

# Analysis finds racial inequities in naloxone administration during fatal overdoses

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Pennsylvania has been disproportionately affected by the opioid epidemic, having the fourth highest number of overdose deaths in the country in 2020. Also, the rate of overdose deaths among Black persons

is significantly higher than that of white persons in the state. A recent analysis published in *Addiction* reveals that compared with white people in Pennsylvania, Black individuals are less likely to receive naloxone—a medication that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose.

In the analysis of 2019–2021 data collected from [death certificates](#) and the State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System, investigators found that overdose death rates in Pennsylvania were the highest among Black persons in the study population and increased over time (rates per 10,000 population were 4.3 in 2019, 6.1 in 2020, and 6.5 in 2021); rates were lowest among white persons and stayed constant over time (approximately 2.6 per 10,000 population).

Across all years, Black people who died from an overdose had 40–50% lower odds of naloxone administration compared with [white people](#) who died. Hispanic decedents had similar odds of naloxone administration to that of white decedents.

"The disparity in overdose rates and differences in naloxone administration emphasize the urgent and continued need for equitable distribution of naloxone and other harm reduction services throughout Pennsylvania, especially among communities of color who are already disproportionately affected by systemic inequalities," said corresponding author Erin Takemoto, Ph.D., MPH, of the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

**More information:** Inequities in Naloxone Administration Among Fatal Overdose Decedents by Race and Ethnicity in Pennsylvania, 2019-2021, *Addiction* (2024). [DOI: 10.1111/add.16478](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.16478)

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