



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

401 E Street, SW – 6th Floor
Washington, DC 20024



Drug-related Fatal Overdoses: January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021

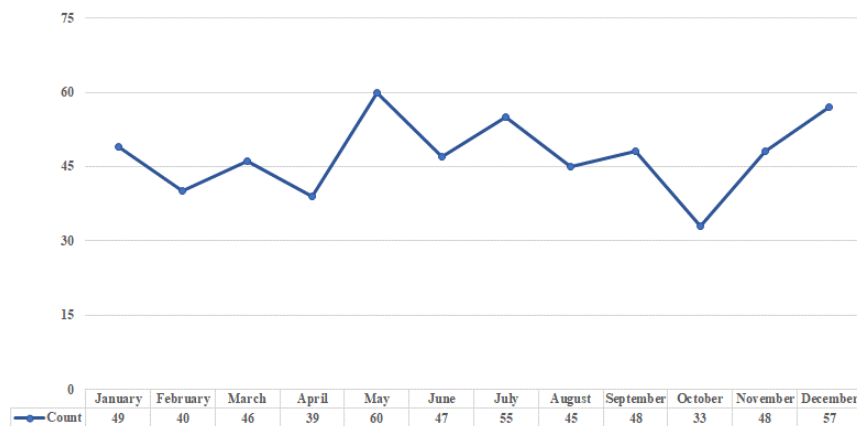
Report Date: April 20, 2022

The DC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) investigated a total of **567** deaths due to the use of substances from January 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021. This report examines the presence of opioids, stimulants, and alcohol, in deaths observed at the OCME.

Trends in Deaths due to Drug Use

Similar to the rest of the country, the number of fatal drug related overdoses in the District of Columbia has increased over the past several years. On average, there were 47 drug-related accidental overdoses per month in 2021, with deaths peaking in May, June, and July (Fig 1).

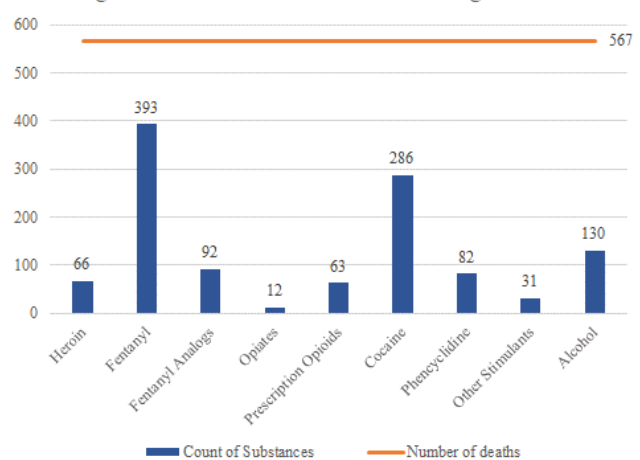
Fig 1: Number of Accidental Drug Deaths by Month (2021)



Incidence of Drugs

Figure 2 displays the substances identified through toxicology testing of decedents in 2021. The most prevalent substance identified was fentanyl, followed by cocaine. Fentanyl analogs include fluorofentanyl, acetyl fentanyl, despropionyl-fentanyl, and p-fluorobutyryl fentanyl. Prescription opioids include methadone, morphine, codeine, tramadol, oxycodone, oxymorphone, buprenorphine, hydromorphone, and hydrocodone. Other stimulants include amphetamines, synthetic marijuana, phencyclidine, and eutylone.

Fig 2: Breakdown of Substances Leading to Death

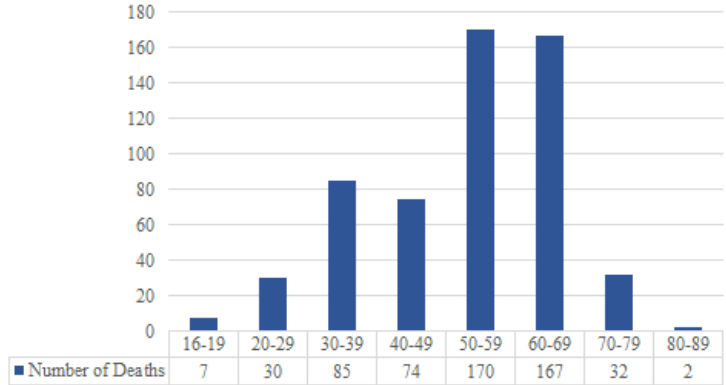


Demographics

Age

Approximately **59%** of all fatal drug overdoses occurred among adults between the ages of 50-69 years old (Fig 3). Deaths due to drug use were most prevalent among people ages 50 to 59 (n= 30%)

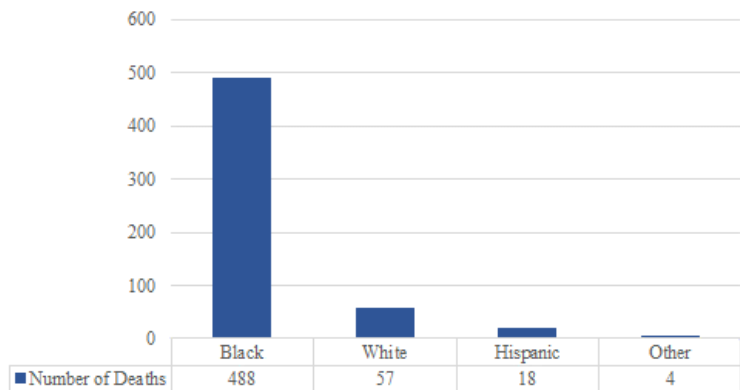
Fig 3: Accidental Drug Deaths by Age Group



Race and Ethnicity

Overall, **488** or **86%** of all drug-related deaths were among Blacks (Fig 4). This trend is consistent with opioid-related deaths.

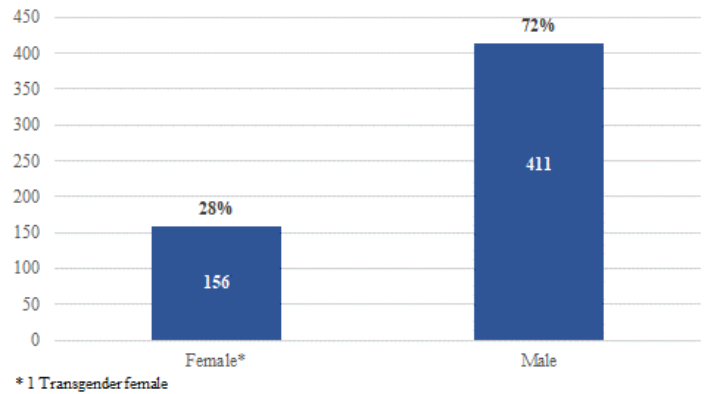
Fig 4: Accidental Drug Deaths by Race and Ethnicity



Gender

Fatal drug overdoses were most common amongst Males (72%) (Fig 5).

Fig 5: Accidental Drug Deaths by Gender



Jurisdiction of Residence

The majority of decedents were residents of DC (Fig 6a). Within DC, fatal overdoses were most common among Ward 5, 7, and 8 residents (n= 252) (Fig 6b).

Fig 6a: Accidental Drug Deaths by Jurisdiction of Residence

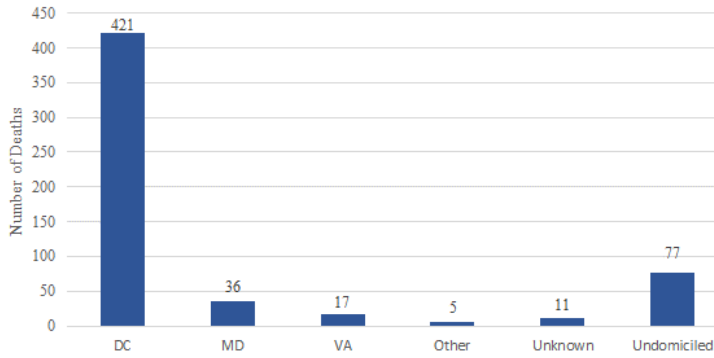


Fig 6b: Accidental Drug Deaths by Ward of Residence

