



COVID-19 and Mental Health in Indiana

Examining How Hoosiers are Adjusting to the New Normal



During the Pandemic, 3 in 10 Adults in the United States have Reported Symptoms of Anxiety or Depressive Disorder

In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic quickly changed the lives of Americans with social distancing, fear of infection, and economic instability.⁵ In 2019, reports showed that 1 in 10 adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder.⁴ In comparison to during the pandemic, reports have shown that 3 in 10 adults in the U.S have reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder.⁴ Indiana saw a similar rate, with 27.4% of adults reporting symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder during the pandemic.⁴ With this being evidence for worsening mental health conditions in Indiana, this report will explore the rates of suicide and overdose emergency department (ED) visits and deaths from overdoses and suicides.

2019 Pre-COVID-19 Pandemic



1 in 10 adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder

2020 COVID-19 Pandemic



3 in 10 adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS DURING THE PANDEMIC



Isolation



Fear of Infection



Economic Hardship



Decreased access to mental health services



School closures



Loss of family member or friend

Are Patients Delaying Emergency Care Visits Due to the Pandemic?

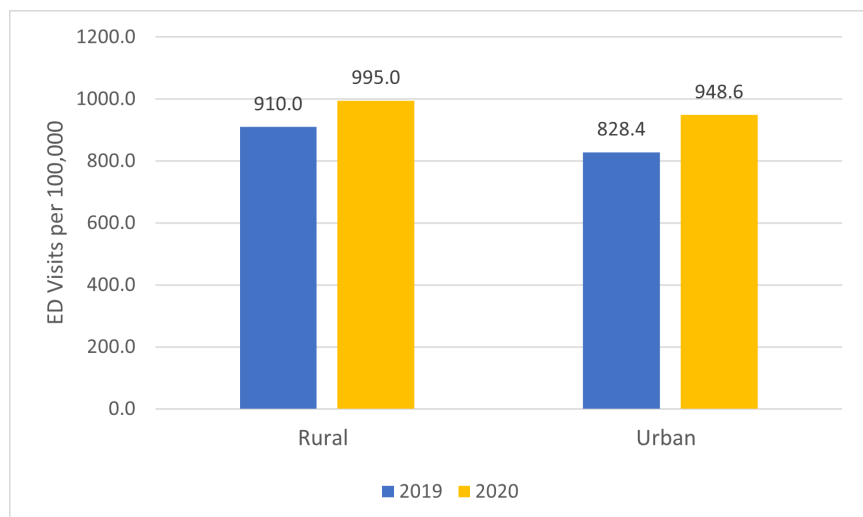
By analyzing 2019 and 2020 ED discharge data, it was identified that 3 in 4 counties saw a decrease in ED visits for overdoses. This is a concern as fear of the virus may have decreased access to treatment, resulting in unmet mental health needs.³

3 OUT OF 4

COUNTIES REPORTED AN INCREASE IN ED VISITS FOR OVERDOSES

Overdose ED Visits:

Rural Vs. Urban Classification

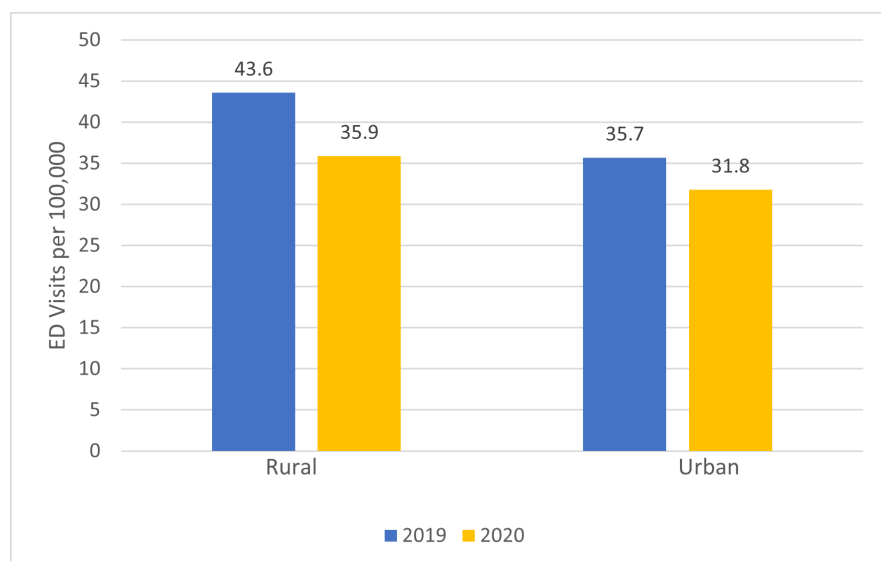


*All rates were calculated using hospital discharge outpatient and inpatient emergency services data

When comparing between 2019 and 2020, the rate of overdose ED visits have increased in both rural and urban areas. While urban areas are more often associated with higher rates of mental health problems, individuals living in rural areas may have less accessibility to hospitals, mental health services, and preventative care than their urban counterparts. This comparison gives insight into the burden COVID-19 has placed on both the rural and urban communities within Indiana, helping to inform future prevention, intervention, and treatment efforts across the state.

Suicide ED Visits: Rural Vs. Urban Classification

Unlike overdose ED visits, the rate of suicide ED visits decreased between the years 2019 and 2020 in both rural and urban areas. A widespread fear of infection, paired with a limited number of hospital beds, left many individuals delaying emergency care for serious mental health challenges and medical conditions.



Through an analysis of 2019 and 2020 Vital Records mortality data, sixty-two percent of counties in Indiana reported an increase in overdose deaths from 2019 to 2020, indicating that the pandemic potentially exacerbated stressors and problems in accessing needed services.

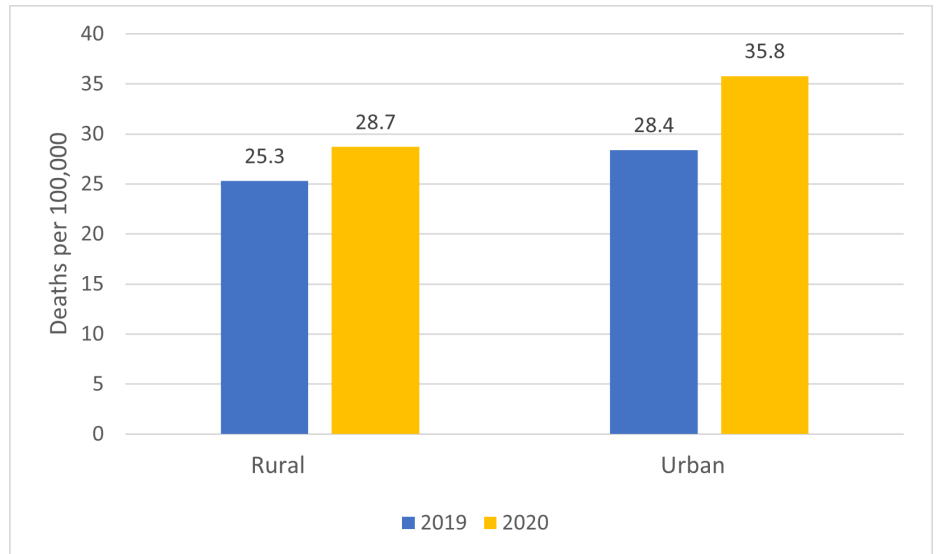
62%

of counties reported an increase in overdose deaths from 2019-2020

Overdose Deaths: Rural Vs. Urban Classification

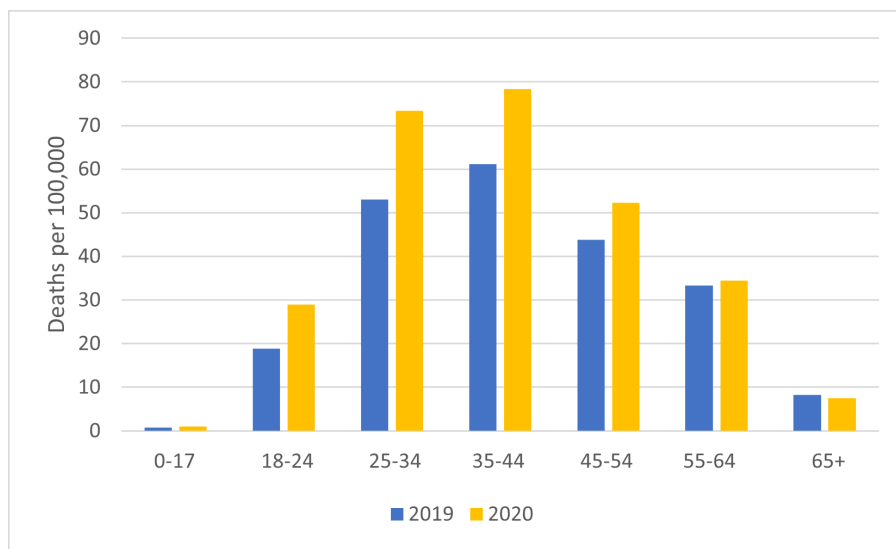
When comparing 2019 and 2020, both rural and urban counties reported an increase in overdose deaths. The increase in deaths was more substantial for urban counties.

The pleasurable feelings associated with drug usage cause reinforcement of unhealthy behaviors. Addiction is a disease of isolation, which aggravates depression and anxiety. Substance use was a method that many people may have used as a way to cope with the burden of stress and negative emotions related to COVID-19.¹



*All rates were calculated using Indiana 2019 and 2020 Vital Records data. Deaths from 2020 will be finalized September 2021.

Overdose Deaths by Age Group, 2019-2020



Every age group, except for ages 65 and older, experienced an increase in overdose deaths from 2019 to 2020. The age groups of 25-34 and 35-44 saw the largest increases in overdose deaths in 2020 compared to 2019.

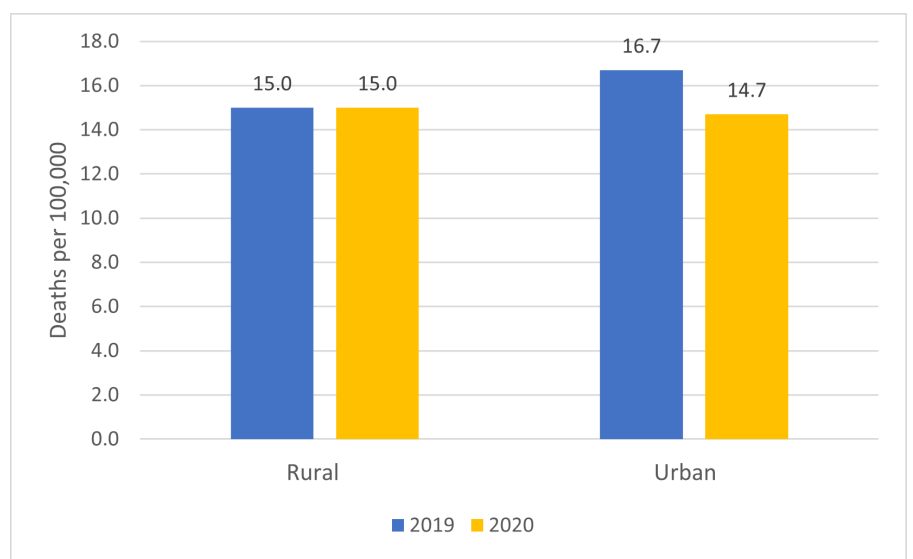
Though less than the number of overdose deaths, Indiana counties reported a forty percent increase in suicide deaths from 2019 to 2020. This highlights the devastating mental health burden that the stress and negative emotions surrounding COVID-19 placed on Hoosiers.

40%

of counties reported an increase in suicide deaths from 2019-2020

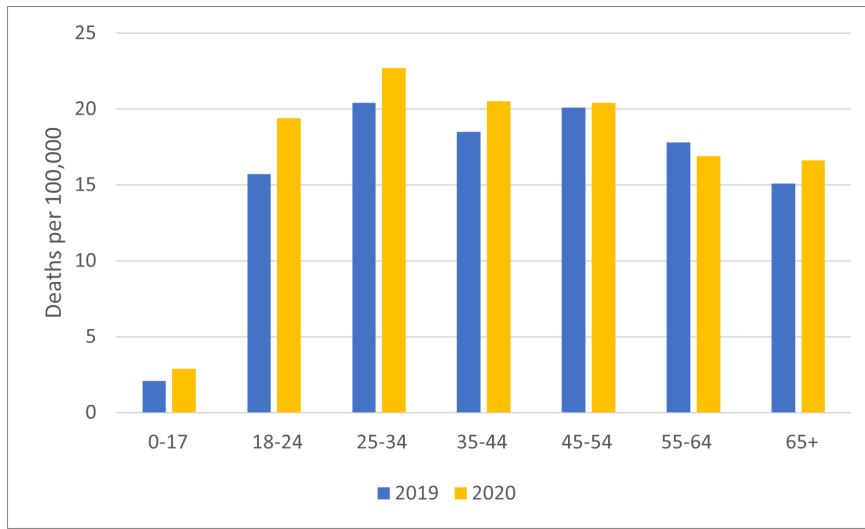
Suicide Deaths: Rural Vs. Urban

When comparing 2019 and 2020, the rate of suicide deaths in urban counties of Indiana roughly stayed the same. In rural counties within Indiana, there was a small increase in the rate of suicide deaths, indicating that the pandemic may have had implications on residents in rural counties accessing mental health services due to cost, availability, accessibility, and stigma.



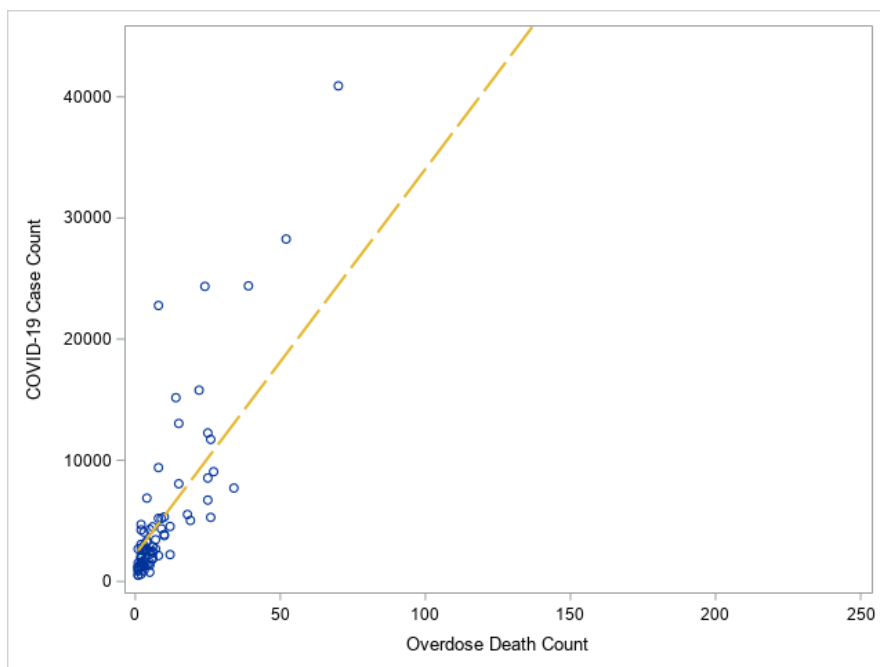
A sense of community cohesion and belonging is a protective factor against suicide risk. It is possible that suicide deaths did not see much of a change from 2019 to 2020 due to a "we're all in this together" mentality.²

Suicide Deaths by Age Group, 2019-2020



Younger age groups experienced a slight increase in the rate of suicide deaths from 2019 to 2020. These rates may indicate the exacerbated impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ongoing children's mental health crisis seen across the last decade.

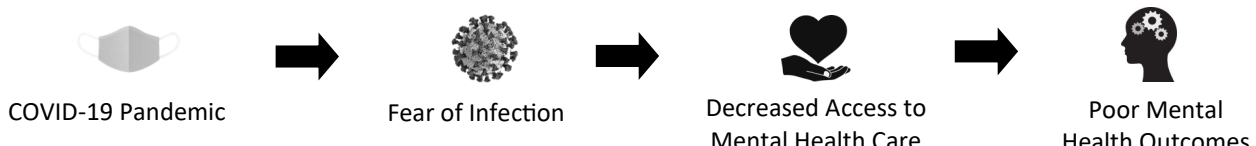
IS THERE A CORRELATION BETWEEN COVID-19 CASE COUNTS AND OVERDOSE DEATHS?



This graph represents COVID-19 and overdose death counts from January to June 2020. With an increase in COVID-19 cases for certain counties, there is also an increase in overdose deaths, thus indicating a positive correlation. It is important to note that there is no data to support that high COVID-19 case counts caused the increase in overdose deaths.

Conclusions and Interpretations

Visits to the ED within Indiana, specifically for suicides and overdoses, decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic likely due to fear of infection. Overdose deaths drastically increased in 2020 compared to 2019. These high rates demonstrate the need for public health and harm reduction strategies for substance use, especially during times of increased stress and social isolation, when it is more difficult to receive treatment.¹ Though suicides stayed roughly the same in 2019 when compared to 2020, increases seen among younger age groups and within rural counties indicate the need for professionals to intervene among vulnerable populations. There is a possibility that there could be a peak in suicide deaths in 2021 due to the pandemic's economic impact.³



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To **promote**, **protect**, and **improve** the health and safety of all Hoosiers

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