

Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths in Cook County, IL, 2018-2019

September 2021

Beginning in 2016, the Chicago Department of Public Health and the Cook County Department of Public Health have worked with the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office and Cook County Health to issue a joint report on opioid overdose deaths in Cook County. This report includes opioid-related deaths from 2018 and 2019.

OVERALL

In 2019, Cook County experienced 1,211 opioid-related overdose deaths: 855 in Chicago and 356 in suburban Cook County (SCC). The trends in opioid related deaths in Cook County differ between Chicago and SCC. The death rate in Chicago (31.6 per 100,000 individuals) was higher than the statewide rate in Illinois in 2019 (17.0 per 100,000) while the rate in SCC was lower than the statewide rate (14.1 per 100,000). Nationally, the age-adjusted rate of overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids other than methadone increased to 11.4 per 100,000 individuals, while the age-adjusted rate of overdose deaths involving heroin decreased to 4.4 per 100,000 individuals.

RACE/ETHNICITY

The rate of opioid-related overdose deaths was highest among Non-Hispanic Black or African-American individuals compared to other racial/ethnic groups in both Chicago and SCC. The Chicago rate of 50.8 deaths per 100,000 Non-Hispanic Black or African-American individuals was almost 2 times the rate of Non-Hispanic White or Caucasian individuals and over 3 times the rate of Hispanic or Latino individuals. The rate of overdose deaths for Non-Hispanic Black or African-American individuals increased by 11.6% from 2018 to 2019 in Chicago. The rate of overdose deaths for Non-Hispanic Black or African-American individuals increased by 21.9% from 2018 to 2019 in SCC as well, indicating that this group is experiencing rapidly rising risk. The SCC rate for Black or African-American individuals was more than 2 times the rate of Hispanic or Latino Individuals, but only 6.4% higher than the rate for Non-Hispanic White or Caucasian individuals. Overdose deaths decreased for Hispanic or Latino individuals in Chicago from 2018 to 2019, but increased by 25.8% in SCC.

SEX/AGE

In both Chicago and SCC, men had rates that were 3.3 and 2.9 times higher than women, respectively (see page 2). In Chicago, the 45-54 and 55-64 age ranges presented the highest rates of opioid overdoses per 100,000. In SCC, the 25-34, 35-44, and 45-54 age ranges had the highest rates of overdoses per 100,000.

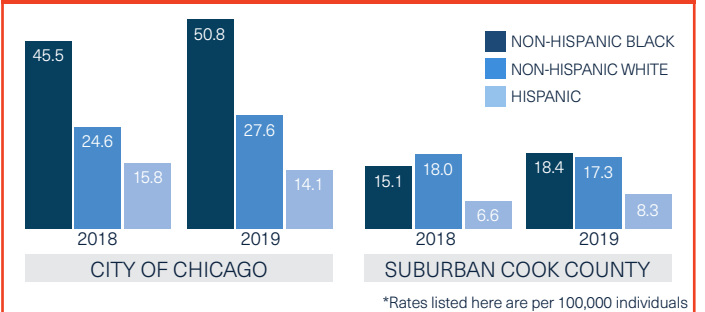
DRUG TYPE

Fentanyl was involved in most opioid-related overdose deaths in 2019 for both Chicago and SCC, at 79.8% and 70.9% of cases respectively. In Chicago, the rate of fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased from 22.5 to 25.2 per 100,000 from 2018 to 2019, an increase of 12.0%. In SCC, the rate of fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased from 9.1 in 2018 to 10.0 per 100,000 in 2019, an increase of 9.9%. The percentage of all opioid deaths involving heroin in Chicago and SCC decreased by 10.6% and 10.7% respectively. The percentage of all opioid deaths involving methadone decreased by 7.3% in Chicago and decreased by 16.2% in SCC.

Over 1,000 people in Cook County died of opioid-related overdose in 2019



Opioid-related overdose death rates for Black individuals exceeded those of all others



Overdose rates for men in Cook County were

3x

higher than those for women

Table 1. Percentage of all opioid-related overdose deaths involving specific opioids – Cook County, IL (2019)

Drug Type	City of Chicago n=855	Suburban Cook County n=356
Heroin-involved	58.6%	53.9%
Fentanyl-involved	79.8%	70.9%
Opioid pain reliever-involved ⁱ	6.4%	19.1%
Methadone-involved ⁱⁱⁱ	8.1%	5.7%

Data Source: Cook County Medical Examiner's Office.

Note: Geographic designations are based on address of incident, regardless of decedent's address of residence.

ⁱ Categories are not mutually exclusive as some deaths involved more than one type of opioid. Percentages will not add to 100%.

ⁱⁱ Opioid pain reliever: buprenorphine, codeine, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, meperidine, morphine, oxycodone, oxycodone, oxycodone, or tramadol. Although buprenorphine is included in this category, it is not possible to determine if it was prescribed for pain or opioid use disorder treatment, as it is approved for both.

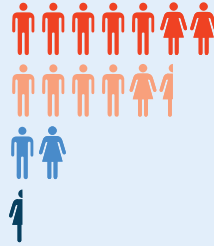
ⁱⁱⁱ It is not possible to determine if methadone was prescribed for pain, dispensed for opioid use disorder treatment, or used illicitly.

Fentanyl was involved in a majority of opioid-related overdose deaths in 2019

City of Chicago (n=855)



Suburban Cook County (n=356)



- FENTANYL-INVOLVED
- HEROIN-INVOLVED
- OPIOID PAIN RELIEVER-INVOLVED
- METHADONE-INVOLVED

Categories are not mutually exclusive as some deaths involved more than one type of opioid.

Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths

- Residence in Chicago
- Residence in Suburban Cook
- Residence outside of Cook County, Homeless, or Unknown
- Chicago
- Suburban Cook County

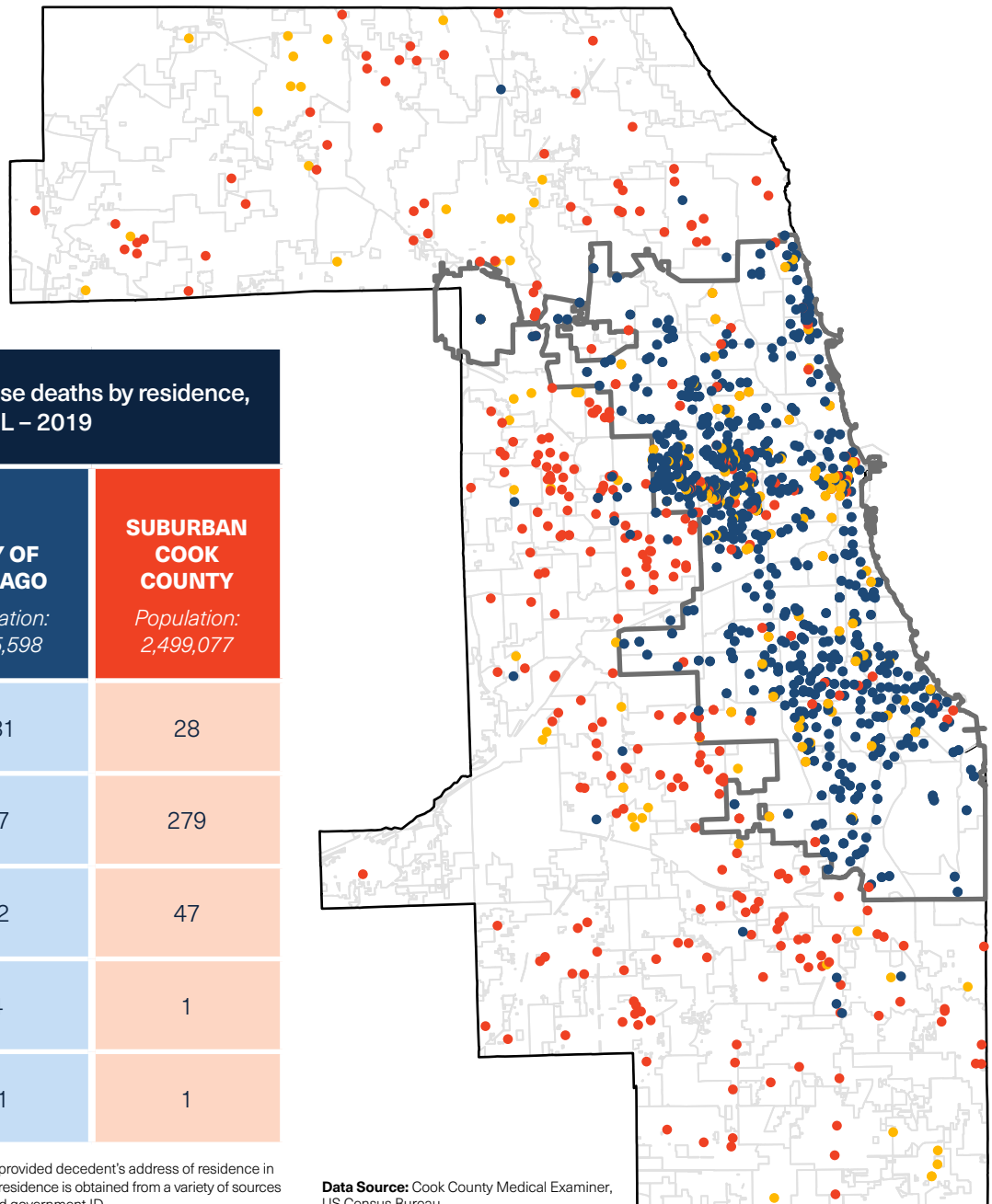


Table 2. Opioid-related overdose deaths by residence, Cook County, IL – 2019

Location of Home Residence	CITY OF CHICAGO <i>Population: 2,695,598</i>	SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY <i>Population: 2,499,077</i>
Residence in Chicago	681	28
Residence in SCC	67	279
Residence outside of Cook County	82	47
Homeless	4	1
Residence unknown	21	1

Beginning in 2016, the Cook County Medical Examiner provided decedent's address of residence in addition to address of overdose incident. The address of residence is obtained from a variety of sources including the hospital records, police records, family, and government ID.

Data Source: Cook County Medical Examiner, US Census Bureau
Note: Dots do not represent exact addresses.

Table 3. Opioid-related overdose deaths – Cook County, IL (2018– 2019)

Drug Type ¹	CITY OF CHICAGO <i>Population: 2,695,598</i>				SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY <i>Population: 2,499,077</i>			
	2018		2019		2018		2019	
	#	Rate ⁱⁱ	#	Rate ⁱⁱ	#	Rate ⁱⁱ	#	Rate ⁱⁱ
All opioids	793	28.7	855	31.6	328	13.2	356	14.1
Heroin-involved	520	18.9	501	18.6	197	8.0	191	7.6
Fentanyl-involved*	620	22.5	682	25.2	221	9.1	251	10.0
Opioid pain reliever-involved ⁱⁱⁱ	67	2.5	55	2	71	2.7	68	2.7
Methadone-involved ^{iv}	69	2.6	69	2.6	22	0.9	20	0.8
Gender								
Male	612	46.6	644	49.4	229	18.9	259	21.4
Female	181	12.9	209	15	99	7.9	97	7.3
Race-Ethnicity^v								
Non-Hispanic Black or African-American	425	45.5	483	50.8	64	15.1	79	18.4
Non-Hispanic White or Caucasian	244	24.6	260	27.6	232	18.0	232	17.3
Hispanic or Latino	121	15.8	103	14.1	31	6.6	39	8.3
Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander	<5	++	<5	++	<5	++	5	2.8+
Age								
15-24	38	9.4	28	6.9	31	9.5	30	9.2
25-34	135	26.2	117	22.7	90	28.5	78	24.7
35-44	152	40.2	163	43.1	79	23.8	81	24.4
45-54	224	66.1	278	82.1	69	18.2	89	23.5
55-64	202	76.9	212	80.7	53	17.3	62	20.2
65-74	39	25.8	53	35.1	6	3.5+	13	7.5+

Data Source: Cook County Medical Examiner's Office, US Census Bureau.

Note: Geographic designations are based on address of incident, regardless of decedent's address of residence.

i Categories are not mutually exclusive as some deaths involved more than one type of opioid.

ii Rates express the number of overdoses per 100,000 people in the population. Denominators are based on the 2010 census population. Rates are age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population.

iii Opioid pain reliever: buprenorphine, codeine, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, meperidine,

morphine, oxycodone, oxymorphone, or tramadol. Although buprenorphine is included in this category, it is not possible to determine if it was prescribed for pain or opioid use disorder treatment, as it is approved for both.

iv It is not possible to determine if methadone was prescribed for pain, dispensed for opioid use disorder treatment, or used illicitly.

+ For counts less than 20, rates may be unstable and should be interpreted with caution.

++ For counts less than 5, rates are not reported.

Reported by

Alfreda Holloway-Beth,¹ Blair Aikens,² Rishi Kowalski,¹ Ponni Arunkumar,³ Juleigh Nowinski Konchak,⁴ Steven Aks,⁴ Nhan Nguyen,¹ Nikhil Prachand,² Wilnise Jasmin,² Hanna Kite,¹ Lydia Karch,¹ and Denise Holman¹

¹ Cook County Department of Public Health

² Chicago Department of Public Health

³ Cook County Medical Examiner's Office

⁴ Cook County Health

Cook County Resources for Opioid Addiction:

- Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH): overcomeopioids.org
- Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH): bit.ly/SCCOpioids
- IL Department of Human Services (DHS) Helpline for Opioids and Other Substances: 1-833-234-6343 (HELP) or <https://helplineil.org/app/home>