

Pain in the Nation: The Epidemics of Alcohol, Drug, and Suicide Deaths: Snapshot for Kentucky

Major National Findings

Combined Death Rate



The combined death rate increased by 11 percent from 2020 to 2021 and included increases for all age, sex, racial/ethnic, and geographic groups.

2x

Between 2011 and 2021, annual alcohol, drug, and suicide deaths more than doubled—from 104,379 deaths in 2011 to a staggering 209,225 deaths in 2021.



These increases between 2011 and 2021 included a 65 percent rise in deaths among youth ages 10 to 17, along with rising rates of poor mental health and suicidal behavior.

Suicide Deaths



The overall age-adjusted suicide rate increased 4 percent in 2021, rising to nearly the peak rate in 2018. In 2021, 48,183 Americans died from suicide.

Drug Deaths



From 2020 to 2021, the death rate from synthetic opioid overdoses increased 23 percent, cocaine overdoses increased 23 percent, and overdoses from other psychostimulants increased by 34 percent.



The age-adjusted drug overdose mortality rate increased by 14 percent from 2020 to 2021, with increases across demographic groups. There were larger increases among certain communities of color, youth, and older adults.

Alcohol Deaths



The age-adjusted rate of deaths from alcohol-induced causes was 10 percent higher in 2021 compared with 2020. In 2021, 54,258 Americans died from alcohol-induced causes.

Percentage Change in Age-Adjusted Death Rate by Cause, 2020 to 2021

US

Kentucky

11%

Combined alcohol, drug, and suicide

7.7%

10%

Alcohol-induced

-9.3%

14%

Drug-induced

13.1%

4%

Suicide

1.2%

Percentage Change in Age-Adjusted Death Rate by Drug Type, 2020 to 2021

US

Kentucky

16%

Opioid

11.3%

23%

Synthetic opioid

13.7%

23%

Cocaine

26.3%

34%

Other Psychostimulants

37.6%

For the full report, go to:

<https://www.tfah.org/report-details/pain-in-the-nation-2023/>

Key Recommendations for Congress



Address upstream drivers of behavioral health concerns by increasing funding for the CDC Adverse Childhood Experiences, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Core State Violence and Injury Prevention, and Comprehensive Suicide Prevention programs



Improve mental health services in schools by passing the Advancing Student Services in Schools Today Act, the Campus Prevention and Recovery Services for Students Act, and the Student Mental Health Rights Act



Prevent substance misuse and overdose by increasing funding for the Drug-Free Communities Support Program, harm-reduction programs to reduce overdose and infections, and CDC efforts to monitor and prevent excessive alcohol use



Promote equity and diversity in mental health services—including through outreach to communities of color and culturally appropriate care—by passing the Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act and the Health Equity and Accountability Act



Modernize crisis care and other mental health services by expanding emergency department programs through the Effective Suicide Screening and Assessment in the Emergency Department Act and ensuring post-disaster care through the Crisis Counseling Act



Transform the mental health and substance use prevention system by strengthening enforcement efforts under the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act and passing the Strengthen Kids' Mental Health Now Act to expand the pediatric workforce

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