



Substance Use Trend *Alert*

October 2022

Drug Overdose Deaths by Race in the U.S. and Florida

The drug epidemic continues to be an ongoing public health issue across the nation. Drug overdose data show widening disparities between different population groups. When the opioid epidemic first began, White individuals were dying from fatal drug overdoses twice the rate than that of their Black counterparts, mostly from prescription opioids.¹ However, a recent report from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that overdose rates are growing fastest among Black communities. The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on drug overdose deaths has affected people of color the most.^{2,3} According to the CDC, inequities in healthcare and access to substance use treatment may explain the increase in overdose deaths among Black communities and other minority groups.⁴

Overdose Rates in the U.S.

From 2019 to 2020, overdose deaths increased by 30% in the US.² Among racial or ethnic groups, overdose deaths among Black people increased 44%, about twice the increase from White people at 22% and Hispanic people at 21%.² American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) people had the second highest increase in overdose deaths at 39%.² When analyzing the 2019-2020 CDC data by sex, race, and age, higher overdose rates occurred among older Black males aged 45-64 years in 2020.⁵

Overdose Rates in Florida

From 2019 to 2020, drug death rates increased across all racial groups in Florida. Although the rate of drug overdose deaths among White individuals increased from 2019 to 2020, the drug death rate for Black people was even greater at 53% versus 37%.⁶ Similarly, the number of deaths from drug poisonings increased among all races and ethnicities in Florida during this period.⁶ However, the number of deaths from drug

poisonings among Black Floridians nearly doubled from 2019-2020.⁶

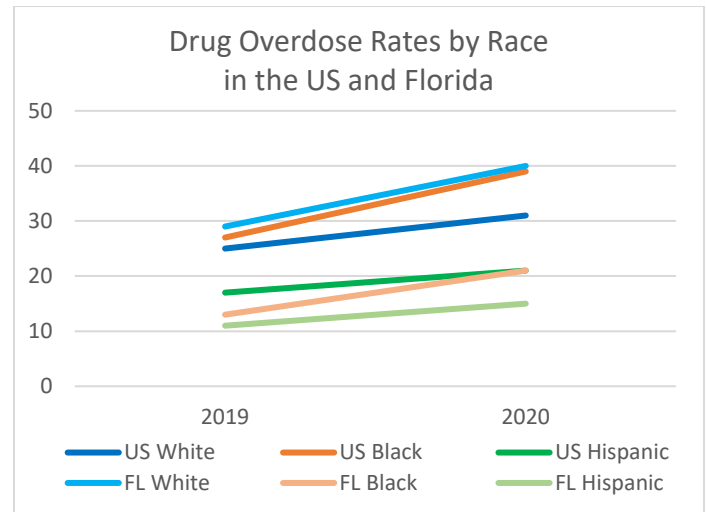


Figure 1: Drug Overdose Death Rates by Race in US and Florida. Source: [FLHealthCharts](#) & [CDC](#)

Recommendations

The sharp increase in overdose deaths among Black and AI/AN people highlights health inequities, like unequal access to substance use treatment and treatment biases.⁴ History of substance use treatment was lowest among Black (8.3%), Hispanic (10.2%), and AI/AN (10.7%) decedents while White (16.4%) individuals had the highest.⁵ Given these disparities, it is imperative to increase access to evidence-based treatment and recovery support services that include culturally responsive practices.⁴ Reducing stigma around treatment and recovery is also needed. Providing harm reduction services that include access to naloxone, fentanyl test strips, and syringe service programs while expanding education on substance use risk in vulnerable populations is recommended.⁴ Lastly, it is critical to continually raise awareness of fentanyl tampering in the drug supply.⁴ For more information, please visit the following websites:

Additional Information Sources:

- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Stigma Reduction](#)
- [Dose of Reality Florida- Prevent Prescription Painkiller Abuse in Florida](#)
- [Florida Department of Children and Families \(DCF\): Treatment for Substance Use](#)
- [I SAVE FL](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#)

References

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3. New York Times (2022). Soaring Overdose Rates in the Pandemic Reflected Widening Racial Disparities. Retrieved on 9-03-2022 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/19/health/overdose-pandemic-race.html>
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5. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2022). Vital Signs: Drug Overdose Deaths by Selected Sociodemographic and Social Determinants Characteristics- 25 States and the District of Columbia, 2019-2020. Retrieved on 9-20-2022 from https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7129e2.htm?s_cid=mm7129e2_w
6. Florida Department of Health, FL Health Charts (2022). Drug Poisoning Deaths. Retrieved on 9-20-2022 from <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=NonVitalInd.DataViewer>