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Overdose Deaths Among Adolescents Georgia, 2019-2021

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Fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses have been increasing nationally and in Georgia in recent years, and especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. These increases are largely driven by the presence of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids in the drug supply; 64% of drug overdoses in the U.S. involved a synthetic opioid during 2021.

In Georgia, from 2019 to 2021, drug overdose deaths increased by 61% and fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased by **230%**, representing 2,404 and 1,294 lives lost respective in 2021.

Adults are not the only demographic affected by this alarming trend, the increase in fentanyl-involved overdose deaths among adolescents (persons aged 10-19 years) was far greater; overdose deaths rose **800%**, and increases were seen across all sexes, races, ethnicities, and geographic areas of the state.

An increasing number of fatal overdoses among adolescents are attributed to fentanyl, yet this age group lacks critical information about the risks and prevalence of this substance. In a 2021 survey of Americans aged 13 to 24 years¹, only 27% of teenagers were aware of fentanyl being used in counterfeit pills, compared with 50% of young adults. Younger participants were also less likely to consider fentanyl to be extremely dangerous (27% vs 44% for young adults). These findings underscore the need for greater awareness and education around the dangers of fentanyl and its increasing presence in the illicit drug supply.

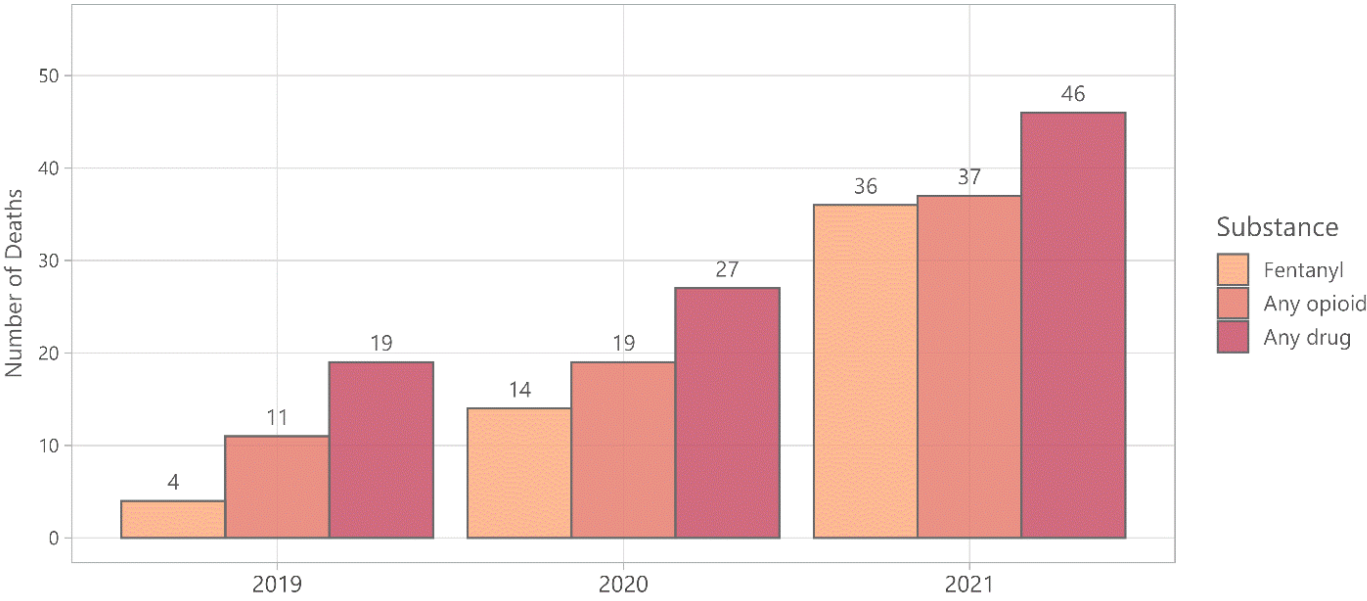
From 2019 to 2021 in Georgia:

- Total overdose deaths among adolescents (persons aged 10-19 years) increased 127%
 - Deaths involving any opioid increased 236%
 - Deaths involving fentanyl increased **800%**
 - The proportion of overdose deaths involving fentanyl increased from 21% to **78%**
- Total overdose deaths among persons aged 15-19 years increased 163%
 - Deaths involving any opioid increased 289%
 - Deaths involving fentanyl increased **775%**
 - The proportion of overdose deaths involving fentanyl increased from 25% to **80%**
- Fentanyl involved overdose deaths increased at a faster rate among adolescents compared to adults (persons aged 20+ years)
 - Deaths involving fentanyl increased 800% among adolescents, 3.7 times more than adults
 - The proportion of deaths involving fentanyl rose to 78% among adolescents, compared to 53% for adults

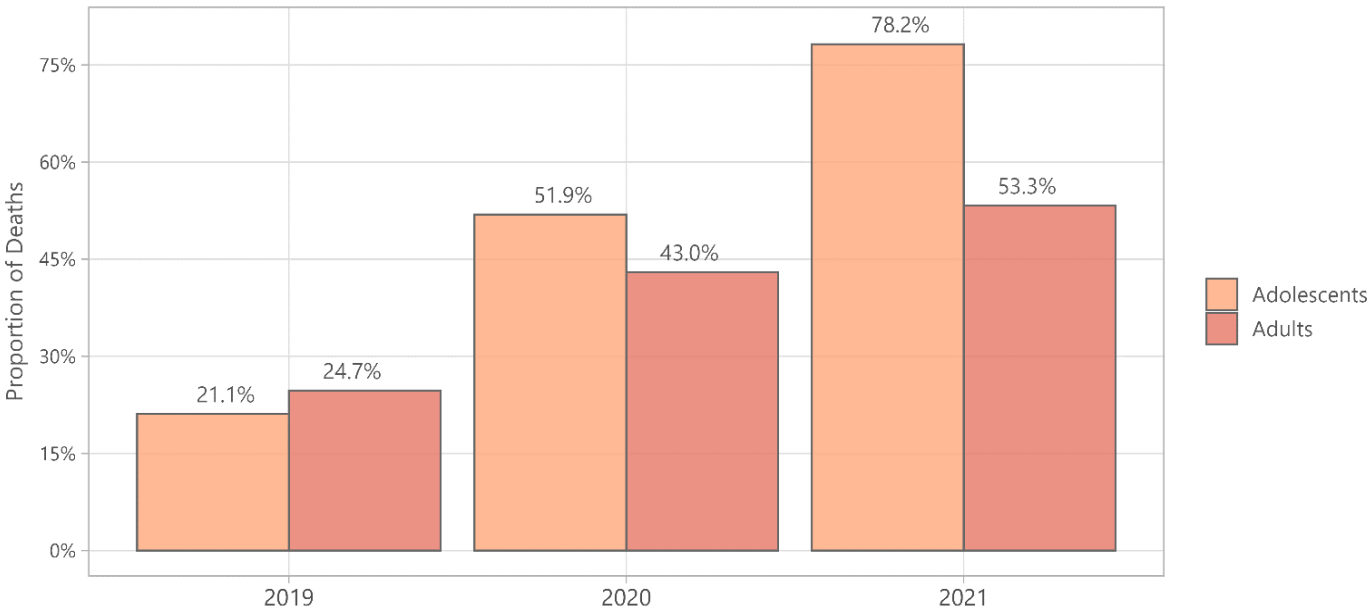
Drug Overdose Deaths Among Adolescents Ages 10-19 Years by Drug Type, Georgia, 2019 – 2021							
Drug Type	2019		2020		2021		% Change 2019-2021
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	
Any Drug	19	1.30	27	1.85	46	3.07	142%
Opioid	11	0.75	19	1.30	37	2.47	236%
Fentanyl	4	0.27	14	0.96	36	2.40	800%

Fentanyl Overdose Deaths Among Adolescents and Adults, Georgia, 2019 – 2021				
Age Group	2019	2020	2021 ^a	% Change 2019-2021
All Adolescents (ages 10-19)	4	14	36	800%
Adolescents ages 15-19	4	14	35	775%
Adults (ages 20+)	387	800	1255	224%

Overdose Deaths Among Adolescents by Drug Type Georgia, 2019-2021



Proportion of Overdose Deaths Involving Fentanyl, Georgia, 2019-2021

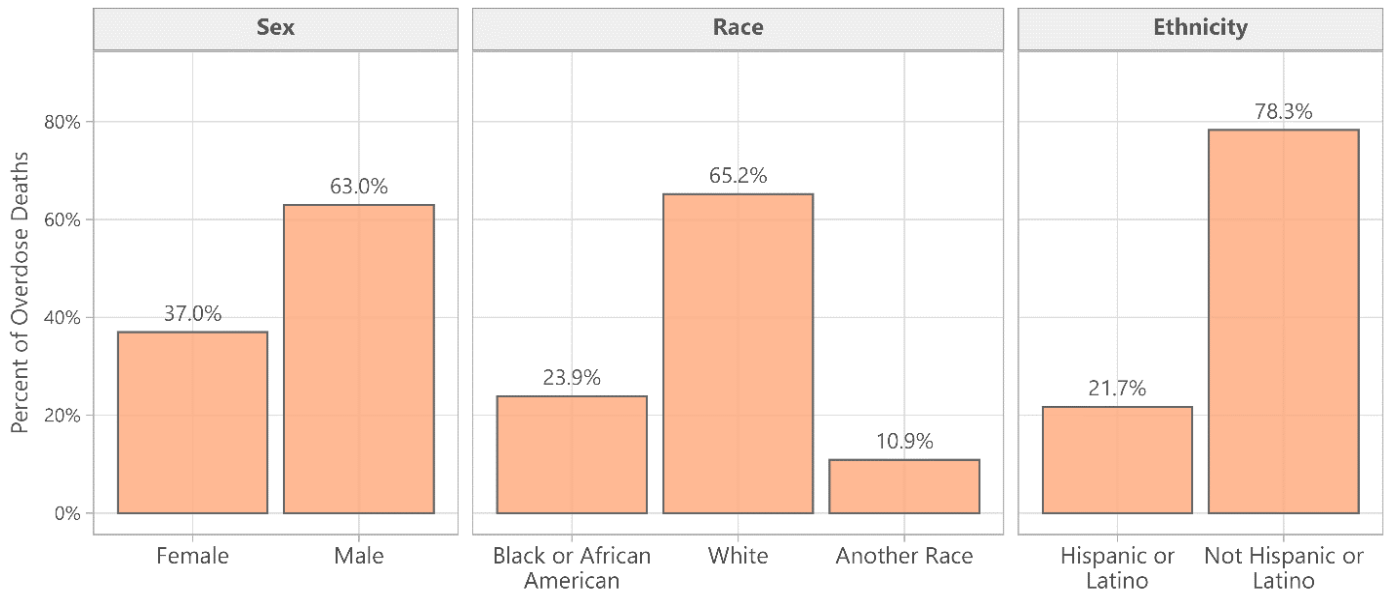


Overdose Deaths Among Adolescents by Sex, Race, and Ethnicity

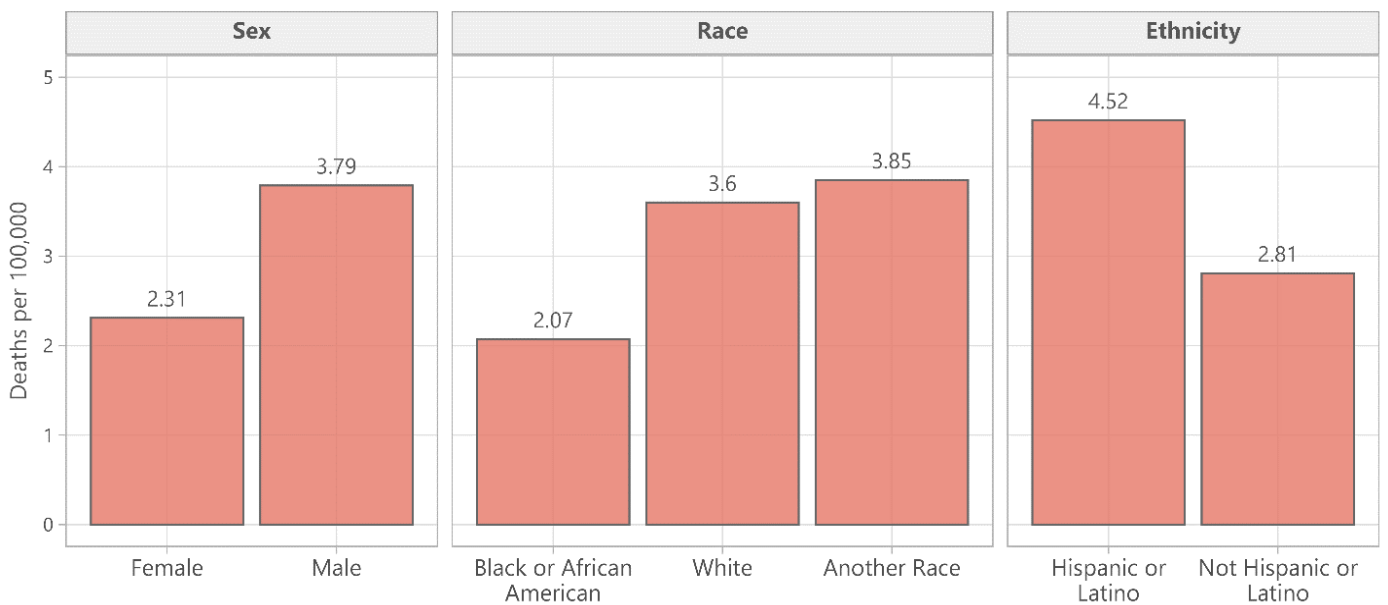
- From 2019 to 2021, overdose deaths among adolescents increased by 89% among females and 190% among males
- A greater proportion of overdose deaths occurred among males (63%) in 2021, and overdoses increased at a higher rate among males compared to females
- Overdose mortality rates among Black adolescents were 74% lower than rates for White adolescents in 2021
- From 2019 to 2021, overdose-related deaths increased at a faster pace among Black adolescents (175%) than among White adolescents (131%)
- In 2021, the overdose mortality rate among Hispanic or Latino adolescents was 1.6 times higher than the rate among non-Hispanic or non-Latino adolescents

Drug Overdose Deaths Among Adolescents Aged 10-19 Years, by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Georgia, 2019 – 2021							
Characteristic	2019		2020		2021		% Change 2019-2021
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	
Sex							
Female	9	1.25	11	1.53	17	2.31	89%
Male	10	1.35	16	2.16	29	3.79	190%
Race							
Black or African American	4	0.78	9	1.75	11	2.07	175%
White	13	1.59	16	1.96	30	3.60	131%
Other Race	2	--	2	--	5	3.85	150%
Ethnicity							
Hispanic or Latino	4	1.96	4	1.90	10	4.52	150%
Non-Hispanic or non-Latino	15	1.19	23	1.84	36	2.81	140%

Distribution of Overdose Deaths Among Adolescents by Sex, Race, and Ethnicity Georgia, 2021



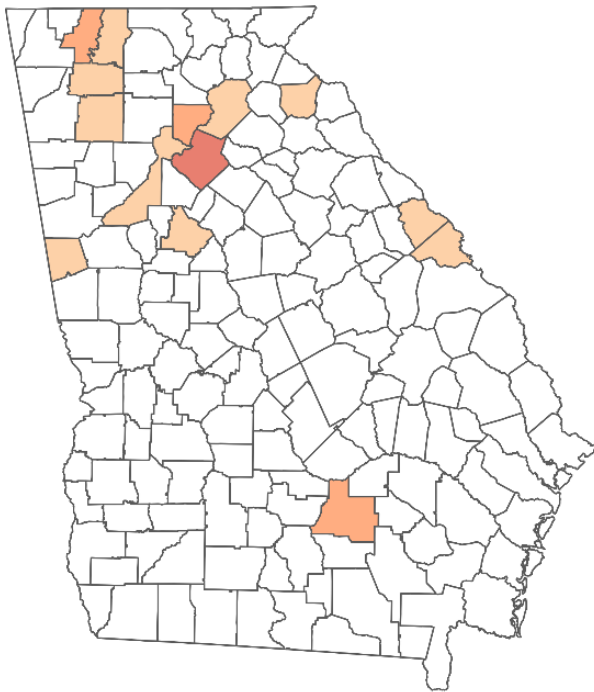
Overdose Mortality Rates Among Adolescents by Sex, Race, and Ethnicity Georgia, 2021



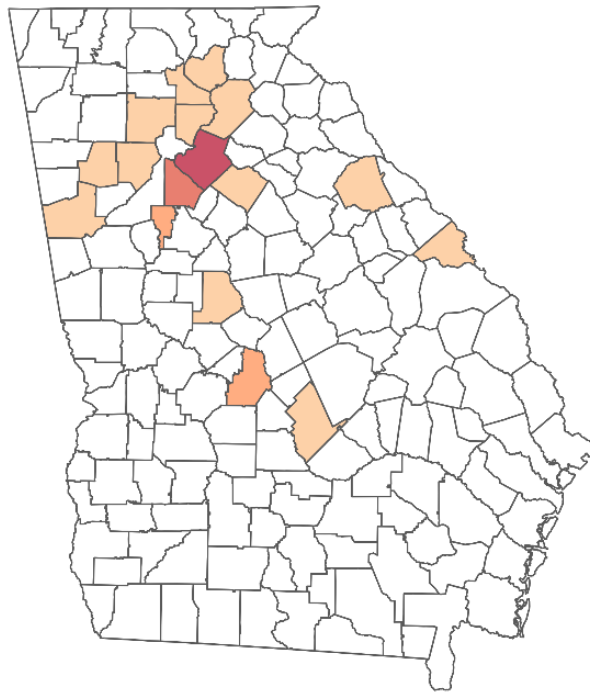
Overdose Deaths by Decedent Residence, Adolescents Aged 10-19 Years, Georgia, 2019-2021

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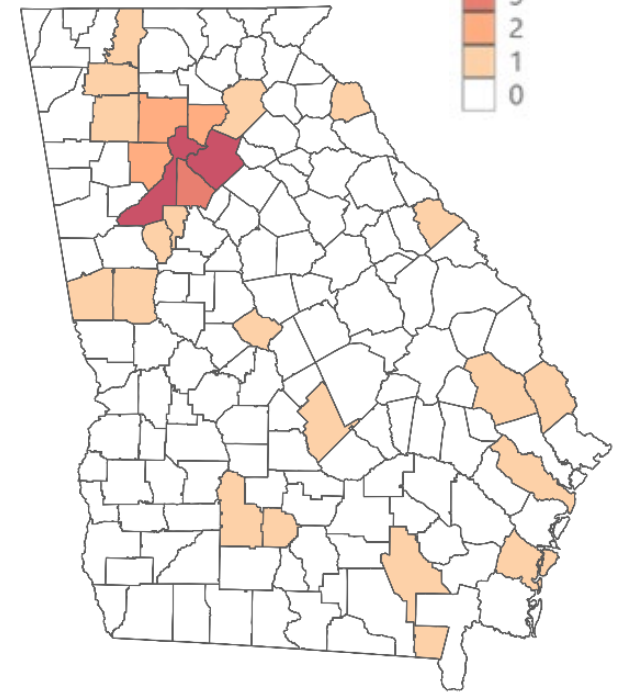
2019



2020



2021



**Drug Overdose Deaths Among Adolescents Aged 10-19 Years,
Georgia, 2017-2021**

Characteristics	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021 ^b	
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate
Total	21	1.45	16	1.10	19	1.30	27	1.85	46	3.07
Substance										
Any opioid	15	1.04	10	0.69	11	0.75	19	1.30	37	2.47
Heroin	4	0.28	2	0.14	4	0.27	3	0.21	1	0.07
Fentanyl	8	0.55	4	0.27	4	0.27	14	0.96	36	2.40
Any stimulant	9	0.62	5	0.34	7	0.48	5	0.34	6	0.40
Cocaine	5	0.35	0	0.00	3	0.21	0	0.00	1	0.07
Amphetamine	6	0.41	5	0.34	4	0.27	5	0.34	6	0.40
Age Group (5 groups)										
10-11 years	0	--	0	--	1	0.33	1	0.33	--	--
12-13 years	1	0.35	0	--	2	0.69	2	0.69	2	0.67
14-15 years	2	0.71	1	0.35	1	0.35	2	0.71	4	1.37
16-17 years	4	1.38	4	1.37	4	1.37	5	1.71	17	5.64
18-19 years	14	4.81	11	3.75	11	3.73	17	5.77	23	7.59
Age Group (2 groups)										
10-14 years	2	0.28	1	0.14	3	0.41	3	0.41	4	0.53
15-19 years	19	2.63	15	2.06	16	2.19	24	3.28	42	5.58
Sex										
Female	8	1.13	8	1.12	9	1.25	11	1.53	17	2.31
Male	13	1.77	8	1.08	10	1.35	16	2.16	29	3.79
Race										
Black or African American	1	0.20	2	0.39	4	0.78	9	1.75	11	2.07
White	20	2.44	14	1.71	13	1.59	16	1.96	30	3.60
Another Race	0	--	0	--	2	--	2	--	5	3.85
Ethnicity										
Hispanic or Latino	1	0.53	0	--	4	1.96	4	1.90	10	4.52
Not Hispanic or Latino	20	1.59	16	1.27	15	1.19	23	1.84	36	2.81

About Fatal Drug Overdose (Mortality) Data

Data Source

Overdose-involved deaths were derived from DPH Vital Records death certificates. The following data include all deaths that occurred in Georgia among Georgia residents and deaths that occurred outside of Georgia among Georgia residents, unless otherwise specified.

Case Definitions

(Note: categories are not mutually exclusive, includes only drug overdose deaths caused by acute poisoning)

Any drug overdose death

May involve any over-the-counter, prescription, or illicit drug

- Deaths with any of the following ICD-10 codes as any underlying cause of death: X40-44, X60-64, X85, Y10-14

Drug overdose death involving any opioid

Involves both prescription opioid pain relievers (e.g., hydrocodone, oxycodone, and morphine), opioids used to treat addiction (e.g., methadone), as well as heroin, opium, and synthetic opioids (e.g., tramadol and fentanyl that may be prescription or illicitly manufactured)

- Deaths with any of the following ICD-10 codes as any underlying cause of death: X40-44, X60-64, X85, Y10-14 AND one of the following:
- Any of the following ICD-10 codes as any other listed cause of death: T40.0, T40.1, T40.2, T40.3, T40.4, T40.6
- Any cause of death text field contains one of the following terms (or common misspelling): heroin, fentanyl (and fentanyl analogs), methadone, buprenorphine, butalbital, codeine, eddp, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, levorphanol, meperidine, norbuprenorphine, oxycodone, oxymorphone, tapentadol, tramadol

OR (for cases without an X or Y code in the underlying cause of death):

- Any cause of death text field contains the word "TOXIC" AND at least one of the following terms (or common misspelling): heroin, fentanyl (and fentanyl analogs), methadone, buprenorphine, butalbital, codeine, eddp, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, levorphanol, meperidine, norbuprenorphine, oxycodone, oxymorphone, tapentadol, tramadol

Drug overdose death involving synthetic opioids other than methadone

Involves synthetic opioids other than methadone (e.g., tramadol and fentanyl that may be prescription or illicitly manufactured). Note: polysubstance abuse deaths may also involve methadone or other opioids

- Deaths with any of the following ICD-10 codes as any underlying cause of death: X40-44, X60-64, X85, Y10-14 AND one of the following:
- The following ICD-10 code as any other listed cause of death: T40.4
- Any cause of death text field contains the following keywords and common misspellings: fentanyl (and fentanyl analogs), tramadol

OR (for cases without an X or Y code in the underlying cause of death):

- Any cause of death text field contains the word "TOXIC" AND at least one of the following terms (or common misspelling): fentanyl (and fentanyl analogs), tramadol

Drug overdose death involving heroin

Involves heroin. Note: polysubstance abuse deaths may also involve other opioids

- Deaths with any of the following ICD-10 codes as any underlying cause of death: X40-44, X60-64, X85, Y10-14 AND one of the following:
- The following ICD-10 code as any other listed cause of death: T40.1
- Any cause of death text field contains the following keywords and common misspellings: heroin, morphine

OR (for cases without an X or Y code in the underlying cause of death):

- Any cause of death text field contains the word "TOXIC" AND at least one of the following terms (or common misspelling): heroin, morphine

Drug overdose death involving fentanyl

Note: polysubstance abuse deaths may also involve other opioids

Any cause of death text field contains the word "TOXIC" AND at least one of the following terms (or common misspelling): fentanyl (and fentanyl analogs)

Other Definitions or Limitations

Deaths represent individual people who died in Georgia and deaths among Georgia residents outside of Georgia.

Overdose death county represents the county of residence, or the place of injury (where the overdose occurred) as specified; when the place of injury field or the county of residence field was blank the county of the death certifier was used.

Rate indicates the number of deaths among Georgia residents per 100,000 population using 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, or 2021 Census data as the denominator, and all rates are age-adjusted unless age category is presented.

Rates for categories with fewer than 5 deaths may not be accurate and are not presented in this report.

2021 death data are still considered preliminary and are likely underreported.

ICD-10 Code Description

X40-X44 (accidental poisonings by drugs), X60-X64 (intentional self-poisoning by drugs), X85 (assault by drug poisoning), Y10-Y14 (drug poisoning of undetermined intent), T40.0 (opium), T40.1 (heroin), T40.2 (natural and semisynthetic opioids), T40.3 (methadone), T40.4 (synthetic opioids, other than methadone), T40.6 (other and unspecified narcotics)

¹ Snap Inc. *Key Findings from Research on Dangers of Counterfeit Drugs and Fentanyl among Teens and Young Adults* (2021). [https://assets.ctfassets.net/Dangers of Counterfeit Drugs and Fentanyl - Key Findings.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/Dangers_of_Counterfeit_Drugs_and_Fentanyl_-_Key_Findings.pdf).