



# Milwaukee County OD-PHAST

## City-County Heroin, Opioid and Cocaine Task Force



June 7, 2022

Constance Kostelac, Amy Parry & Nicole Fumo,  
Medical College of Wisconsin

Sara Schreiber, Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office



## Background

- 3-year, grant funded project through federal Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)
- Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP)
- County-level through Medical Examiner's Office
- Focus on preventing overdoses and fatal overdoses in particular
  - Critical with over 540 fatal overdoses in 2020 and over 640 fatal overdoses in 2021
- Bringing multi-disciplinary partners together

# OD-PHAST Capacity Building

1

Expand the social worker positions at the medical examiner's office and the role to include interviews with next of kin\*

2

Add a toxicology staff member at the ME Office to increase capacity to deliver timely toxicology findings

3

Connect with the Milwaukee Community Justice Council's Executive Team to expand capacity for recommendation implementation

\*Update: With the expanded resources, contact is attempted with next of kin for all suspected overdose deaths to offer resources. Next of kin interviews have recently been initiated.

# OD-PHAST Guiding Principles

North Star: Our shared goal is to reduce overdoses in Milwaukee County.

We recognize substance use disorder as a chronic, treatable disease.

We will use multi-sector data responsibly to inform response strategies.

We share accountability for reducing overdoses.

# OD-PHAST Composition

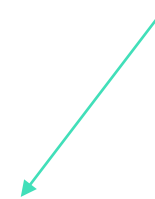
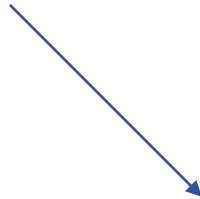
## **Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) Team**

Multi-disciplinary, in-depth review of individual fatalities to identify gaps in service or barriers to care

## **Data Strategy Team (DST)**

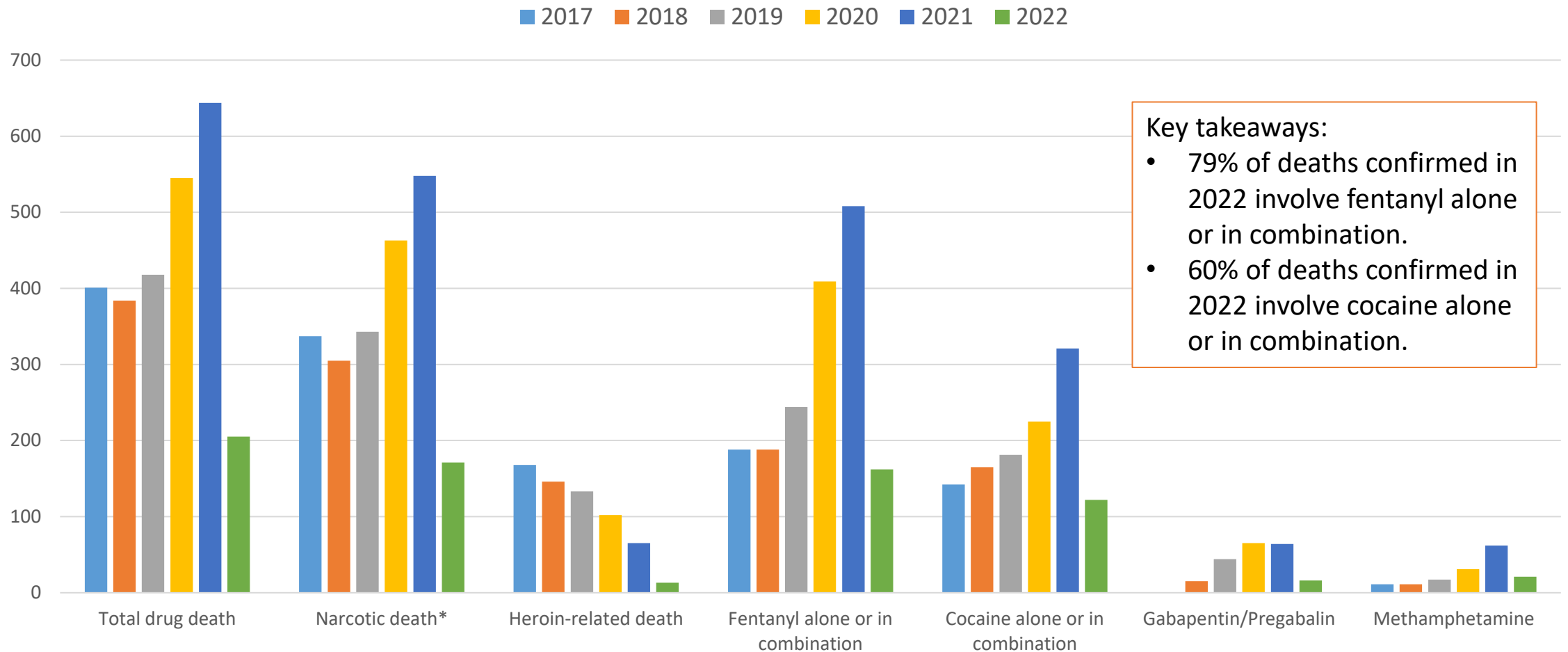
Multi-disciplinary, analysis of near real-time aggregate data to identify trends in overdose and substance use disorder care and treatment

**Shared Goal**  
Develop and implement recommendations to prevent future overdoses



# Confirmed Drug Deaths, Milwaukee County, through early June

(sent by the ME office 6/2/2022)



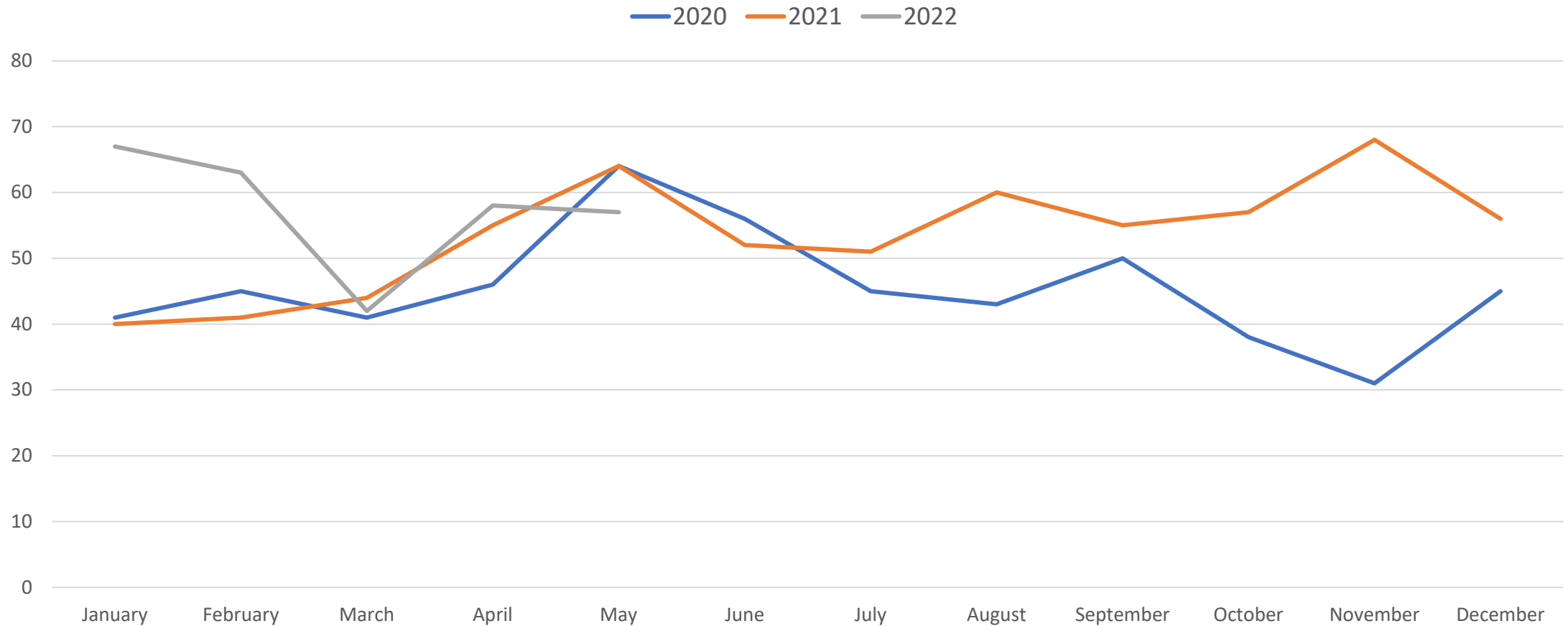
\*Narcotic drug deaths are any in which opioids (morphine, heroin, etc.) or synthetic opioids (oxycodone, fentanyl, etc.) are involved

# Comparison of 2021 to 2022 (sent by the ME office on 6/1/2022)

2021 (Jan.–May) (confirmed drug deaths)	2022 (Jan. – May) (confirmed + suspected drug deaths)	% change
244	287: 202 confirmed + 85 pending toxicology	18% increase

# Comparison of 2020 and 2021 confirmed drug deaths to 2022 confirmed plus suspected drug deaths

(as of 6/1/2022)





# Milwaukee County fatal overdose summary, 2017-2021

---

Data provided by Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office

# Methodology

- Includes all deaths indicated as drug deaths by the forensic pathologists at the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office.
- Includes all manners (accident, suicide, homicide, undetermined)

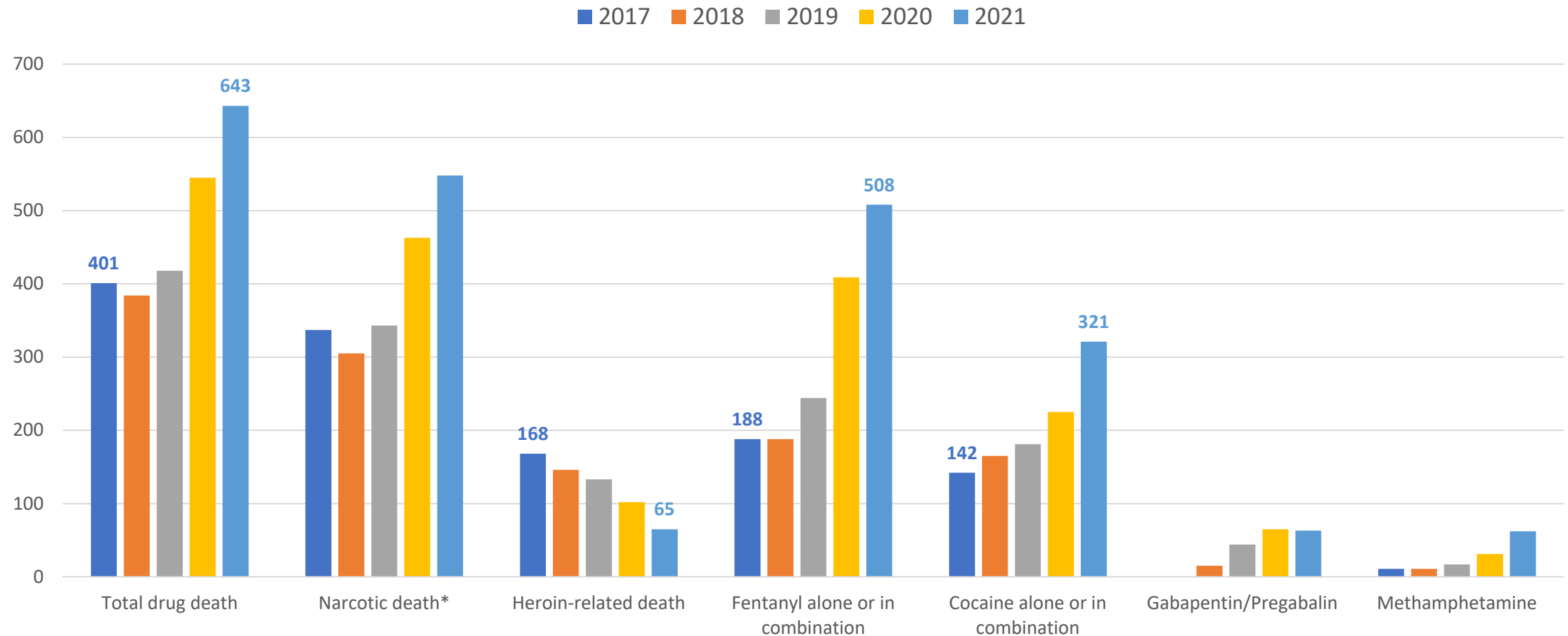
Accident	Suicide	Homicide	Undetermined
94.6%	3.6%	0.2%	1.7%

- Includes all drug deaths that occurred in Milwaukee County regardless of where the decedent resided

Milwaukee Co. resident	Out of county resident
93%	7%

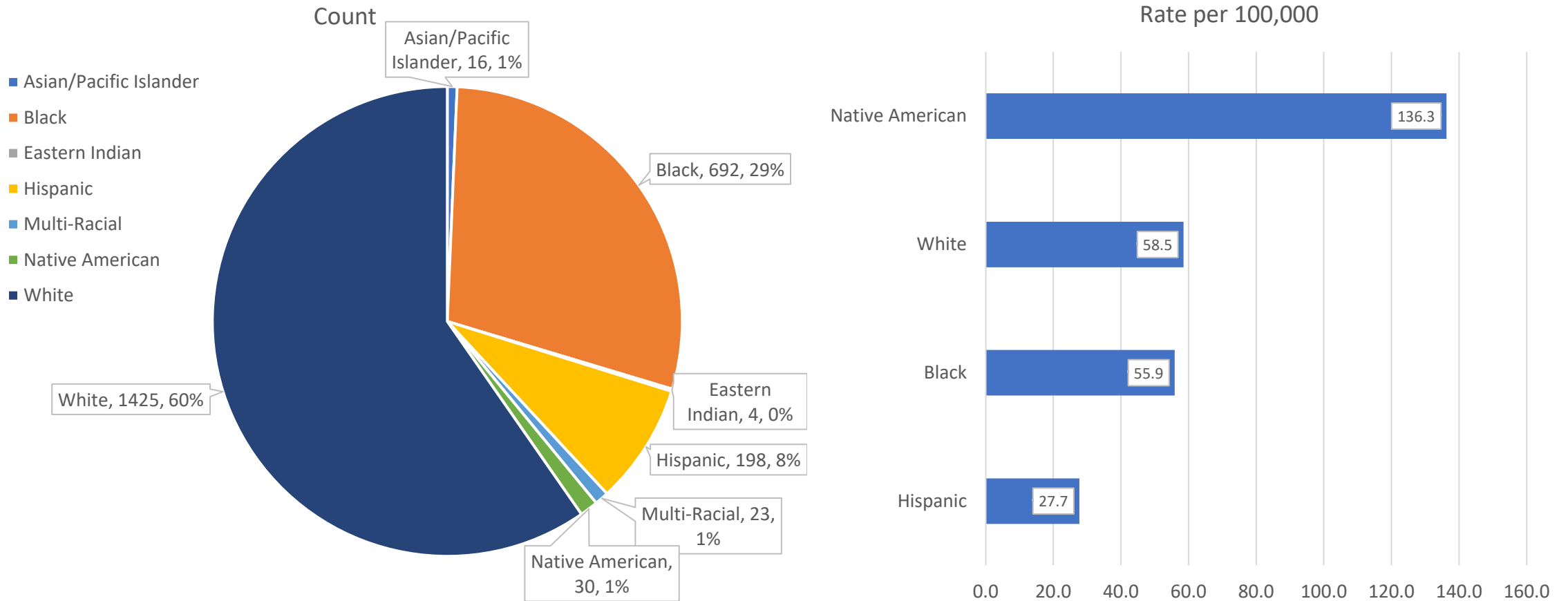
- Race and Hispanic ethnicity are combined in ME data [Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Eastern Indian, Hispanic, Multi-racial, Native American, White]

Drug deaths by substance type, present alone or in combination with other substances. From 2017 to 2021, fentanyl involvement increased 170%, heroin decreased 61%, & cocaine increased 126%. While in 2017, just under half of drug deaths involved fentanyl, by 2021 79% of deaths involved fentanyl. In addition, 50% of deaths in 2021 involved cocaine alone or in combination.



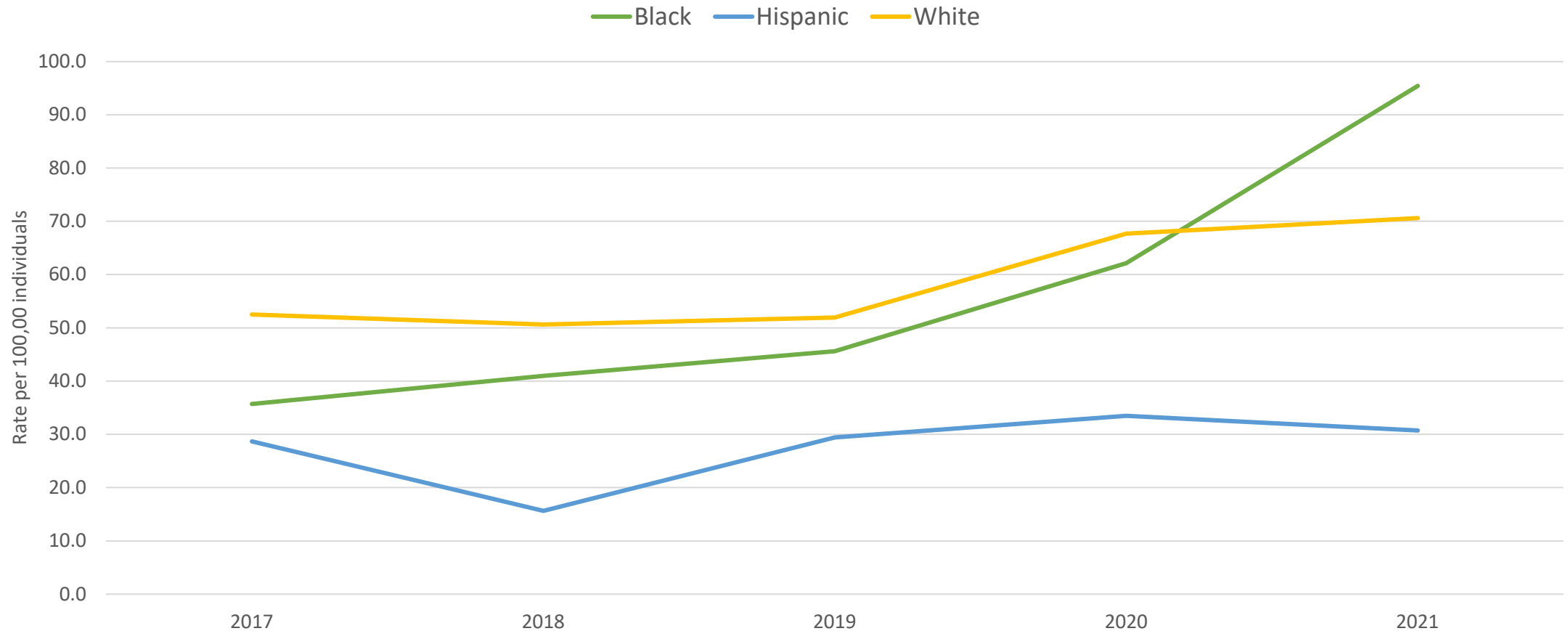
\*Narcotic drug deaths are any in which opioids (morphine, heroin, etc.) or synthetic opioids (oxycodone, fentanyl, etc.) are involved

From 2017-2021, the highest number of drug deaths was among White individuals, while the highest rate relative to the population was among Native Americans.\*  
The rate among White and Black individuals was similar.



\* Small population counts can make estimation of accurate rates difficult.

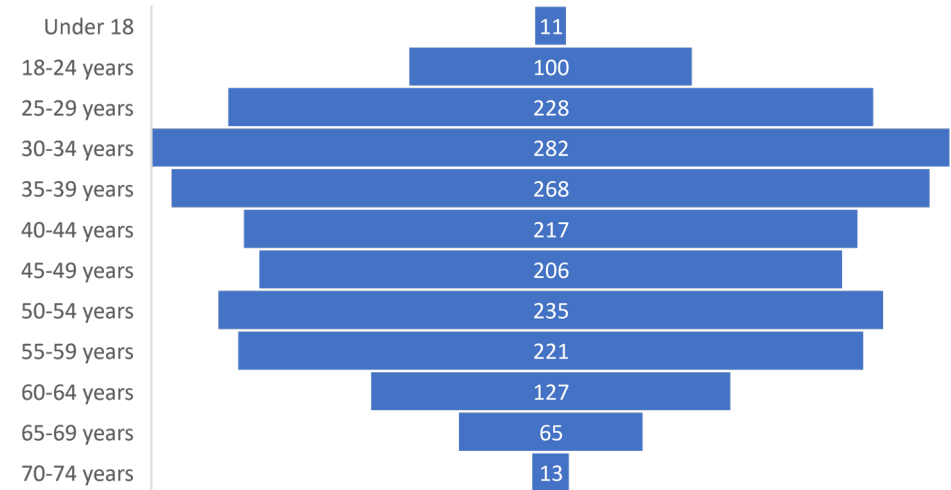
From 2017-2020, the rate of drug deaths was higher among White individuals compared to Black and Hispanic individuals. In 2021, the rate of drug deaths for Black individuals surpassed the rate for White and Hispanic individuals.



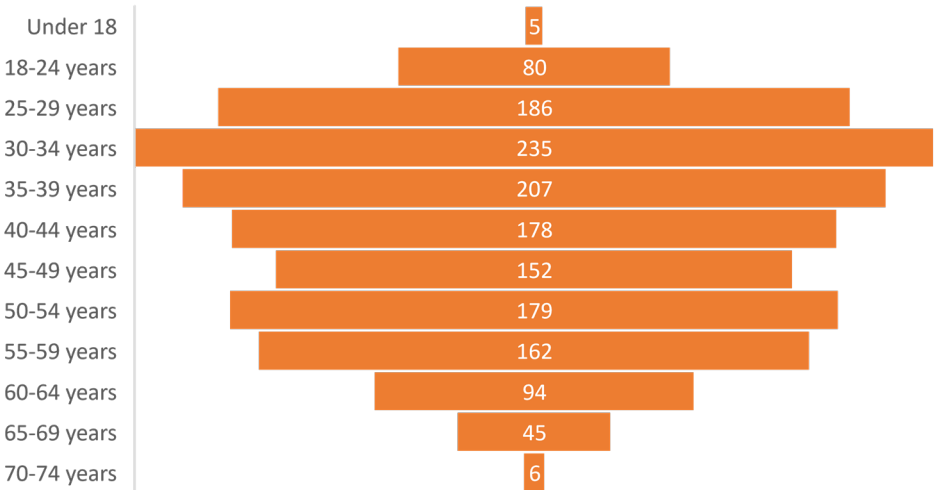
Included groups with five or more deaths for any given year.

Most drug deaths involving a narcotic, fentanyl specifically, were among individuals ages 25-59 years. Deaths involving cocaine were highest among individuals ages 35-39 and 55-59 years. Most deaths involving methamphetamine were among individuals ages 25-44 years.

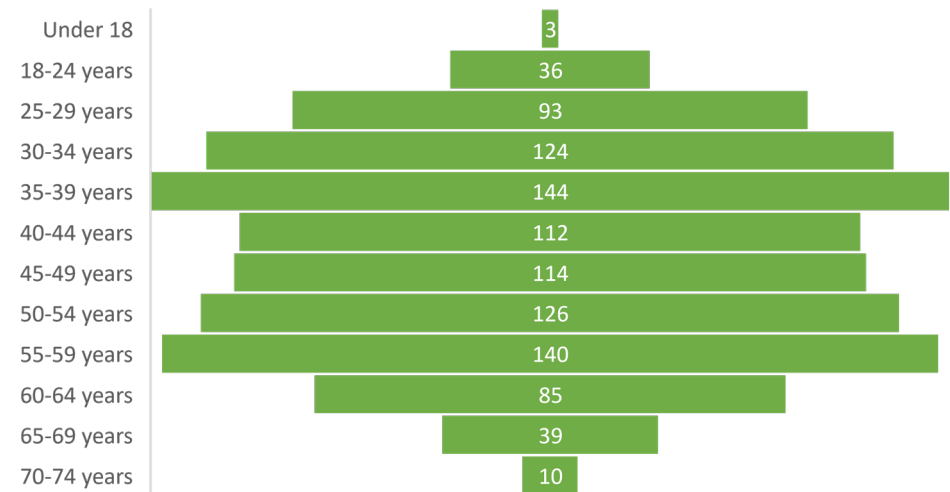
Narcotic involved, 2017-2021



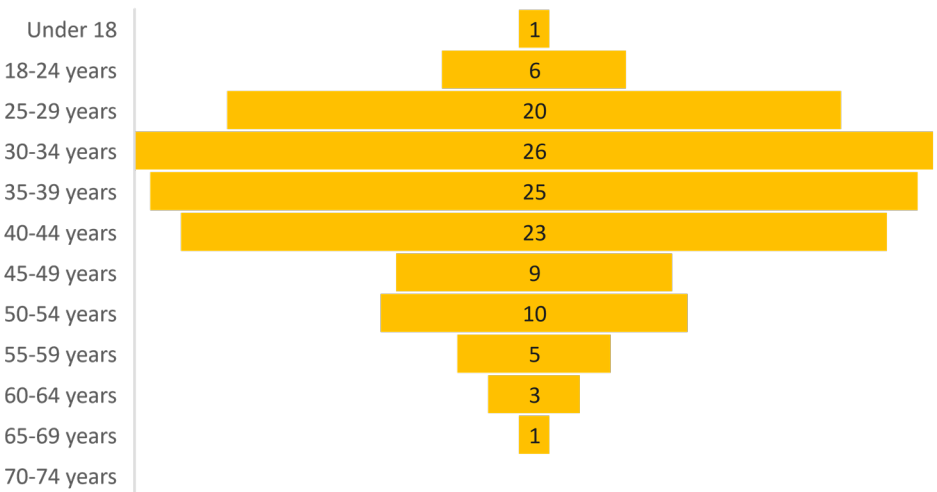
Fentanyl involved, 2017-2021



Cocaine involved, 2017-2021



Methamphetamine involved, 2017-2021



# Substance trends by race and Hispanic ethnicity

Examined these trends by age group within each group (White, Black, Hispanic, and Native American):

- Narcotic + cocaine
- Fentanyl + cocaine
- Heroin + cocaine
- Cocaine without a narcotic
- Narcotics other than fentanyl or heroin
- Fentanyl without heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, or gabapentin

Selected starting and concluding age group to capture most deaths. *Exclusion of a specific age group does not indicate deaths did not occur in that age group.*

# Trends by demographic group, 2017-2021

For all groups, the number of deaths involving fentanyl alone or in combination rose from 2017 to 2021.

- 330% increase among Black individuals
- 52% increase among Hispanic individuals
- 129% increase among White individuals

The number of deaths involving cocaine alone or in combination also rose.

- 192% increase among Black individuals
- 92% increase among Hispanic individuals
- 75% increase among White individuals

The number of deaths involving heroin has declined.

- 33% decrease among Black individuals
- 60% decrease among Hispanic individuals
- 70% decrease among White individuals



# Increases in deaths involving cocaine and fentanyl

**In 2021, most deaths involving cocaine also involved fentanyl.**

71% Black  
individuals

84% Hispanic  
individuals

87% White  
individuals

## Action team goal

Implement strategies and recommendations for change to reduce the likelihood of future overdose incidents

# Recommendation update - DST

Action team	Recommendation	Update
<b>Education and awareness action team</b>	Develop a social media package for overdose prevention and education that may be used by community partners. (Has evolved to be more broad education and awareness materials, with a focus on fentanyl.)	Planning to carry out listening sessions in Milwaukee County with specific target populations to gain an understanding of community awareness involving the presence of fentanyl, co-occurring substance use and related aspects of community-level trends. Also exploring the possibility of conducting some interviews with individuals who are incarcerated in Milwaukee County. The information will be used to help develop the social media package
<b>Fentanyl action team</b>	Investigate the co-occurrence of cocaine and fentanyl in overdose incidents in Milwaukee County to tailor prevention and intervention strategies.	Implementing a pilot program with NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) to test substance residue at fatal overdose scenes. Scene investigators will be taking the samples and they will be mailed NIST with an approximate testing turnaround of 24-48 hours. May lead to a larger project to purchase an instrument for local use.
<b>Treatment and support services action team</b>	Increase public support for additional treatment locations within the city of Milwaukee.	DST focused the most recent quarter on understanding aspects of treatment within Milwaukee, including resources through county services such as BHS and peer support programs. Action team has developed additional recommendations from this process.

# Recommendation update - OFR

## OFR Recommendations

- Approximately 10 recommendations completed in the past year
- June meeting focused on prioritizing newer recommendations
- Wide range at both the local and the state level
  - State recommendations will potentially go to the State OFR Advisory Group
  - Local recommendations may need support from the taskforce or other groups such as the Milwaukee Community Justice Council
  - Recommendations can also be helpful as information related to priorities for change and implementation of funding



# Milwaukee County OD-PHAST Update

## Questions/Comments?

June 7, 2022

Constance Kostelac, Amy Parry & Nicole Fumo,  
Medical College of Wisconsin

Sara Schreiber, Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office