



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

# Harm Reduction Services, 2024

The Kentucky Department for Public Health is dedicated to advancing harm reduction strategies that enhance the health and safety of all Kentuckians.



**Kentucky Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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## Introduction

The Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) has supported and facilitated the expansion of Harm Reduction Services throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky since the legalization of Syringe Services Programs (SSP) in 2015 through [Senate Bill 192](#). Guided by scientific evidence, harm reduction strategies demonstrate a decrease in overdose deaths, a decrease in infectious disease transmission rates and improved health outcomes for people who use drugs. It is essential to address structural factors through a syndemic approach by recognizing that there is an interconnectedness of substance use, overdose, HIV, and hepatitis C. This work would not be possible without Local Health Departments and their dedication to providing supportive services to people who use drugs in their community.

### What Does this Report Cover?

This report provides an overview of Harm Reduction Services provided by Local Health Departments to anonymous participants in Kentucky between January and December 2024. These data are self-reported by participants, collected through the electronic KY Harm Reduction Services REDCap Survey, and managed by the KDPH Harm Reduction Epidemiologist. These data represent a sample of the information collected by participants receiving Harm Reduction Services in Kentucky and was published in April 2026. This report will be revised and published on an annual basis.



## Where Can I Learn More?



KDPH Harm Reduction Branch



Kentucky Syringe Services Programs



Kentucky Naloxone Saturation Strategic Plan 2025-2026



Find Naloxone Now Kentucky



Find Help Now KY



Find Mental Health Now Kentucky



Find Recovery Housing Now



Never Use Alone - Never Use Alone National



KY HELP Call Center Operation UNITE



Xylazine Fact Sheet - July 2023



2024 Drug Overdose and Related Comorbidities County Profiles

[KDPH Harm Reduction Branch](#)

[Kentucky Syringe Services Programs](#)

[Kentucky Naloxone Saturation Strategic Plan 2025-2026](#)

[Find Naloxone Now Kentucky](#)

[Find Help Now Kentucky](#)

[Find Mental Health Now Kentucky](#)

[Find Recovery Housing Now](#)

[Never Use Alone- Never Use Alone National](#)

[Operation UNITE KY Help Call Center](#)

[Xylazine Fact Sheet- July 2023](#)

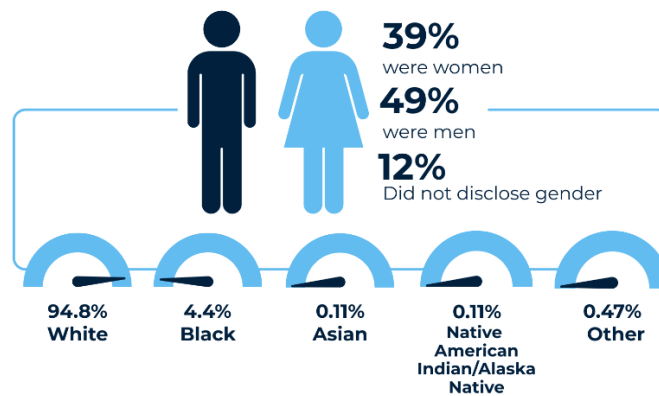
[2024 Drug Overdose and Related Comorbidities County Profiles](#)



## Demographics of Participants Reached through Local Health Departments

Harm reduction is an important component of Kentucky’s comprehensive approach to addressing substance use through prevention, treatment, and recovery, and empowering people to reach their own goals through incremental change. People who use drugs and their families are who make up harm reduction participants. Providing services for individuals who make up the Black community, Asian community, Hispanic community, and White community. Of the Kentuckians that received harm reduction services, 39% identified as women and 49% identified as men. Serving all individuals across the Commonwealth is essential to advancing transformative work that improves drug user health and reduces overdose.

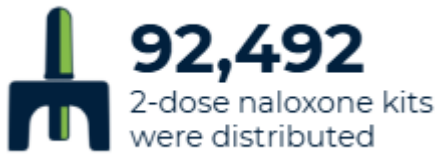
### Of Kentucky Local Health Department Harm Reduction Participants:



## Services Provided by Local Health Departments

Harm reduction emphasizes engaging directly with people who use drugs to prevent overdose and infectious disease transmission; improve physical, mental, and social well-being; and offer low-barrier options for accessing health care services. These low-barrier options are important to creating a robust referral service. Participants can receive referrals for treatment services, PrEP, HIV testing, and Hep C testing. Wound Care kits are also distributed by harm reduction programs to prevent further injuries. These, in tandem with community-level partners, help create well-rounded services for people who use drugs and their families.

## Naloxone Distribution



According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), naloxone is a medication that temporarily reverses an opioid overdose. It works by blocking the effects of opioids on the brain receptors. In Kentucky, this lifesaving medication is largely dispensed by the Kentucky Pharmacy Education and Research Foundation to

statewide partners such as Local Health Departments and Community-Based Organizations who distribute to people most likely to witness an overdose. Through the [Kentucky Naloxone Saturation Strategic Plan](#) and [FindNaloxoneNowKY.org](#), access to naloxone in Kentucky has steadily increased.

## Fentanyl Test Strip Decriminalization



Drug checking test strips have become a very important Harm Reduction strategy, and the [2023 decriminalization of Fentanyl Test Strips](#) in Kentucky has removed legal barriers. Fentanyl Test Strips can help individuals understand if fentanyl is in a substance before they use it. Fentanyl is an extremely potent opioid that may be

added to drugs like heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and pills. Fentanyl Test Strips aren't perfect, and individuals can still overdose even when the strip is negative due to a false result, but these are a recommended overdose prevention strategy by the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#).

## Other Harm Reduction Services Provided to Participants by Kentucky Local Health Departments



## Community Level Harm Reduction Partners

Progress towards the expansion of Harm Reduction Services occurs at the community level through the vast number of partnerships made throughout Kentucky. These partnerships have been developed over years of communication and by aligning common goals. Such partnerships include but are not limited to the following:

- Community Advisory Boards
- Emergency Medical Services



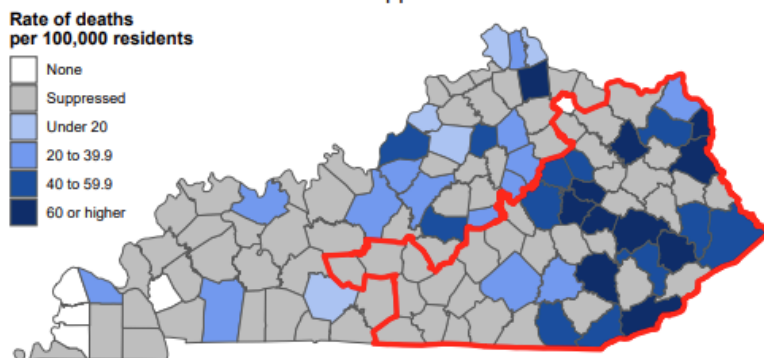
- Emergency Shelters
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Family Caregivers and Community Advocates
- Hospitals, Clinics, and Behavioral Health Providers
- Housing Organizations, Employment Support Services, Food Assistance Programs and Transportation Services
- Local Businesses and Non-Profit Organizations
- Local Government Officials
- Local Health Departments and Regional Prevention Centers
- Local Kentucky Agency for Substance Abuse Policy Boards
- Local Police Department, Sheriff's Departments, and Correctional Facilities
- Local Schools, Universities, and Colleges
- Quick Response Teams
- Recovery Community Organizations and Peer Support Specialists
- Social Media Influencers and Community Platforms
- Substance Use Treatment Programs

## Drug Use Trends in Kentucky

According to the [2024 Kentucky Resident Drug Overdose Death Report](#), drug use trends show that fentanyl was identified through toxicology in 829 drug overdose deaths, representing an outsized rate of 57.6% of all overdose deaths in 2024. Methamphetamine was identified in 576 drug overdose deaths, reaching a rate of 40% of all overdose deaths in 2024. Fentanyl involved overdose deaths saw a decrease of 12% in 2024; however, Methamphetamine involved overdose deaths saw a slight uptick, just under two percent, when compared to 2023.

**Figure 11.1.1: Age-adjusted rates of drug overdose deaths by Kentucky county of residence, 2024**

Red line denotes Appalachian counties



Produced by the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center, as bona fide agent for the Kentucky Department for Public Health. Data source: Kentucky Death Certificate Database, Kentucky Office of Vital Statistics, Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Data extracted January 2026. Data are provisional and subject to change.



## Polysubstance Use

According to the [Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center in 2024](#), polysubstance refers to the use of multiple substances at one time whether that be purposeful or on accident; these account for the majority of overdose deaths in Kentucky. The polysubstance combinations that have led to the most deaths are 4-ANPP (4-anilino-N-phenethylpiperidine) and Fentanyl, Amphetamine and Methamphetamine, and Fentanyl and Methamphetamine. 4-ANPP is a Fentanyl Analog and used as a precursor in the production of Fentanyl.

Additional information can be found in the [2024 Kentucky Resident Drug Overdose Death Report](#).

## Drug Overdose Trends in Kentucky

According to the [Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center, in 2024](#), 1,439 Kentucky residents died from a drug overdose, a decrease of 28.8% from the 2,020 resident deaths in 2023. This amounts to a rate of 32.7 deaths per 100,000 residents.

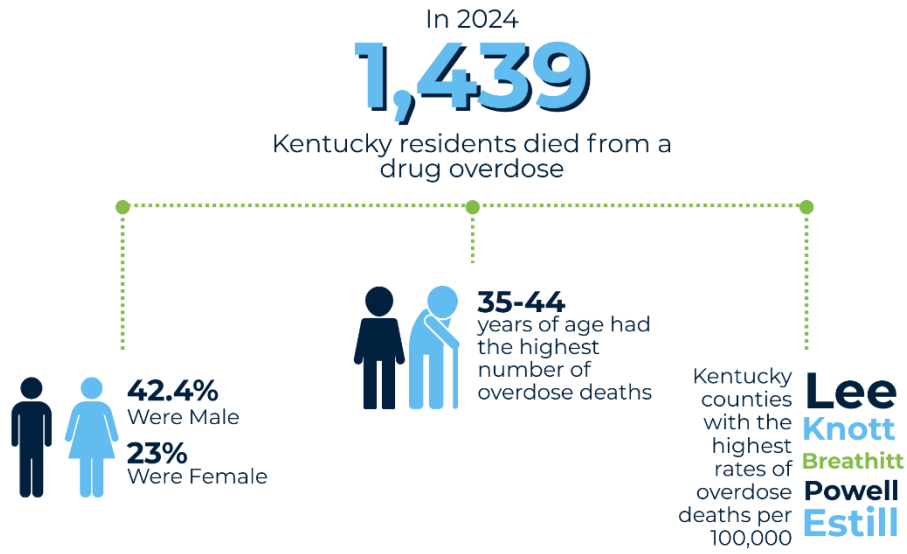
In 2024, 171 Black Kentucky residents died from a drug overdose, a 36.0% decrease from the 267 Black resident deaths in 2023. The rate of drug overdose deaths among Black Residents in 2024 was 44.8 deaths per 100,00 for Black residents, which 37.0% greater than the rate of deaths among White residents, which also saw a decrease of 27.1 deaths per 100,00 White residents in 2023. White residents had a total of 1,236 deaths in 2024 resulting in an age-adjusted mortality rate of 33.8 deaths per 100,000 White residents.

When broken down by biological sex, males made up 42.4 percent (929 individuals) of drug overdose deaths, with 29.6 percent (637 individuals) being classified as opioid overdoses and 24.8 percent (549 individuals) being classified as stimulant overdose deaths. Females in the Commonwealth accounted for 23.0 percent (510 individuals) of drug overdose deaths. Opioid-related deaths made up 16.1 percent (350 individuals), and 11.2 percent (236 individuals) were classified as stimulant-caused overdose deaths.

The age group of 35–44-year-olds had the highest number of drug overdose deaths in 2024 at 385, which is a decrease of 33.8% from the 581 deaths in the same age group in 2023. Nine-year-olds and younger individuals also saw a decrease from 9 deaths in 2023 to 6 deaths in 2024.

Kentucky counties with the highest rates per 100,000 residents are Lee County, 156.0, Knott County, 141.5, Breathitt County, 129.6, Powell County, 109.8 and Estill County, 85.4.





Additional information can be found in the [2024 Kentucky Resident Drug Overdose Death Report](#).

## Resources

- [2023 Xylazine Fact Sheet](https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/HarmReduction/EmergingThreatXylazineInfographic.pdf): [https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/HarmReduction/Emerging Threat Xylazine Infographic.pdf](https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/HarmReduction/EmergingThreatXylazineInfographic.pdf)
- [Drug Overdose and Related Comorbidities County Profiles-2024 | Tableau Public](https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/mira.mirzaian3467/viz/DrugOverdoseandRelatedComorbiditiesCountyProfiles-2024/DataDashboard): <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/mira.mirzaian3467/viz/DrugOverdoseandRelatedComorbiditiesCountyProfiles-2024/DataDashboard>
- [Find Help Now - KY](https://findhelpnow.org/ky): <https://findhelpnow.org/ky>
- [Find Naloxone Now Kentucky - FINDNALOXONE](https://findnaloxone.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx): <https://findnaloxone.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>
- [Find Recovery Housing Now](https://findrecoveryhousingnowky.org/): <https://findrecoveryhousingnowky.org/>
- [FindMentalHealthNowKY.org](https://findhelpnow.org/ky/mentalhealth): <https://findhelpnow.org/ky/mentalhealth>
- [Harm Reduction Branch - Cabinet for Health and Family Services](https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/Pages/harmreduction.aspx): <https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/Pages/harmreduction.aspx>
- [KY HELP Call Center | Operation UNITE](https://operationunite.org/programs/kyhelp-call-center/): <https://operationunite.org/programs/kyhelp-call-center/>
- [Never Use Alone – US National, Toll Free, US National Overdose Detection and Response](https://neverusealone.com/): <https://neverusealone.com/>
- [Syringe Services Programs - Cabinet for Health and Family Services](https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dehp/hab/Pages/kyseps.aspx): <https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dehp/hab/Pages/kyseps.aspx>



## References

- [Fentanyl and Xylazine Test Strips | SAMHSA](https://www.samhsa.gov/substance-use/treatment/overdose-prevention/fentanyl-xylazine-test-strips): <https://www.samhsa.gov/substance-use/treatment/overdose-prevention/fentanyl-xylazine-test-strips>
- [Kentucky Naloxone Saturation Strategic Plan 2025-2026](https://findnaloxone.ky.gov/Documents/Kentucky%20Naloxone%20Saturation%20Strategic%20Plan%202025-2026.pdf) : <https://findnaloxone.ky.gov/Documents/Kentucky Naloxone Saturation Strategic Plan 2025-2026.pdf>
- [KRS 218A.500](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=54121): <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=54121>
- [REVERSING OPIOID OVERDOSES WITH LIFESAVING NALOXONE](https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-resources/pdf/Naloxone-Fact-Sheet-508.pdf): <https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-resources/pdf/Naloxone-Fact-Sheet-508.pdf>
- Steel, M., Mirzaian, M., Daniels, L. (2026). [Kentucky Resident Drug Overdose Deaths, 2020–2024: Annual Report](#), Updated January 2026. Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center.



## Acknowledgments

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# At a Glance Report Highlights

In 2024:

**1,439**

Kentucky residents died from a drug overdose

**OVER 76**

**THOUSAND PARTICIPANT VISITS**

to Harm Reduction Services

Of Kentucky Harm Reduction Service Participants:

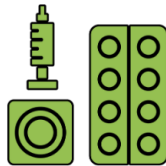


**39%** were women

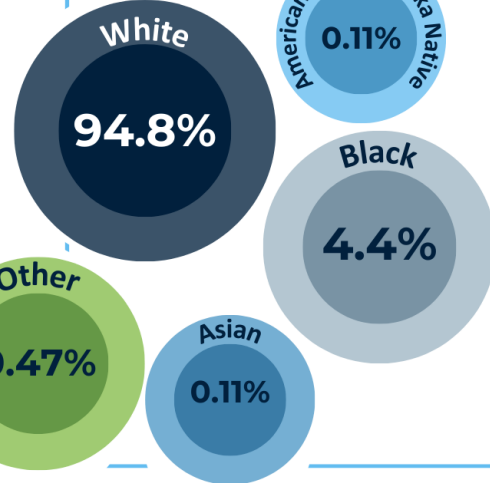
**49%** were men

**12%** did not disclose gender

**95** Harm Reduction Programs operated in **79** different counties



**82** Syringe Services Sites operated in **67** different counties



**92,492** 2-dose naloxone kits were distributed

**169,257** Fentanyl test strips were distributed

**29,290** treatment services referrals were made

**Additionally:**

**1,328** participants referred to receive PrEP

**44,679** Wound Care Kits distributed

**23,089** HIV tests administered

**1,119** Hepatitis C tests administered



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