

County-level Vulnerability to Overdose Deaths in West Virginia

Key Findings

Key Finding 1: Vulnerability to overdose mortality is highest in West Virginia's southern region and northern and eastern panhandles.

Vulnerability to overdose mortality was measured using deaths from all drug overdoses, not just opioids. This outcome was chosen because the share of overdose deaths attributable to opioids has decreased in recent years, while deaths involving cocaine and other psychostimulants has increased. Overdose rates vary considerably by county, from 0 in Tucker and Gilmer counties to 156.6 per 100,000 population in Cabell County (2017 data).

Key Finding 2: Within a county, a higher proportion of people reporting a disability is associated with higher numbers of overdose deaths.

The proportion of people with a disability was measured using 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS), which asks respondents if they experience deafness or serious difficulty hearing; blindness or serious difficulty seeing; serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions; serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs; difficulty dressing or bathing; and difficulty doing errands alone. People responding yes to one or more of these questions were considered to have a disability. In some areas, as many as one in three people report such a disability.

Key Finding 3: Within a county, a higher rate of drug-related exposure calls to the West Virginia Poison Center (WVPC) was associated with higher numbers of overdose deaths.

Exposure calls make up nearly three-quarters of calls received by the WVPC and are those in which exposure to a potential poison has occurred. This measure was restricted to calls in which the patient was over the age of 12 and had a reported exposure to a drug of abuse. Poison center calls may be an indicator of drug use prevalence.

Key Finding 4: Urban areas had higher numbers of overdose deaths.

The 2013 Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties is used by the National Center for Health Statistics and based on delineations from the Office of Management and Budget. The scheme places counties into one of six designations: large central metro (most urban), large fringe metro, medium metro, small metro, micropolitan, and noncore (most rural). Most counties in WV are considered noncore (26), and only Jefferson County is considered to be a large fringe metro area.

Key Finding 5: There is strong agreement in vulnerability between these overdose mortality vulnerability rankings and national assessment performed by CDC.

All counties ranking in the 20% most vulnerable to overdose death were also ranked among the 5% most vulnerable counties in the nation to rapid spread of HIV/HCV by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) national assessment.

Key Finding 6: Vulnerability to rapid spread of HIV/HCV differs from vulnerability to overdose mortality.

While many counties ranked high in vulnerability to both rapid spread of HIV/HCV and overdose mortality, there were some differences. The northern and eastern panhandles were found to be more vulnerable to overdose mortality, and the north-central area of the state more vulnerable to rapid spread of HIV/HCV. This could reflect differences in drug use-related behaviors, such as preferred drug type and method of using, across different areas of West Virginia. WV's southern counties are most vulnerable to rapid spread of HIV/HCV and drug overdose death.

Figure 1. County rankings for vulnerability to all-drug overdose mortality.

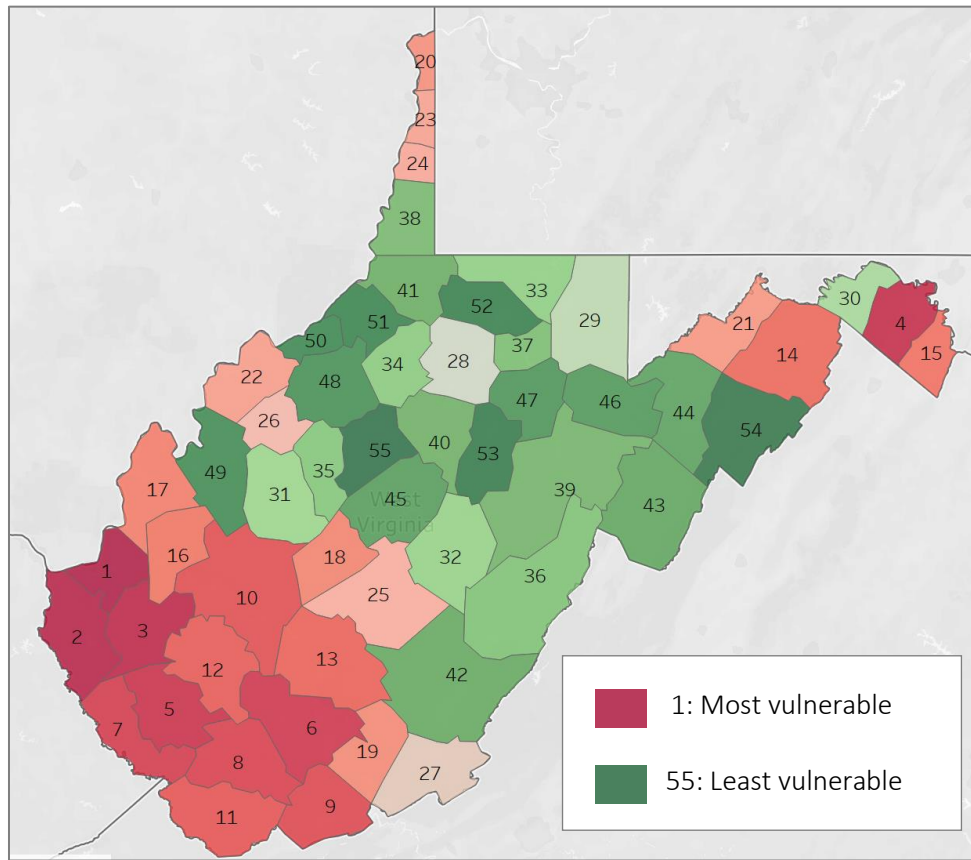


Table 1. County rankings for vulnerability to all-drug overdose mortality. Counties with an asterisk (*) were identified in CDC’s national assessment for county-level vulnerability to rapid transmission of HIV/HCV.

Most Vulnerable		More Vulnerable		Vulnerable		Less Vulnerable		Least Vulnerable	
1	Cabell*	12	Boone*	23	Brooke*	34	Doddridge	45	Braxton*
2	Wayne*	13	Fayette*	24	Ohio	35	Calhoun*	46	Tucker
3	Lincoln*	14	Hampshire	25	Nicholas*	36	Pocahontas	47	Barbour
4	Berkeley*	15	Jefferson	26	Wirt	37	Taylor*	48	Ritchie
5	Logan*	16	Putnam	27	Monroe*	38	Marshall*	49	Jackson
6	Raleigh*	17	Mason*	28	Harrison	39	Randolph	50	Pleasants
7	Mingo*	18	Clay*	29	Preston	40	Lewis	51	Tyler*
8	Wyoming*	19	Summers*	30	Morgan*	41	Wetzel	52	Marion
9	Mercer*	20	Hancock*	31	Roane*	42	Greenbrier	53	Upshur
10	Kanawha*	21	Mineral	32	Webster*	43	Pendleton	54	Hardy
11	McDowell*	22	Wood	33	Monongalia	44	Grant	55	Gilmer

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