

# 2024 MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE ANNUAL REPORT



Report produced by:  
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# OVERVIEW

In 2022, Portage County Health District (PCHD) and University Hospitals embarked on a Community Health Assessment (CHA) process, engaging over 35 community partners, including Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County (MHRB), Kent City Health Department (KCHD), Family and Community Services, Townhall II, PARTA, and Portage County School Districts.

Following the CHA, these community stakeholders participated in the community health improvement process using CHA data to determine community priorities with accompanying strategies. Mental Health, Substance Use, and Addiction was determined to be a priority in the 2023-2025 Portage County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), along with Chronic Disease and Family, Pregnancy, Infant, & Child Health. Planning for the 2026-2029 CHA and CHIP began in January, 2025.

The 2024 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Annual Report was prepared by Olivia Card, Portage County Health District Epidemiologist. Contributions to this report were made by Kylee McCracken, Portage County Health District Health Educator and Project DAWN coordinator.

The objective of this report is to inform education and outreach efforts by Portage County stakeholders by summarizing trends in morbidity and mortality related to mental health and substance use. Any questions about the contents of this report can be directed to Olivia Card by phone at 330-296-9919 Extension 152.



# 2023 2024

<b>Emergency department visits for unintentional overdoses</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Portage resident Overdose deaths, Ohio Vital Stats</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Portage resident Overdose deaths coroner's report</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Emergency department visits for self harm, suicidal ideation or suicide attempts</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>929</b>
<b>Portage resident Suicide deaths, Ohio Vital Stats</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Portage resident suicide deaths coroner's report</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b> (2 pending)

# RESOURCES

If you or someone you know are having a mental health crisis, you can call **988** or **330-678-HELP (4357)** 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 988 can be texted for help as well.

If you or someone you know is interested in receiving suicide prevention training, call the Portage County Mental Health and Recovery Board at **330-673-1756**. Visit their website **[www.mental-health-recovery.org](http://www.mental-health-recovery.org)** to find comprehensive resource guides for both mental health and addiction.

For anyone struggling with addiction, call the Townhall II addiction helpline at **330-678-3006**. Please note that Townhall II has recently launched a Problem Gambling Group to more wholly address addiction in our community. For a complete list of their recovery, emergency, and prevention programs, please visit their website [www.townhall2.com](http://www.townhall2.com).

Additionally, you can call United Way at **211** to receive help finding mental health or addiction resources. Portage County Family and Community Services also provides counseling services, and assistance with housing and transportation needs.



# PROJECT DAWN AND NALOXONE

## **What is Project DAWN?**

Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided With Naloxone) is a network of opioid overdose education and naloxone distribution programs from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). The Project DAWN program in Portage County is coordinated by Kylee McCracken at PCHD. The goal of the Project DAWN program is to provide access to Narcan as a life-saving resource to anyone who is at risk or anyone who may come in contact with anyone at risk of an opioid overdose. Participants of the Project DAWN program are provided education on an opioid overdose and a Project DAWN kit, which contains two doses of nasal Naloxone, Naloxone use instructions, one pair of nitrile gloves, and a mouth guard in the event that resuscitation is required.

## **What is Naloxone?**

You may have heard Naloxone referred to as Narcan or Evzio, which are brand names under which Naloxone is frequently sold. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes Naloxone as, “a drug that can reverse the effects of opioid overdose and can be life-saving if administered in time.”

## **Will Naloxone reverse any overdose?**

Unfortunately, no. Naloxone only reverses overdoses of opioids, which are defined by the CDC as, “natural, synthetic, or semi-synthetic chemicals that interact with opioid receptors on nerve cells in the body and brain, and reduce the intensity of pain signals and feelings of pain.” Examples of opioids include heroin, fentanyl, oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, and morphine. Please see the next page for more information.





# Difference Between an Opioid and an Opiate



An **OPIATE** is a drug naturally derived from the opium poppy plant. On the other hand, **OPIOID** is any compound attached to opioid receptors that can be partially or fully synthetic.

- Opiates are a subset of Opioids
- Not all Opioids are Opiates

Opioids**	Opiates
Vicodin Percocet Oxycodone Fentanyl etc.	Opium Morphine Heroin Codeine etc.

\*\*Synonymous with the term “Narcotics”

### **Who should carry Naloxone?**

Anyone who uses opioids, prescribed or not, should carry Naloxone. Additionally, if you have family members, friends, co-workers, clients, or interact with anyone who uses opioids you should always carry Naloxone in case of an overdose. As a reminder, some opioids are prescribed by doctors for pain management. Even when taken as directed, opioids can still cause an overdose.

### **How can I get a Project Dawn kit?**

There are several ways to obtain a Project DAWN kit in Portage County.

- PCHD: Call Kylee at 330-296-9919, ext. 129 to schedule a individual or group training, after which a kit will be distributed.
- Portage County Health District Mail Order: Go to <https://portagehealth.net/our-programs/health-education-and-promotion/project-dawn-narcan/>
- Townhall II: Call 330-678-3006 to schedule an appointment.
- KCHD: Call 330-968-7555 to schedule an appointment.

### **Interested in becoming a Project DAWN Distribution Agency?**

PCHD provides trainings to agencies/organizations that are interested in becoming a Narcan distributor (someone who trains others to properly use Narcan and distributes Project DAWN kits). PCHD will supply the resources needed to provide the educational component of Project DAWN program and the Project DAWN kits.

### **Where can I find more information about Naloxone distribution in Portage County?**

On the next page of this report.





	<b>Jan- Mar</b>	<b>Apr- Jun</b>	<b>Jul- Sept</b>	<b>Oct- Dec</b>
Doses of Naloxone administered by EMS	63	58	52	52
Project DAWN kits distributed by PCHD	353	449	486	331
Reversals reported by law enforcement	3	1	4	9
Reversals reported by community members	7	10	13	5

**Table 1.** Overall, there were 17 reversals reported by law enforcement and 35 reported by the community or "other".

# YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION GRANT ACTIVITIES

## About the grant

In March, 2024, PCHD was awarded a multi-year grant to address the issue of youth suicide in our community. The grant is administered through ODH using funds from the CDC.

## Grant objective

By September 14, 2027, PCHD, MHRB, Townhall II, and the Portage County Suicide Coalition will reduce the annual suicide mortality among Portage County youth ages 10-24.

## Portage Suicide Prevention Coalition

The Portage Suicide Prevention Coalition is an interdisciplinary group of community agencies working to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health, eliminate suicide attempts and deaths in Portage County, and support individuals that have lost loved ones to suicide. Meetings are held every other month at MHRB in Kent. Members of the public are welcome to join the coalition.

## 2024 Highlights

- 6 meetings of the Portage Suicide Prevention Coalition
- 1,000 middle and high school students received Signs of Suicide educational programming
- 17 Nursing Students at Hiram College were trained in Question, Persuade, Refer
- Townhall II authored a Youth Suicide Prevention Action Plan for use by the Portage Suicide Prevention Coalition



Department of  
Health



# EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS

Pages 11-18 contain information regarding the number of Portage County residents who visited an emergency room for an unintentional overdose or self harm/suicidal ideation/suicide attempt. This data was extracted from the Epicenter surveillance system on January 3, 2025.

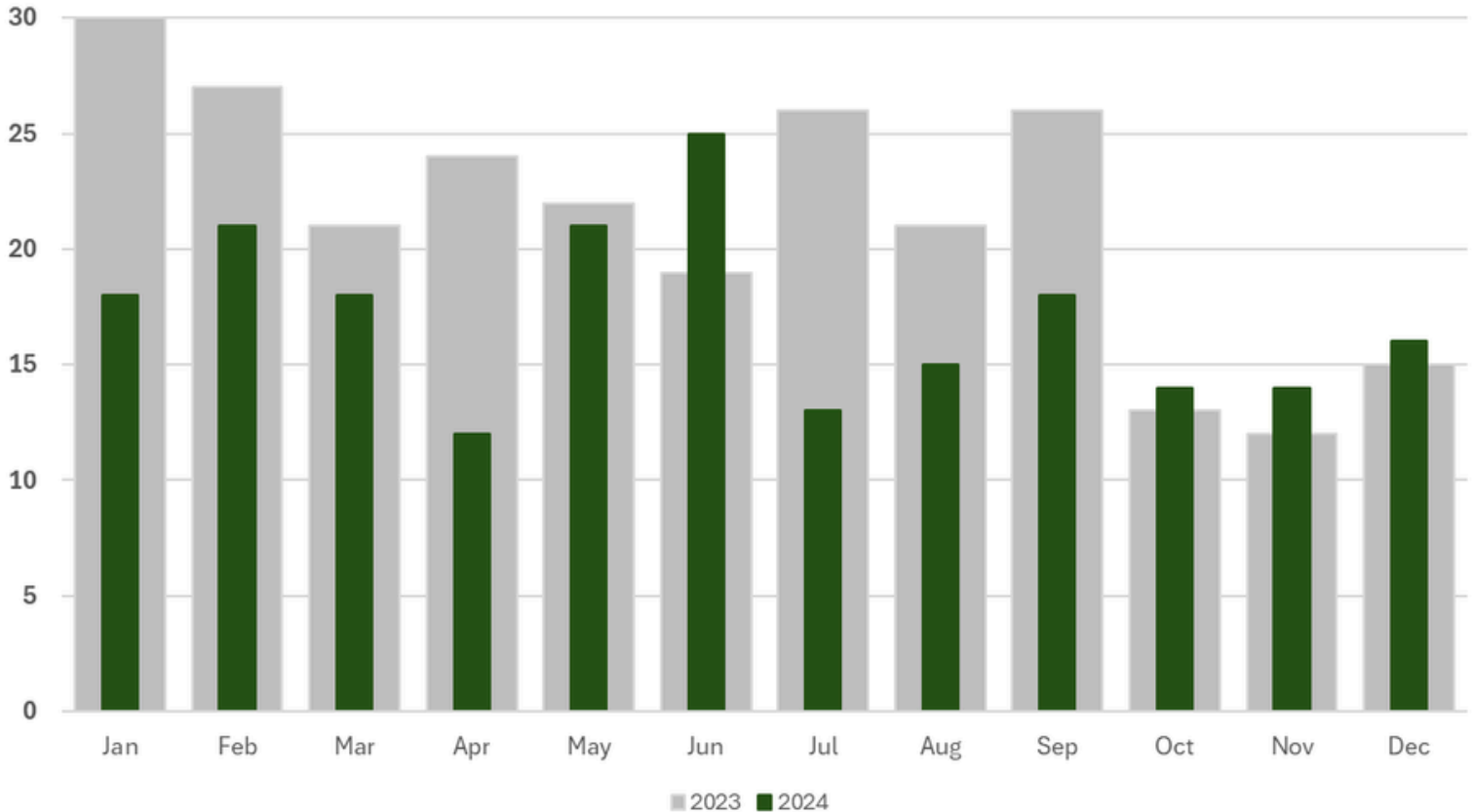
The data regarding overdoses was obtained by using the “charts” function in Epicenter and selecting the “suspected drug overdose” variable. Not all Emergency Department visits categorized as overdoses are the result of illicit substances. Some are the result of accidental double-dosing of medications, adverse reactions to medications, accidental mixing of incompatible over-the-counter medicines, and concerns about poison exposure.

Overdose visit data was intended to capture only accidental overdoses. For that reason, the data was manually filtered to eliminate any visits that indicated the following:

- SH/Self Harm
- SI/Suicidal Ideation
- SA/Suicide Attempt
- Intentional overdose
- Pink/PINK/“Pink slip”

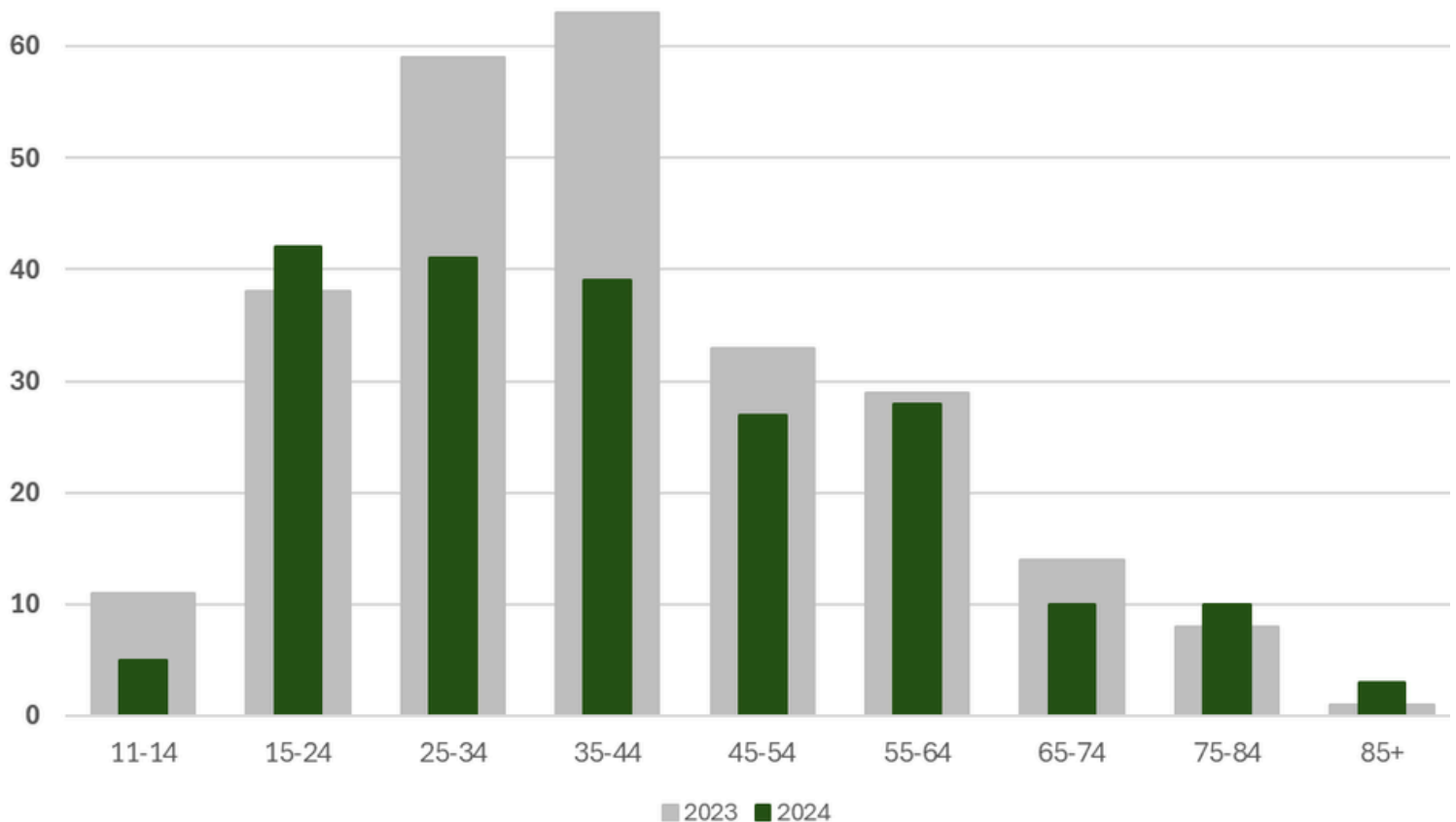
The data regarding self harm/suicidal ideation/suicide attempts was also obtained by using the “charts” function in Epicenter, selecting the “self harm” and “suicidal ideation” variables. All visits for suicide attempts were captured under one or both of those variables. After extraction, no filtering was needed.

# Monthly Emergency Department Visits for Unintentional Overdoses



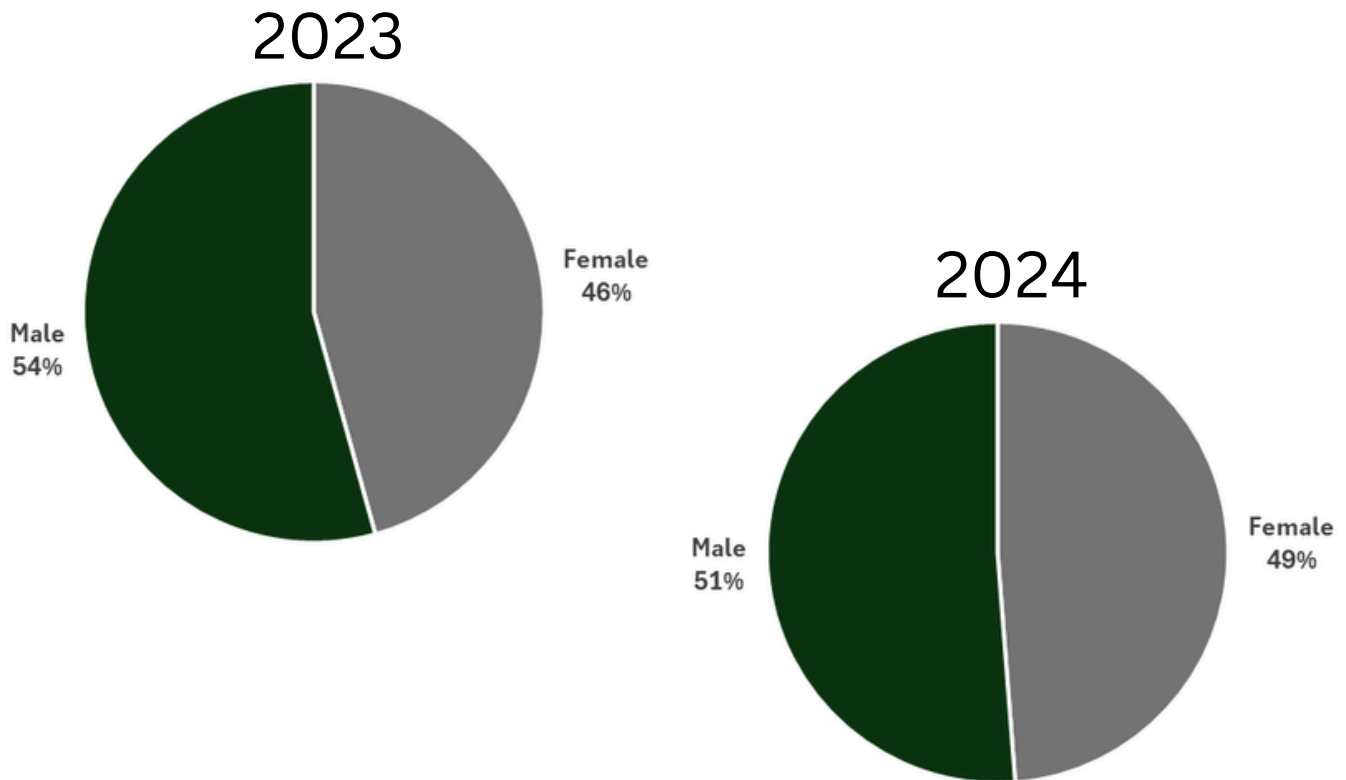
**Figure 1.** A chart showing the number of monthly visits by Portage County residents to any emergency room for an unintentional overdose. The grey bars indicate visits from 2023, and the dark green bars indicate visits from 2024. In 2023, visits were most frequent in January, February, July and September. In 2024, visits were most frequent in February, May, June and September. In both years, emergency room visits for overdoses seem to increase and decrease in a cyclical manner. In fact, if all 24 months were plotted together, January of 2024 would show the continuation of an increase in visits that began in December 2023. However, it should be noted that overall, 2024 showed approximately a 20% decrease in emergency room visits for overdoses compared to 2023.

## Emergency Department Visits for Unintentional Overdoses by Age Group



**Figure 2.** A chart showing the number of visits by Portage County residents of various age groups to any emergency room for an unintentional overdose. The grey bars indicate visits from 2023, and the dark green bars indicate visits from 2024. Adolescents and adults 18-44 were more frequent visitors to emergency rooms for overdoses compared to older adults. This was true for both years, however there was a dramatic drop in the number of visits for adults 25-44 from 2023 to 2024. This could be due to the increasing availability of naloxone, less drug use, or another unidentified factor. Conversely, more individuals aged 15-24 visited emergency rooms for overdoses in 2024 than in 2023. In fact, this group had the highest number of visits in 2024. This speaks to a possible need for increasing education and outreach about substance use in high schools and colleges.

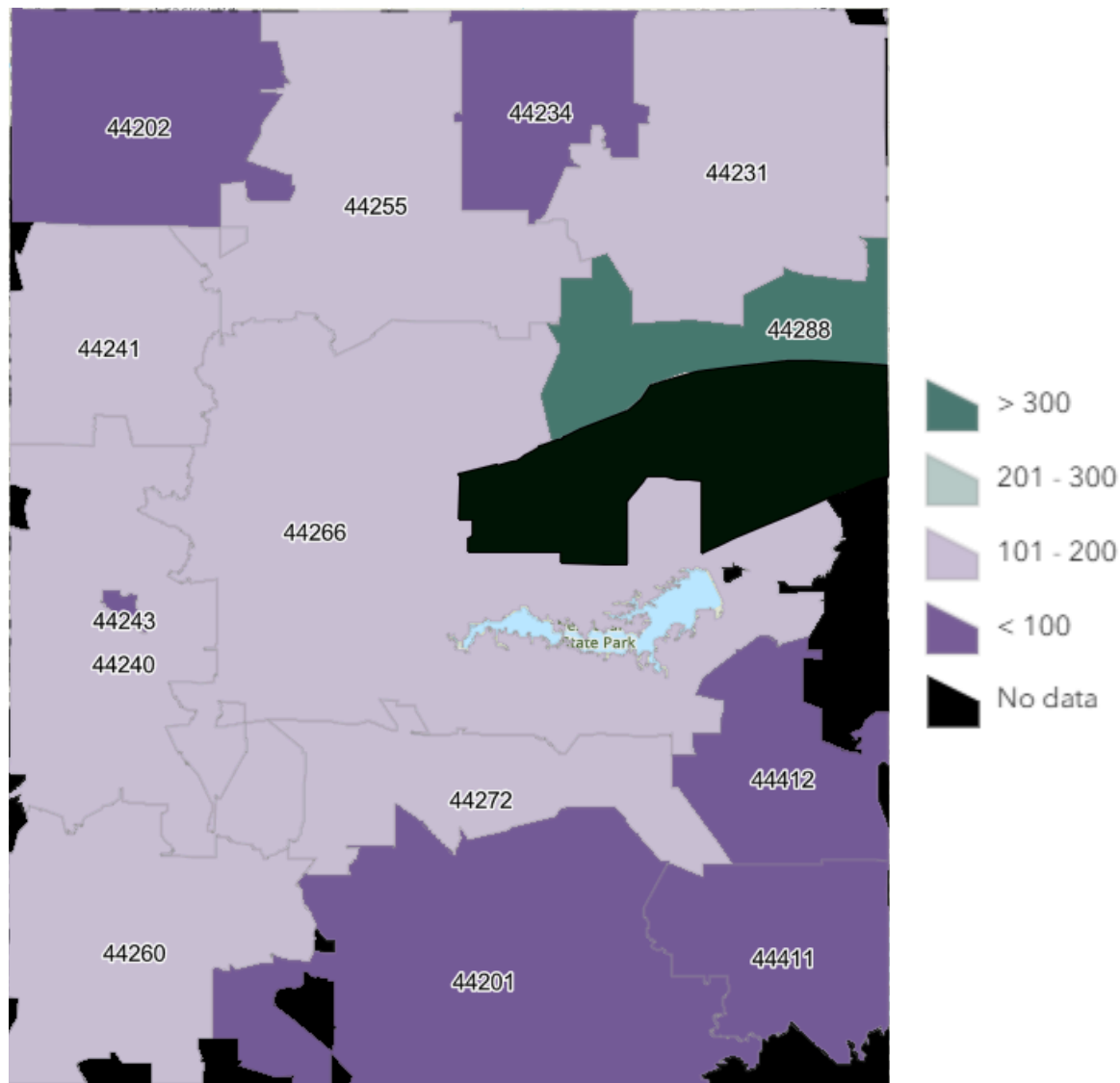
## Emergency Department Visits for Unintentional Overdoses by Sex



**Figure 3.** Pie charts showing the proportion of visits by Portage County residents of each sex to any emergency room for an unintentional overdose. 2023 is shown on the left, and 2024 is shown on the left. Visits are split fairly evenly between men and women. Therefore, both sexes should be targeted by substance use outreach efforts.

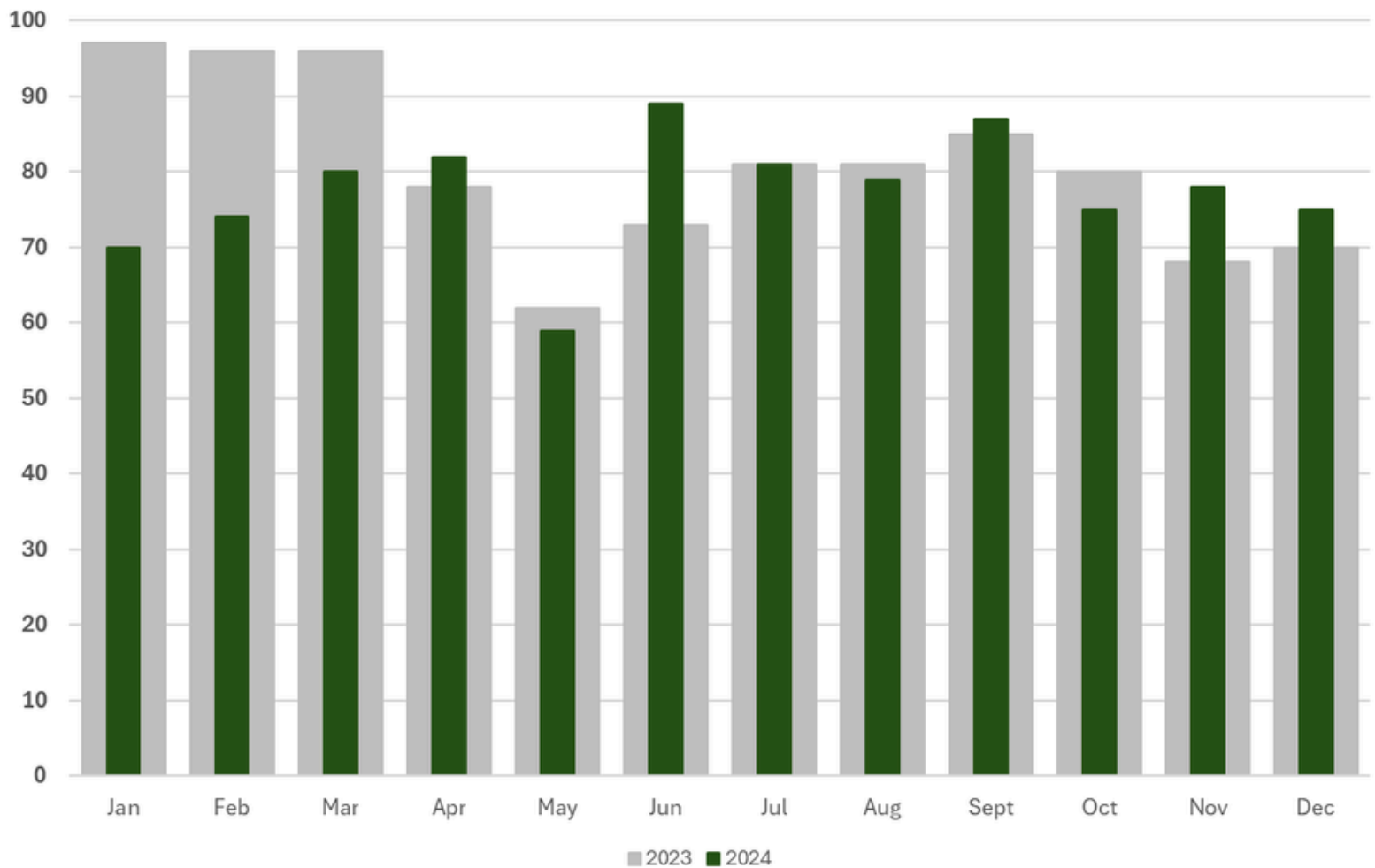


## Emergency Department Visit Rates for Unintentional Overdoses by Zipcode



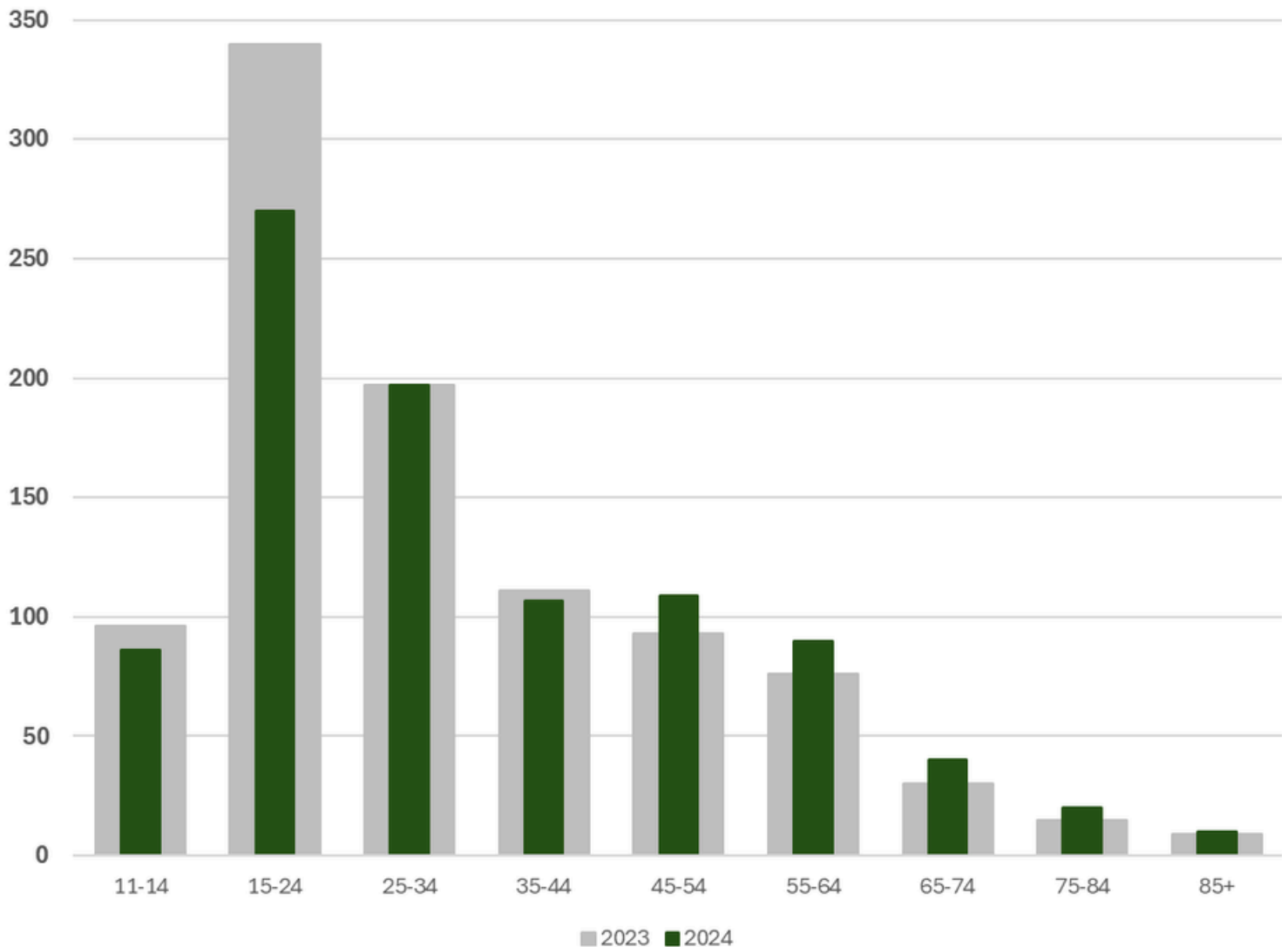
**Figure 4.** A map displaying the rate (per 100,000 people) of visits to any emergency department for unintentional overdose by residents of each zipcode in 2024. This rate is highest for zipcode 44288, which corresponds to Windham. The high number of visits to emergency departments for unintentional overdoses could speak to an increased need for naloxone distribution to residents of the 44288 zipcode. Windham is relatively isolated from naloxone distributors in Portage County, which are mostly located in Ravenna and Kent (PCHD, KCHD, MHRB, and Townhall II). Additionally, this zipcode may be targeted for substance use education and outreach in 2025.

## Monthly Emergency Department Visits for Suicide-related Concerns



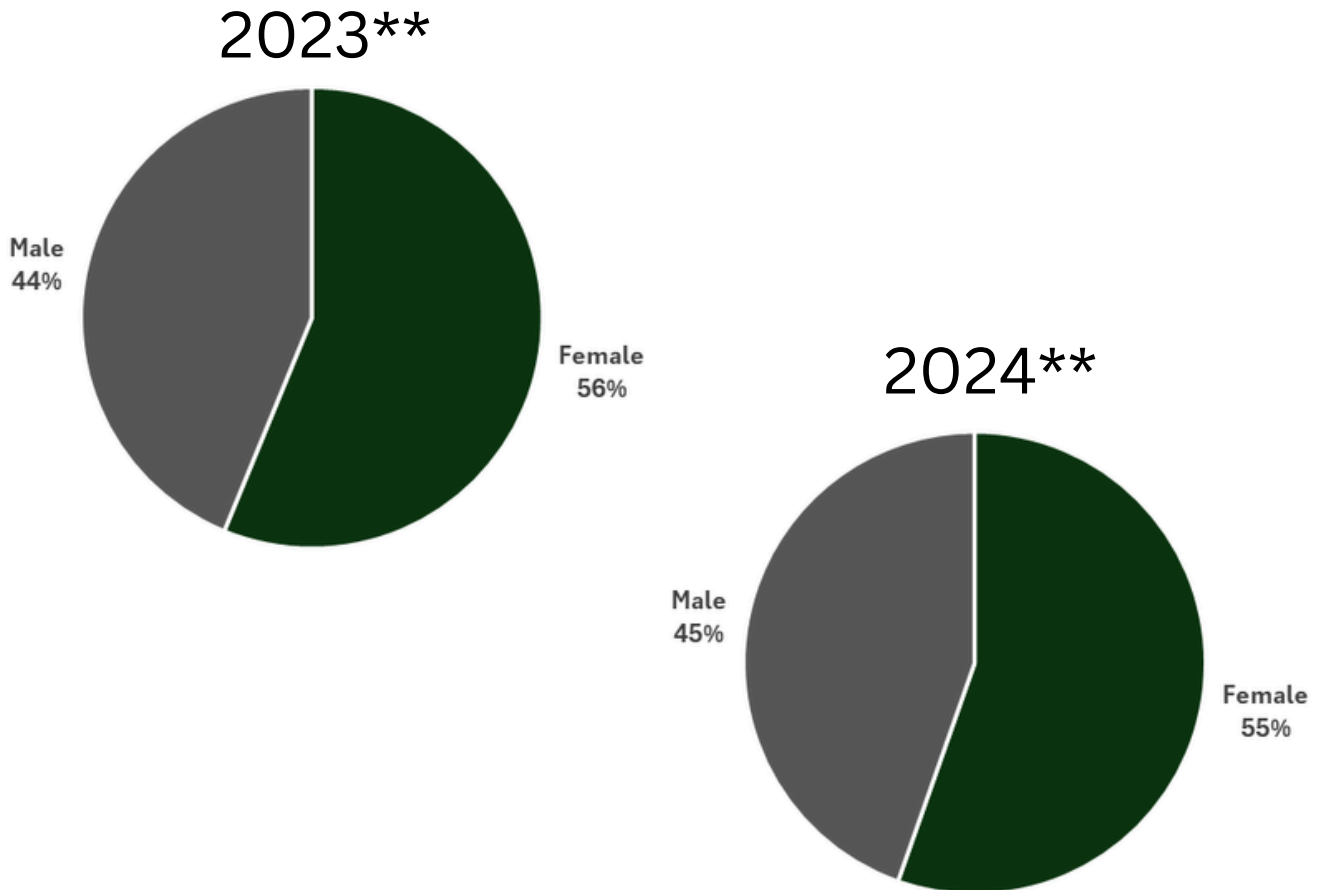
**Figure 5.** A chart showing the monthly number of visits by Portage County residents to any emergency room for self harm, suicidal ideation, or a suicide attempt. The grey bars indicate visits from 2023, and the dark green bars indicate visits from 2024. In 2023, January, February and March had the most visits. In 2024, April, June and September had the most visits. In both years, May had the lowest number of visits. People may assume mental health is worse in the winter due to lack of sunlight. However, the data shown here do not support that idea. Make sure to check in with your loved ones about their mental health all year long, not just during the winter.

## Emergency Department Visits for Suicide-Related Concerns by Age Group



**Figure 6.** A chart showing the number of visits by Portage County residents of various age groups to any emergency room for self harm, suicidal ideation, or a suicide attempt. The grey bars indicate visits from 2023, and the dark green bars indicate visits from 2024. The trend was similar across both years - adolescents and young adults overwhelmingly visited emergency rooms for suicide-related concerns more frequently than other age groups. For information on how PCHD is working with community partners to address the issue of youth suicide, refer to page 9 of this report.

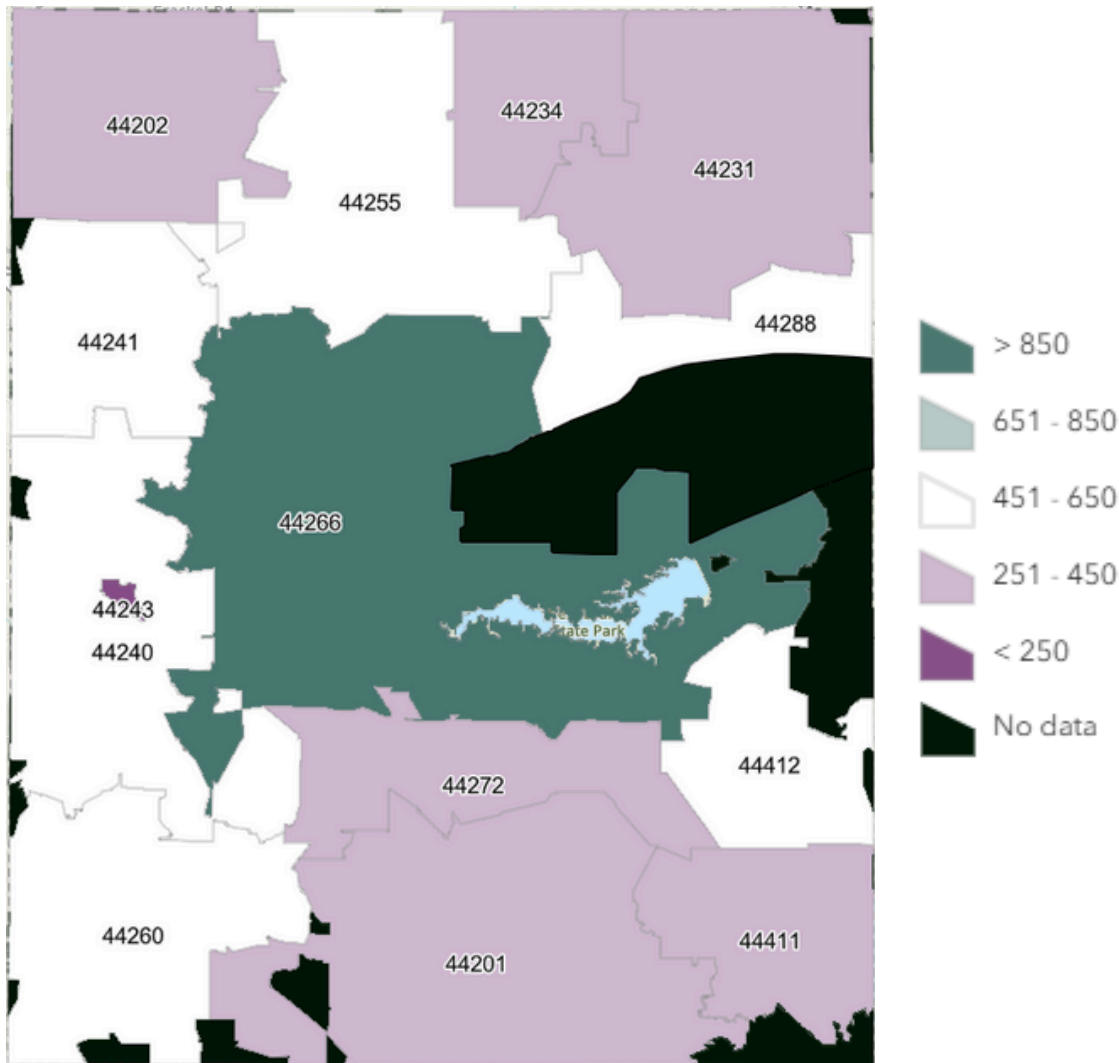
## Emergency Department Visits for Suicide-Related Concerns by Sex



**\*\*Not shown:** In both 2023 and 2024, one individual for which sex was not reported visited an emergency department for a suicide-related concern.

**Figure 7.** Pie charts showing the proportion of visits by Portage County residents of each sex to any emergency room for self harm, suicidal ideation, or a suicide attempt. 2023 is shown on the left, and 2024 is shown on the left. 2023 and 2024 are very similar in that a slight majority of visitors were women. This may be because women may be more comfortable or willing to discuss their mental health than men; the result could be more hospital visits for suicide-related concerns. However, there was still a notable percentage of male emergency department visitors for suicide-related concerns in both years. This underscores the need for a focus on mental health education and outreach for both sexes.

## Emergency Department Visit Rates for Suicide-related concerns by Zipcode



**Figure 8.** A map displaying the rate (per 100,000 people) of visits to an emergency department for self-harm, suicidal ideation or a suicide attempt by residents of each zipcode in 2024. This rate is highest for zipcode 44266, which corresponds to Ravenna. Areas within this zipcode have been designated by ODH as having a high social vulnerability index (SVI). According to ODH, high SVI scores correspond to a decreased “... ability to prevent human suffering and financial loss in a disaster.” In other words, many individuals living in the 44266 zipcode face persistent stressors that can heavily influence mental wellbeing, such as living in poverty, living with a disability, or housing stress. It will be beneficial to address these underlying issues by connecting Ravenna residents with needed medical or housing services.

# VITAL STATISTICS DATA

Pages 20-27 contain information about Portage County resident deaths by suicide (ICD codes X60-X84) or overdose (ICD codes X40-X44). The data reported in this section is from the DataOhio platform, and it is derived from death certificates filed with the State of Ohio. Only deaths of Portage County residents are included in this section, regardless of where the deaths occurred.

The overdose deaths reported in this section of the report are limited to non-alcohol, toxicity deaths only. In other words, individuals that died due to a car crash while driving under the influence, or individuals who died from alcohol poisoning are not reported as overdose deaths in this section.

Some figure captions in this section of the report reference a 2020 editorial published in the American Journal of Men's Health by Benita Chatmon (Assistant Dean for Clinical Nursing Education, School of Nursing, LSU) entitled "Males and Mental Health Stigma." The full citation for the editorial is below:

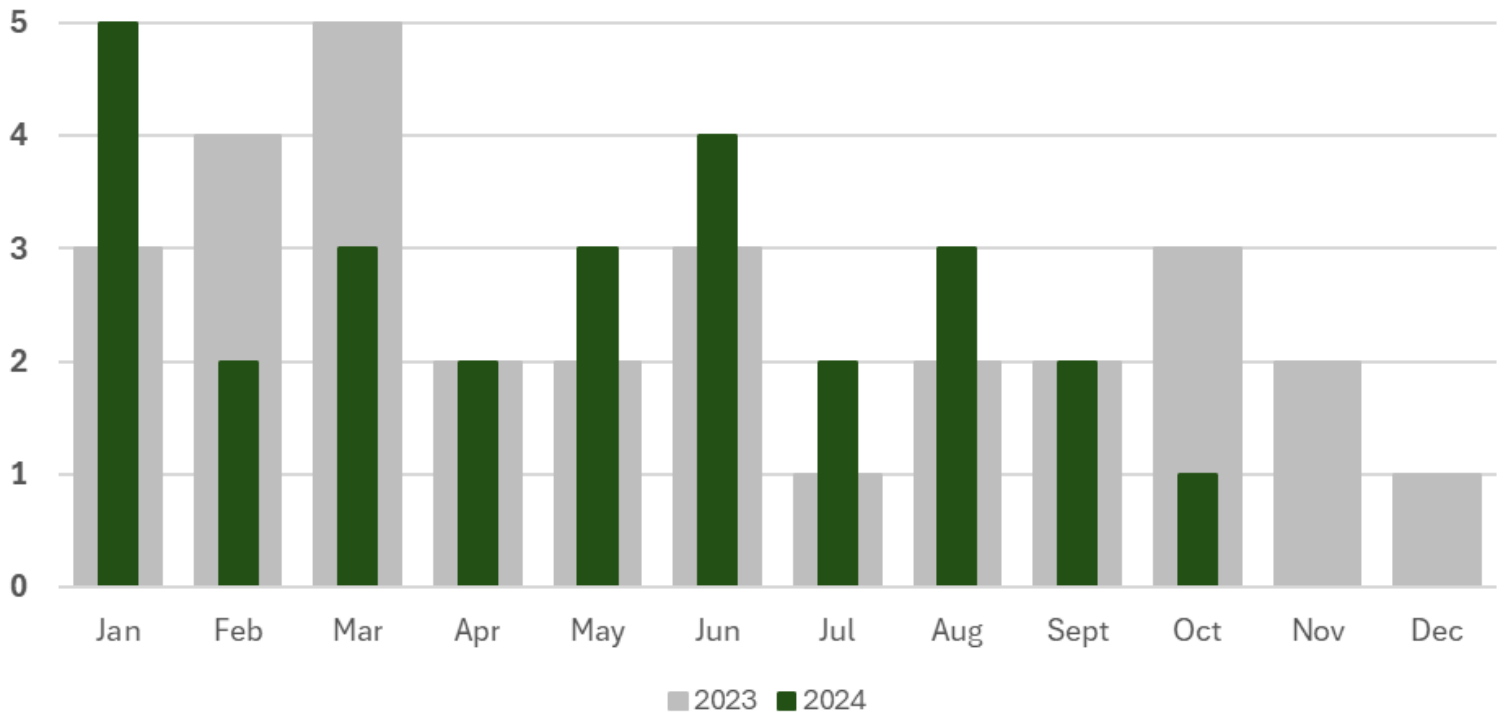
Chatmon BN. Males and Mental Health Stigma. Am J Mens Health. 2020 Jul-Aug;14(4):1557988320949322. doi: 10.1177/1557988320949322. PMID: 32812501; PMCID: PMC7444121.

**Disclaimer:** *"Overdose death" is a subjective term. The Portage County Coroner's office and the Ohio Department of Health's Bureau of Vital Statistics define an overdose death differently. Furthermore, their reports differ in scope. This is reflected in the variable estimates of the number of suicide and overdose deaths between the two datasets.*



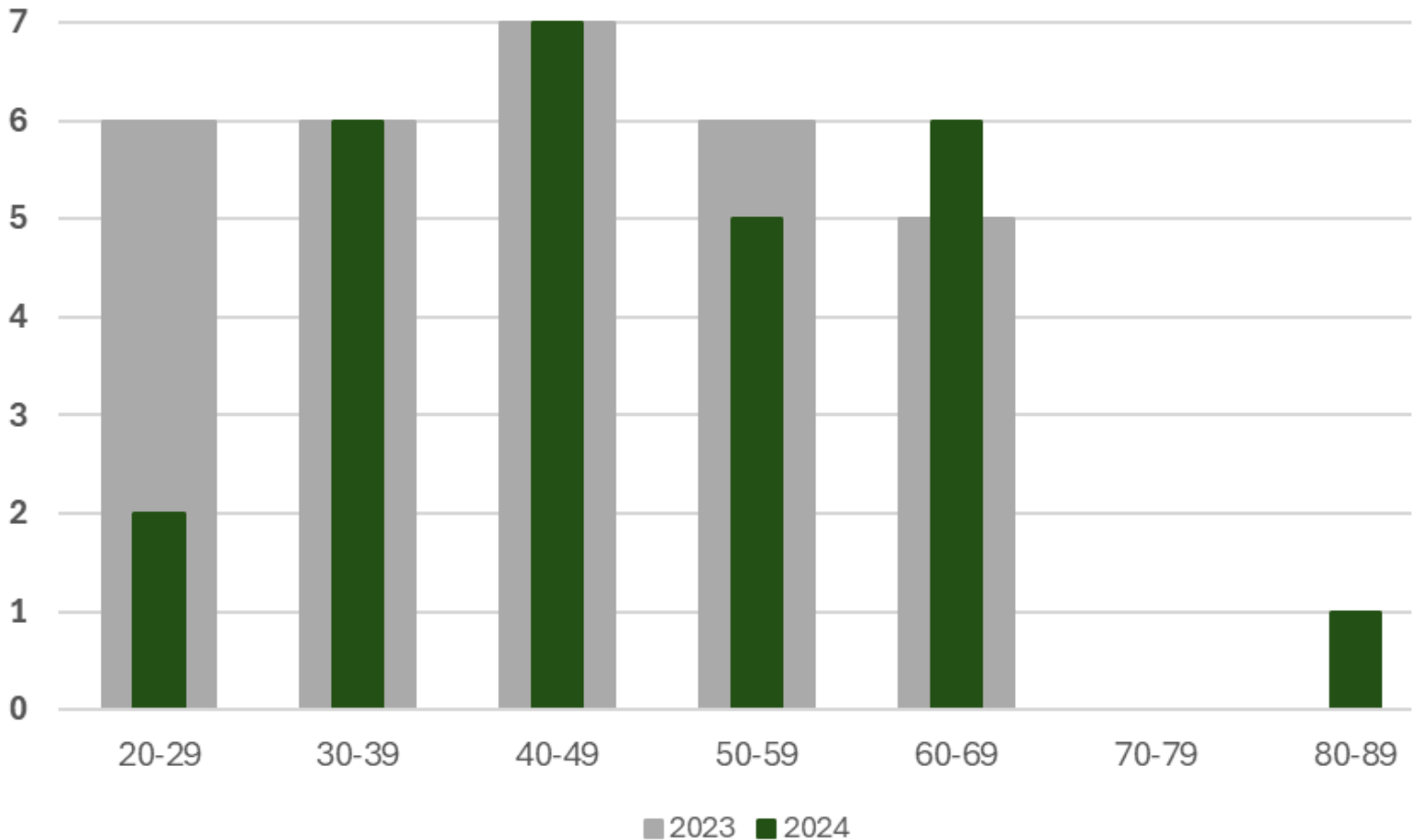


## Monthly Overdose Deaths



**Figure 9.** A chart showing monthly Portage County resident deaths due to overdoses. The grey bars indicate deaths from 2023, and the dark green bars indicate deaths from 2024. As with emergency room visits for overdoses, deaths due to overdoses appear to increase and decrease cyclically.

## Overdose Deaths by Age Group



**Figure 10.** A chart showing deaths due to overdoses of Portage County residents in various age groups. The grey bars indicate deaths from 2023, and the dark green bars indicate deaths from 2024. While emergency room visits due to overdoses were not very frequent for middle-aged and older adults (refer to figure 2), unfortunately this group experienced many overdose deaths in 2023 and 2024. Conversely, from 2023 to 2024, there was a large drop in overdose deaths of individuals in their 20s. Naloxone and fentanyl test strips have become more accessible than ever in the last few years. The observed trend could represent a reluctance in middle-aged and older adults to carry these items, compared to younger adults. There can be stigma attached to carrying these items. However, the risk of opioid overdose is present even when using prescription opioids, or taking something “harmless” from an unknown source. Carrying naloxone or test strips is a great way to keep yourself, and others around you, safe.

## Overdose Deaths by Sex and Race

Demographic Category	2023	2024
Female	11	4
Male	19	23
Single race, white	26	25
Multiracial or not white	4	2

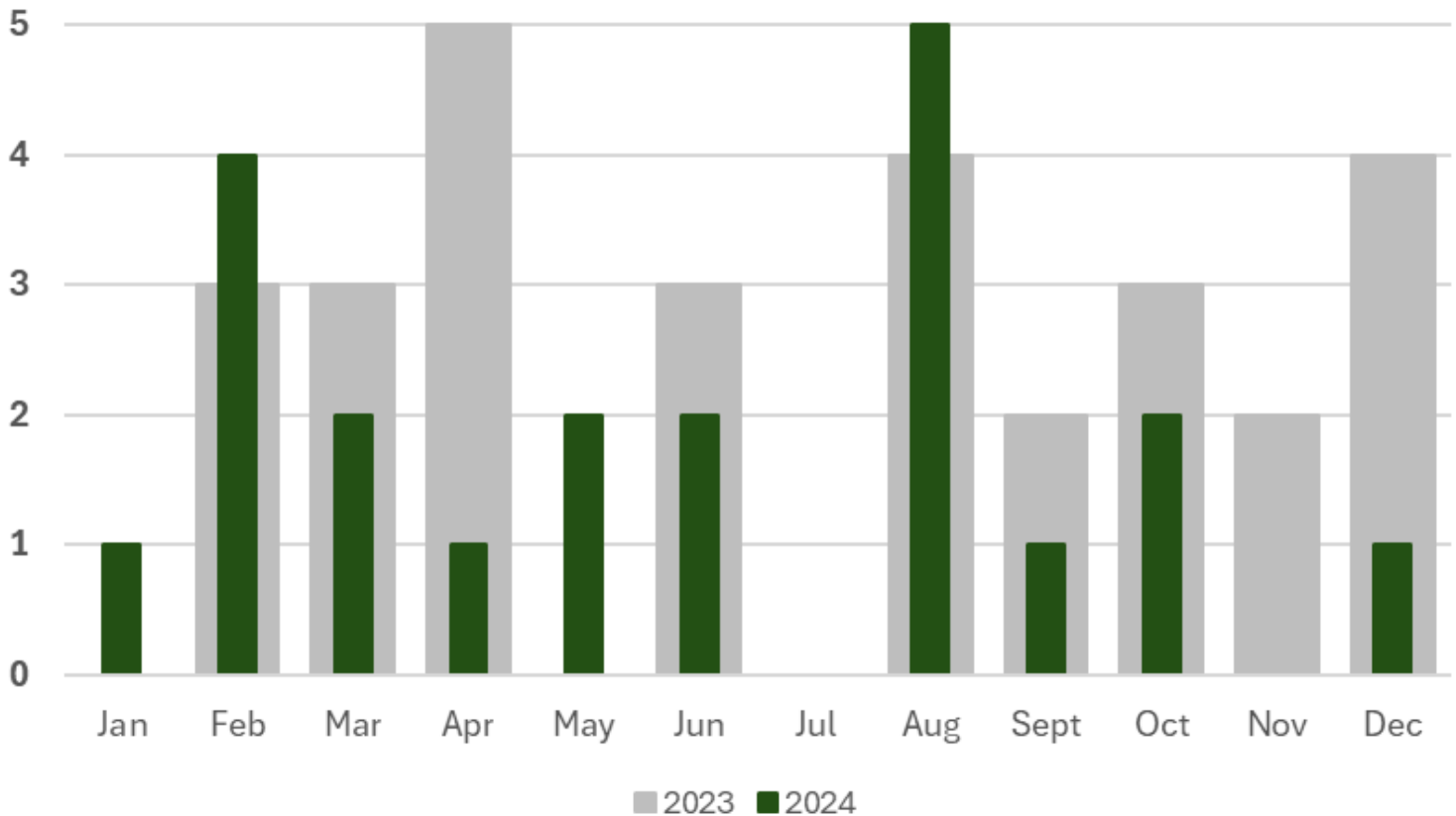
**Table 2.** A table showing overdose deaths of Portage County residents, categorized by sex and racial group. In both 2023 and 2024, more men died from overdoses than women. Notably, in 2023 approximately 63% of overdose deaths occurred in males, while in 2024 it increased to approximately 85%. As stated by Chatmon (2020), “men are two to three times more likely to misuse drugs than women.” Chatmon continues on to state that statistics like these, “reinforce the notion that males are less likely to seek help and more likely than women to turn to dangerous, unhealthy behaviors.” This context may explain the discrepancy in overdose deaths between sexes. In the last two years, white individuals have died from overdoses in much higher numbers compared to multiracial or non-white individuals. Approximately 95% of Portage County residents identify as “white, alone” on the United States census. Thus, overdose deaths of members in the racial groups specified above are fairly proportional to the racial makeup of Portage County.

## Substances Involved in Overdose Deaths

Substance	2023	2024
Benzodiazepines	4	2
Cocaine	8	7
Ethanol	5	4
Fentanyl or analogues	22	17
Methamphetamines	13	5
Prescription opiates	23	22
Other synthetic narcotic	22	17

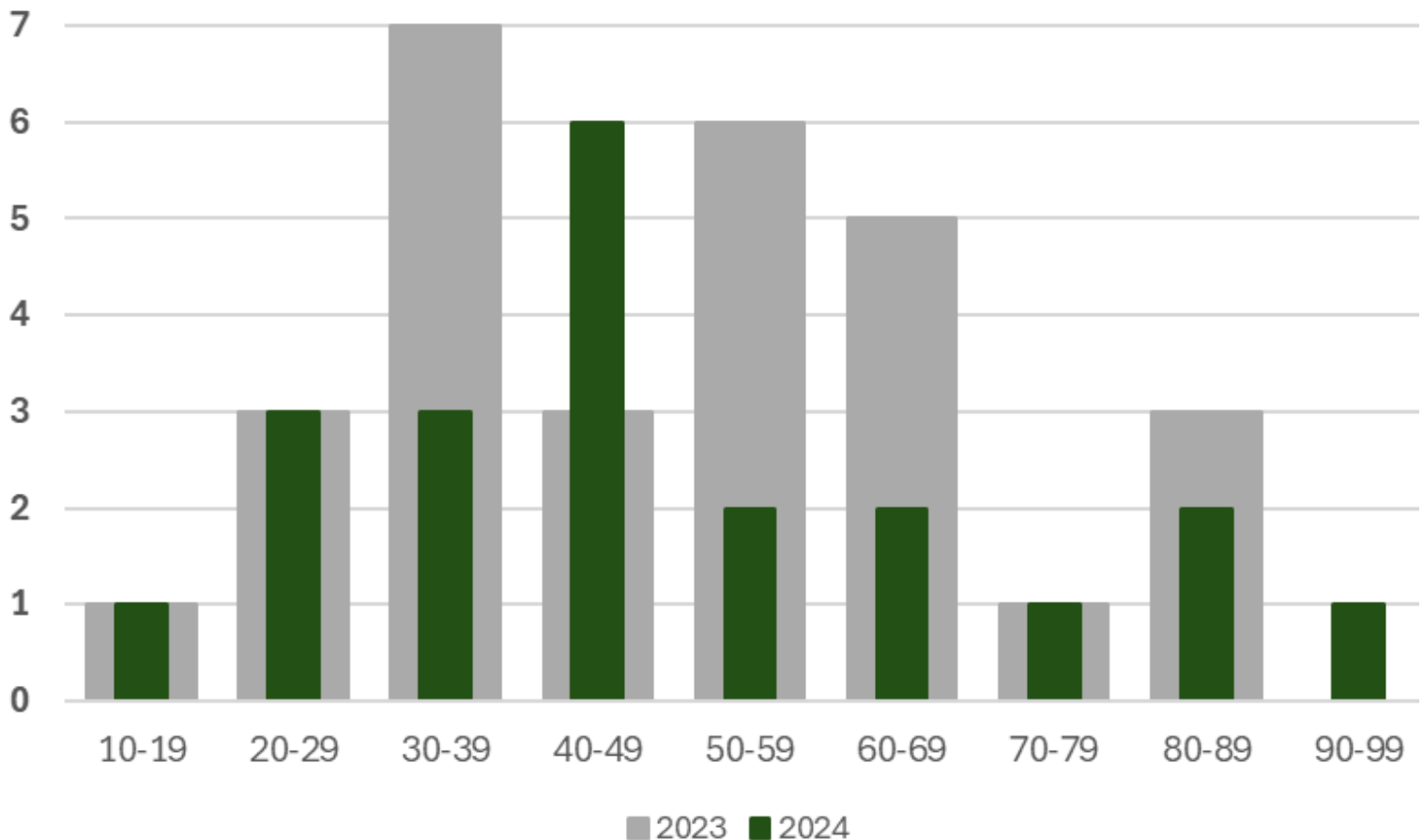
**Table 3.** A table showing the number of overdose deaths in which a given substance was involved. Many overdose deaths involved multiple substances. As explained on page 6 of this report, fentanyl, opiates and narcotics are all opioids. That said, in both 2023 and 2024, most overdose deaths involved opioids. Opioid overdoses can be reversed by naloxone. This is why it is so vital to have naloxone readily available if you or someone you love uses opioids, including prescribed medications. For more information on how to obtain naloxone, see the Project DAWN section of this report (pages 5-8).

## Monthly Suicide Deaths



**Figure 11.** A chart showing monthly deaths by suicide of Portage County residents. The grey bars indicate deaths from 2023, and the dark green bars indicate deaths from 2024. There is no apparent trend of suicide deaths over time based on this graph. In fact, the number of deaths seems sporadic from month to month. For example, in 2024 there were no suicide deaths in July; but there were five in August, which was the highest number of suicide deaths in a single month during 2024. As with emergency visit data for suicide-related concerns on page 15, this information demonstrates that mental health crises are not predictable based on the time of year. It is a good idea to observe your loved ones all year long for signs of mental distress, not just during “especially difficult times,” such as holidays or winter months.

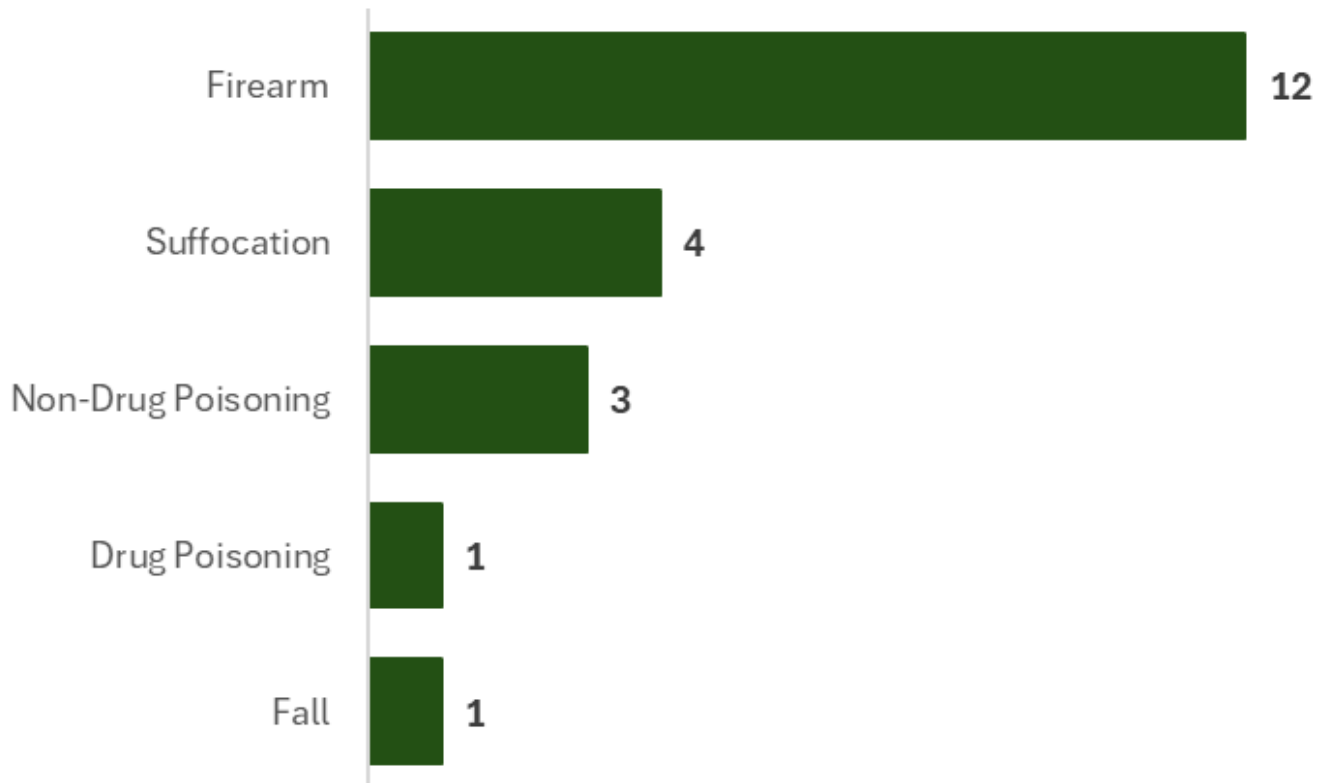
## Suicide Deaths by Age Group



**Figure 12.** A chart showing deaths by suicide of Portage County residents belonging to different age groups. The grey bars indicate deaths from 2023, and the dark green bars indicate deaths from 2024. While emergency department visits for suicide-related concerns were highest for individuals 15-34, suicide deaths were highest for the 40-49 age group in 2024. This group had double the number of suicide deaths in 2024 compared to 2023. Meanwhile, the 30-39, 50-59, 60-69, and 80-89 age groups had fewer suicide deaths in 2024 compared to 2023. Overall, this chart shows that Portage County adults aged 30-69 are dying by suicide in higher numbers than younger people or seniors 70 and older. Outreach for middle-aged and older adults addressing suicide prevention and mental health might be considered in forums where these individuals socialize, for example: churches, workplaces, and clubs such as Rotary, Kiwanis or the Elks.



## Suicide Deaths by Method



**Figure 13.** A bar chart displaying the number of suicide deaths resulting from the given methods. By far, firearms are the most common means of suicide deaths. For that reason, several Portage County agencies, including PCHD, distributed gun locks in 2024. Locking up firearms is an important step in ensuring they are not used by a loved one to harm themselves. If you need gun locks, you can contact PCHD, MHRB or KCHD.

## Suicide Deaths by Race and Sex

Demographic Category	2023	2024
Female	7	2
Male	22	19
Single race, white	27	19
Multiracial or not white	2	2

**Table 4.** A table showing deaths by suicide of Portage County residents, categorized by sex and racial group. A majority of Portage County residents who died by suicide in 2023 and 2024 were men. Chamon (2020) writes, “depression and suicide are ranked as a leading cause of death among men.” She also points out that men die by suicide at a rate four times higher than women. If 2023 and 2024 are examined together, this statistic is accurate for Portage County. Men and women reside in Portage County in approximately equal numbers. Over the last two years, there were a total of 50 Portage County residents died by suicide, 9 of which were female, 41 of which were male. Portage County displays a population where males have died by suicide at a rate almost exactly four times higher than their female counterparts. As discussed in the figure caption for table 2, approximately 95% of Portage County residents identify as “white, alone” on the United States census. As with overdose deaths, deaths by suicide of members in the racial groups specified above are fairly proportional to the racial makeup of Portage County.

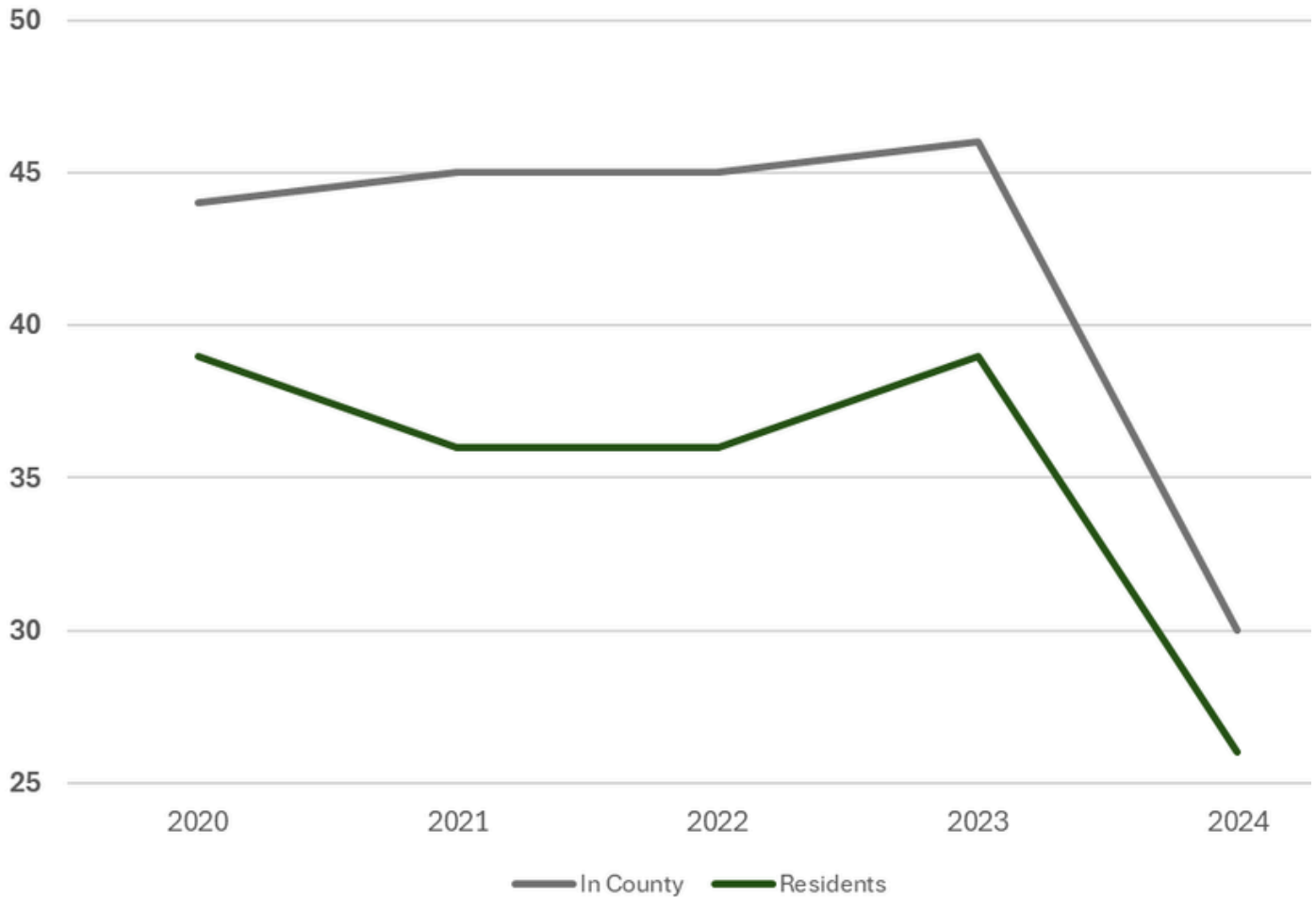
# CORONER'S REPORT DATA

Pages 29-32 contain information obtained from the Portage County Coroner's report. The 2024 Coroner's report is not yet finalized, and it contains deaths that are still under investigation. PCHD thanks the Coroner's office and MHRB for providing this valuable data source.

The Coroner's office signs death certificates for individuals pronounced dead in Portage County, and as such, the Coroner's report contains overdose and suicide deaths that occurred in Portage County regardless of the individual's place of residence. Deaths that occurred within Portage County are shown below in grey. Deaths of Portage County residents that occurred within Portage County are shown below in green.

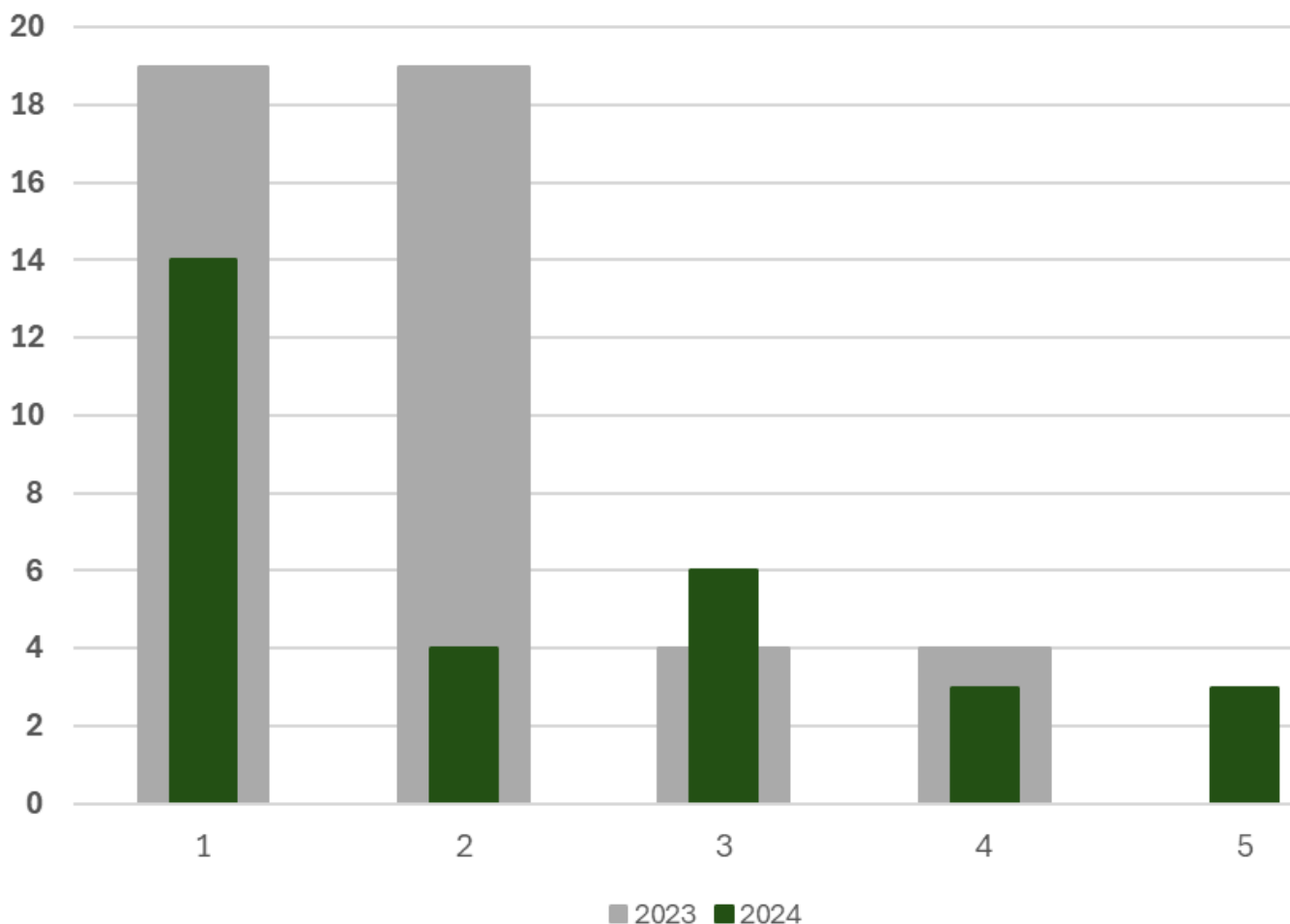
**Disclaimer:** *"Overdose death" is a subjective term. The Portage County Coroner's office and the Ohio Department of Health's Bureau of Vital Statistics define an overdose death differently. Furthermore, their reports differ in scope. This is reflected in the variable estimates of the number of suicide and overdose deaths between the two datasets.*

## Annual Overdose Deaths



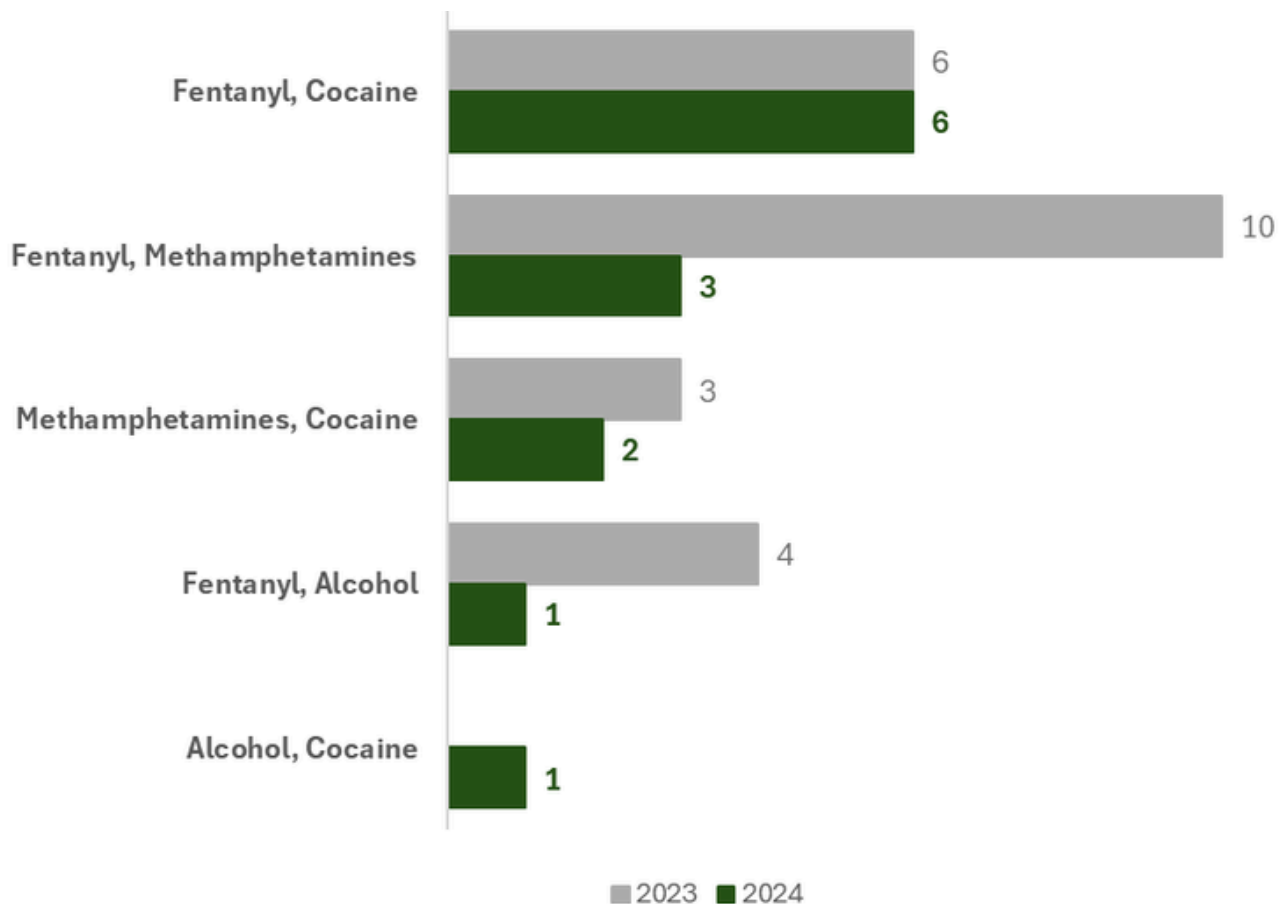
**Figure 14.** A chart showing overdose deaths from 2020-2024. Deaths that occurred within Portage County are shown in grey, and deaths of Portage County residents that occurred within Portage County are shown in green. Because many people use drugs at or near the location where the drugs were purchased, it is not unusual for individuals to overdose outside their county of residence. As stated on page 28, the 2024 Coroner's report has not been finalized yet. However, it is current up to October of 2024, so Portage County is on track to have the lowest number of overdose deaths in the last five years. This may be the result of widespread naloxone distribution efforts by several community agencies, including PCHD.

## Number of Substances Involved in Overdose Deaths



**Figure 15.** A chart showing the number of substances involved in overdose deaths. The grey bars indicate deaths from 2023, and the dark green bars indicate deaths from 2024. In 2023, the majority of overdose deaths involved one or two substances. In 2024, the majority of overdose deaths involved one substance, followed by three substances. Additionally, in 2024, three overdose deaths involved five substances. This data is somewhat concerning, as it might represent a shift towards simultaneously using more and more substances over time. According to the CDC, “mixing drugs is never safe because the effects from combining drugs may be stronger and more unpredictable than one drug alone, and even deadly.” For over-the-counter or prescription medications, read the labels very carefully and only take them as instructed to avoid drug interactions. If you have questions about what drugs can be taken together safely, make sure to ask your Primary Care Provider or pharmacist.

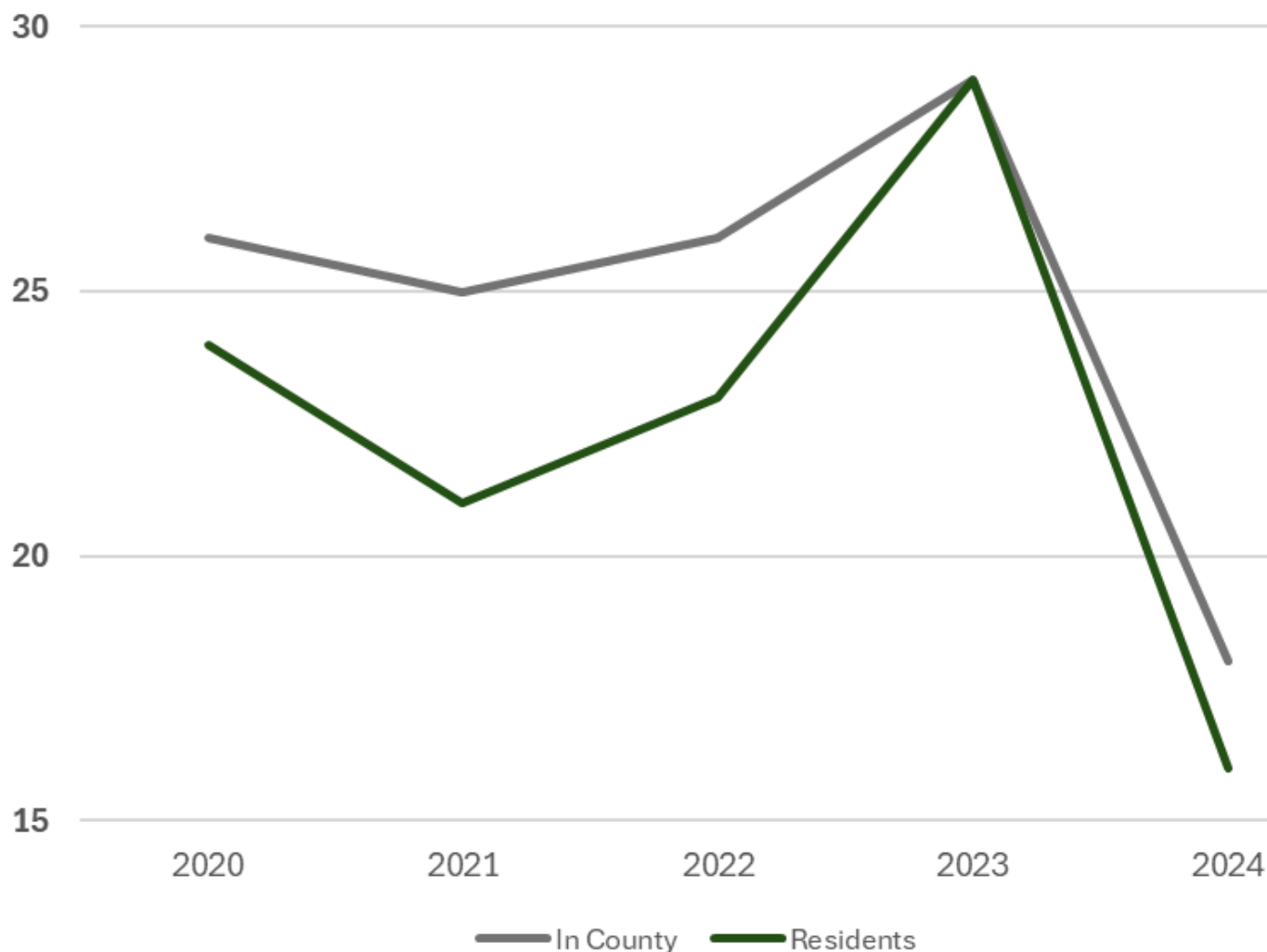
## Combinations of Substances Involved in Overdose Deaths



**Figure 16.** A chart showing some combinations of substances involved in overdose deaths. The drug combinations seen in the chart are not mutually exclusive, or comprehensive. The grey bars indicate deaths from 2023, and the dark green bars indicate deaths from 2024. All of the combinations shown here, aside from methamphetamines and cocaine, are mixes of stimulants with depressants. Stimulants, also referred to as “uppers,” increase heart rate and blood pressure, while depressants (“downers”) slow down breathing. Examples of stimulants include cocaine and methamphetamines, while fentanyl and alcohol are depressants. According to the CDC, “mixing stimulants and depressants doesn't balance or cancel them out. In fact, the results of combining drugs are unpredictable, often modifying or even masking the effects of one or both drugs. This may trick you into thinking that the drugs are not affecting you, making it easier to overdose.”



## Annual Suicide Deaths



**Figure 17.** A chart showing deaths by suicide from 2020-2024. Deaths that occurred within Portage County are shown in grey, and deaths of Portage County residents that occurred within Portage County are shown in green. In 2023, there were slightly more deaths to suicide than in the previous years. However, there was a sharp decrease in the number of suicide deaths in 2024. As stated on page 28, the 2024 Coroner's report has not been finalized yet. However, it is current up to October of 2024, so Portage County is on track to have the lowest number of suicide deaths in the last five years. There have been initiatives by several Portage County community agencies to address mental health, and specifically suicide, over the last few years. Signs of Suicide training, QPR training, gun lock distribution, sextortion trainings and more. We hope that that the decrease in deaths by suicide are the result of these efforts.