in the Washtenaw County Health Department’s new [September 2023 Opioid Report](#). Visit [www.washtenaw.org/opioids](http://www.washtenaw.org/opioids) for additional opioid reports and data.

#### **Overdose prevention resources**

Naloxone (also known as Narcan) is a safe medication that counteracts the dangerous effects of an opioid overdose. There are several ways to [get free naloxone](#) in Washtenaw County. This page also includes information about how to pick up or request free fentanyl test strips. Fentanyl test strips are small strips of paper that can detect the presence of fentanyl in all different kinds of drugs (cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, etc.) and drug forms (pills, powder, and injectables).

**Recovery is possible.** Find local stories of recovery, medication disposal sites, materials, and more harm reduction and treatment resources at [www.washtenaw.org/ItsPossible](http://www.washtenaw.org/ItsPossible). Refreshed campaign materials and new stories will be available in the coming weeks.

#### **Washtenaw County Health Department**

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

Local public health information and updates are always available at [www.washtenaw.org/health](http://www.washtenaw.org/health). The Health Department also provides frequent social media updates (@wcpublichealth) and sends regular email updates, sign up at <http://bit.ly/WCHD555>.

###