

# Cowlitz County deaths from suicide, drug/alcohol overdose, and COVID-19: 2015-2021

— *Final death counts* —

In the spring of 2021, Cowlitz County Health & Human Services released a [report](#) focused on deaths from COVID-19, drug/alcohol overdose, and suicide — particularly among youth and young adults. This report was produced in response to questions we had received from the community.

Final data for 2021 were not yet available at the time that report was published, so we used preliminary data and provided context for how the figures might change once final. We are publishing this update now that final death counts for 2021 are available.

Most of our reports provide population rates in addition to counts. Rates allow us to take population growth and aging into account when measuring time trends. Because final population data are not yet available for 2021, this report does not include rates for that year.

Our original report defined a COVID death as any death in which COVID-19 played a significant role. This included deaths whose underlying cause of death was COVID-19 as well as those deaths with a non-COVID-19 cause of death but in which COVID-19 played a significant role. Most cause of death analysis considers only the underlying cause. So, we have updated our definition to be consistent with this methodology and are no longer including deaths with an underlying cause of death other than COVID-19.

More details, including answers to frequently asked questions, can be found in the [original report](#).

*Have questions?* Let us know! Email:  
**[AskCowlitzHealth@co.cowlitz.wa.us](mailto:AskCowlitzHealth@co.cowlitz.wa.us)**



**Cowlitz County Health  
and Human Services**

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# Key Findings

**FINAL DATA SHOW** that 252 Cowlitz County residents died of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021.

We are publishing this report to better understand how those deaths compare to deaths from drug/alcohol overdose, and suicide, in Cowlitz County.

**Citing death certificate data from 2015-2021, our analysis breaks down deaths by age and identifies the causes.**

## 2020 & 2021 DATA FOR COWLITZ COUNTY YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS SHOW:

### AGES 0-17

- **No deaths** from **COVID-19**.
- **No deaths** from **DRUG/ALCOHOL OVERDOSE**.
- Too few **SUICIDE** deaths to report.
- In this age group, over the 20 years before the pandemic, Cowlitz County had an average of about one suicide every other year.

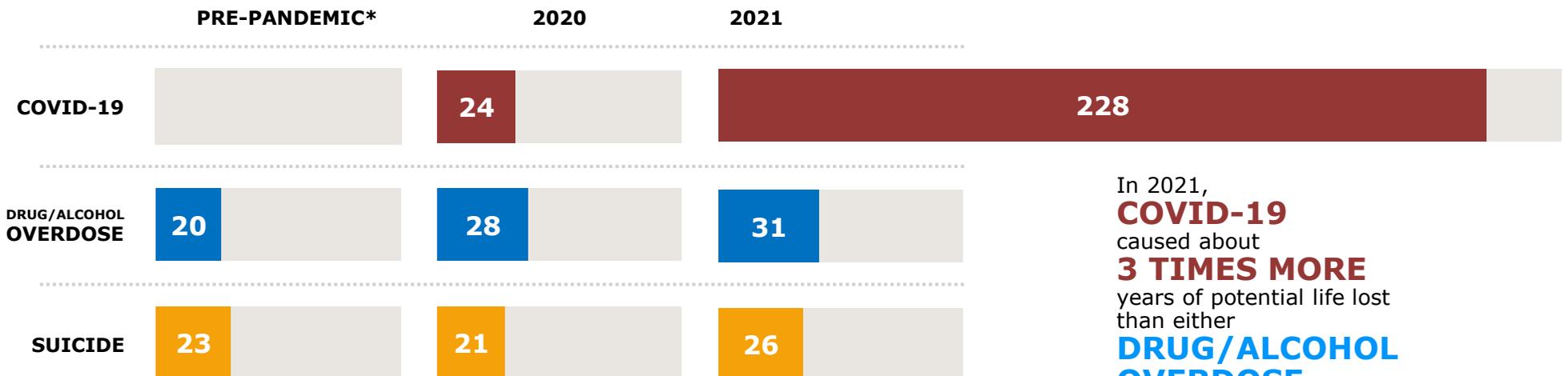
### AGES 18-34

- **No deaths** from **COVID-19** in 2020 & too few to report in 2021.
- Too few deaths from **DRUG/ALCOHOL OVERDOSE** to report.
- Too few deaths from **SUICIDE** to report.

### AGES 35-49

- Too few deaths from **COVID-19** to report in 2020. **18 deaths** made this the **leading cause of death in this age group in 2021**.
- Too few deaths to report in **2020**, and **11 deaths in 2021**, from **DRUG/ALCOHOL OVERDOSE**.
- Too few **SUICIDE** deaths to report.

## Cowlitz County COVID-19, Drug/Alcohol Overdose & Suicide Deaths: 2015-2021



\*PRE-PANDEMIC FIGURES ARE AVERAGE ANNUAL COUNTS FOR 2015-2019.

In 2021, **COVID-19** caused about **3 TIMES MORE** years of potential life lost than either **DRUG/ALCOHOL OVERDOSE** or **SUICIDE**.

# Our Findings

**TO LEARN HOW** many people died in 2020 and 2021 compared to previous years, we report the total number of deaths. We do not have final population data for 2021, which we need to factor in population growth and aging. As a result, time trends are not available for 2021.

The Washington State Department of Health (WA DOH) has recently begun work to estimate the number of excess deaths in 2020 and 2021. Their preliminary findings are similar to ours in our [original report](#). In lieu of re-calculating those figures for Cowlitz County, we will rely on WA DOH's findings once they are published.



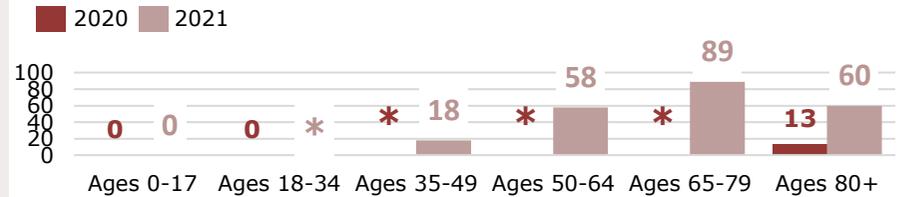
\*TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY, AND TO ENSURE WE ARE REPORTING STATISTICALLY STABLE FIGURES, WE TYPICALLY DO NOT ANALYZE OR REPORT COUNTS OF FEWER THAN 10.

# Deaths due to COVID-19, SUICIDE, & DRUG/ALCOHOL OVERDOSE

Have Cowlitz County youth or young adults died of COVID-19?

**AGES 0-17:** No deaths in 2020 or 2021.  
**AGES 18-34:** No deaths in 2020. Too few deaths to report in 2021.  
**AGES 35-49:** Too few deaths to report in 2020. **18** deaths in 2021.  
*Note: Statewide COVID-19 death counts were not available to include in this report.*

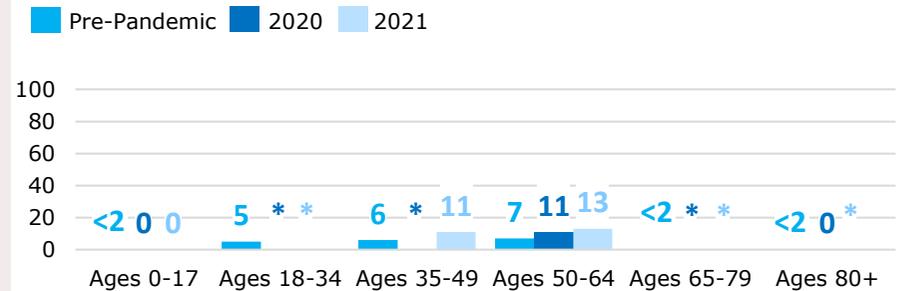
**COVID-19 Deaths: All Residents by Age (2020-2021)**



Has there been an increase in DRUG/ALCOHOL OVERDOSE DEATHS among youth and young adults?

**AGES 0-17:** No deaths.  
**AGES 18-34:** Too few deaths to report.  
**AGES 35-49:** Average of 6 deaths each year prior to the pandemic. Too few deaths to report in 2020. **11** deaths in 2021. We do not have final population data for 2021, which we need to factor in population growth. As a result, precise time trends are not available.

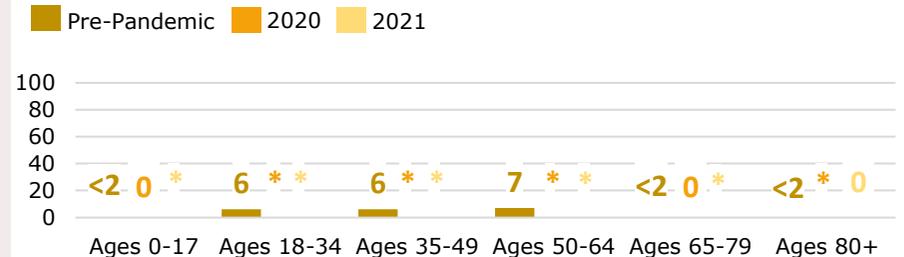
**Drug/Alcohol Overdose Deaths All Residents by Age (2015-2021)**



Has there been an increase in SUICIDES among youth and young adults?

**AGES 0-17:** No deaths in 2020; too few deaths to report in 2021.  
**AGES 18-34, 35-49:** Too few deaths to report.

**Suicide Deaths : All Residents by Age (2015-2021)**



\* Asterisks (\*) represent counts of fewer than 10. To protect confidentiality, and to ensure we are reporting statistically stable figures, we typically do not analyze or report counts of between 1-9.  
 \*\* Pre-pandemic figures are average annual counts for 2015-2019.

+TIME TRENDS TAKE INTO ACCOUNT POPULATION GROWTH AND AGING.