



JUSTICE AND
PUBLIC SAFETY CABINET

2022 Overdose Fatality Report

Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy
Commonwealth of Kentucky
Justice & Public Safety Cabinet

Kerry Harvey, Secretary
Justice & Public Safety Cabinet

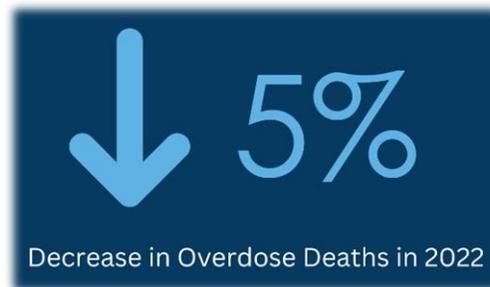
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For the first time in four years, Kentucky has seen a decrease in drug overdose deaths, representing a 5% reduction since 2018. While 23 states reported fewer overdose deaths in 2022, Kentucky was one of only eight states that reported decreases of 100 or more deaths compared to 2021.

However, addiction remains one of the most critical public health and safety issues facing the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

- In 2020, there were 1,964 overdose deaths.
- In 2021, there were 2,250 overdose deaths. This was a 14.5% increase from 2020.
- In 2022, there were **2,135** overdose deaths. This was a **decrease** of over 5% from 2021.

The Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP) states that overdose cases autopsied by the Office of the State Medical Examiner (OSME) and toxicology reports submitted by Kentucky coroners, that 90% of deaths in 2022 involved opioids. Illicit fentanyl continues to be the most prevalent drug contributing to overdose deaths, accounting for 72.5% nationwide in 2022. The overall number of overdose deaths in the commonwealth was also worsened by the widespread availability of potent inexpensive methamphetamine.



House Bill 1, from the 2012 Special Session, mandates that ODCP, in cooperation with OSME, prepares and publishes an annual report for the Secretary of the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet that includes:

- (1) The number of drug-related deaths;
- (2) The decedent's age, race, and gender, but not their last name or address;
- (3) The counties in which those deaths occurred;
- (4) The scientific, trade, or generic names of the drugs involved; and
- (5) The method by which the drugs were obtained, when available

The report is compiled utilizing data from OSME, KIPRC and the Kentucky Office of Vital Statistics. KIPRC, with support from the CDC, launched the **Drug Overdose Technical Assistance Core (DOTAC)** to support local health departments, community coalitions, and state and local agencies in their efforts to address substance misuse, abuse, and overdose. DOTAC's goal is to support and enhance local agencies' and community organizations' access to timely local data and analytical results on controlled substance prescribing, drug-related morbidity, and mortality trends. More information on the available data, analytical and community services is available at <https://kiprc.uky.edu/injury-focus-areas/drug-overdose-prevention>.

Key Findings from 2022¹

In 2022, a total of 2,135 Kentucky residents died from a drug overdose, representing a decrease of more than 5% from the 2,250 resident drug overdose deaths in 2021.

A review of the resident autopsy cases by OSME and toxicology reports submitted by Kentucky coroners indicates that in 2022:

- A total of 505 residents of Jefferson County died from a drug overdose, a decrease from the 572 resident overdose deaths in 2021.
- The age group with the greatest number of drug overdose deaths in 2022 included those between the ages of 35 and 44, with 643 drug overdose deaths, a decrease of 4.7% from the 675 overdose deaths among that age group in 2021.
- The following data on drug types are based on identification through toxicology reports:
 - Fentanyl was identified through toxicology in 1,548 drug overdose deaths, representing 72.5% of the total drug overdose deaths in 2022 and a decrease of 6.3% from the 1,652 drug overdose deaths for which fentanyl was identified through toxicology in 2021.
 - Methamphetamine was identified in 1,069 drug overdose deaths, representing 50.1% of the total drug overdose deaths in 2022 and a decrease of 1.2% from the 1,082 drug overdose deaths for which methamphetamine was identified through toxicology in 2021.
 - Acetylfentanyl was identified in 453 drug overdose deaths, representing an increase of 75.6% from the 258 drug overdose deaths for which acetylfentanyl was identified through toxicology in 2021.
 - Oxycodone was identified in 159 drug overdose deaths, representing a decrease of 21.3% from the 202 drug overdose deaths for which oxycodone was identified through toxicology in 2021.
 - Heroin was identified in 49 drug overdose deaths, representing a decrease of 47.3% from the 93 drug overdose deaths for which heroin was identified through toxicology in 2021.
 - Morphine was identified in 217 drug overdose deaths, representing a decrease of 30% from the 310 drug overdose deaths for which morphine was identified through toxicology in 2021.
 - Alprazolam was identified in 149 drug overdose deaths, representing a decrease of 29.7% from the 212 drug overdose deaths for which alprazolam was identified through toxicology in 2021.
 - Gabapentin was identified in 448 drug overdose deaths, representing a decrease of 11.5% from the 506 drug overdose deaths for which gabapentin was identified through toxicology in 2021.

¹This report is based on data from KIPRC derived from death certificates and toxicology reports for all drug overdose deaths among Kentucky residents submitted by May 2023. The data are provisional and subject to change.

Table 1: Kentucky Counties with the Highest Rates of Drug Overdose Deaths in 2022

Kentucky County	Rate of Drug Overdose Deaths per 100,000 Residents	Number of Drug Overdose Deaths
1 Bath	185.1	20
2 Lee	151.3	11
3 Floyd	133.0	44
4 Estill	129.7	17
5 Knott	126.1	15

Counties with rates based on numbers less than 10 have been excluded from this list.

Table 2: Kentucky Counties with the Highest Numbers of Drug Overdose Deaths with Fentanyl Identified through Toxicology in 2022

Kentucky County	Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Fentanyl
1 Jefferson	419
2 Fayette	137
3 Kenton	57
4 Madison	46
5 Boyd	37

Table 3: Kentucky Counties with the Highest Numbers of Drug Overdose Deaths with Methamphetamine Identified Through Toxicology in 2022

Kentucky County	Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Methamphetamine
1 Jefferson	226
2 Fayette	60
3 Madison	35
4 Pike	29
5 Hardin	27

Drug Overdose Deaths by Age

Table 5: Numbers of Kentucky Resident Drug Overdose Deaths by Age Group, 2020–2022

Age	2020	2021	2022
0–4	<5	<5	5
5–14	<5	0	<5
15–24	127	139	117
25–34	463	485	426
35–44	572	675	643
45–54	404	495	498
55–64	304	372	341
65–74	75	82	87
75–84	14	5	14
85+	<5	<5	<5

Numbers greater than zero but less than five were suppressed in accordance with state data release policy. Data are provisional and subject to change. Produced by the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center, as bona fide agent for the Kentucky Department for Public Health. May 2023. Data source: Kentucky Death Certificate Database, Kentucky Office of Vital Statistics, Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

Drug Overdose Deaths by Race

Table 6: Numbers of Kentucky Resident Drug Overdose Deaths by Race, 2020–2022

Race	2020	2021	2022
White	1,773	2,005	1,847
Black	172	233	252
Other	20	19	36

Data are provisional and subject to change. Produced by the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center, as bona fide agent for the Kentucky Department for Public Health. May 2023. Data source: Kentucky Death Certificate Database, Kentucky Office of Vital Statistics, Cabinet for Health and Family Services.