

Are Delaware's drug overdoses happening in your neighborhood?

Brittany Horn, Delaware News Journal Published 10:23 a.m. ET Nov. 1, 2018 | Updated 10:30 a.m. ET Nov. 3, 2018



(Photo: Suchat Pederson, The News Journal)

Overdoses happen every single day in Delaware.

But in Wilmington, near North Jackson and West Seventh streets in the Hilltop and Cool Spring neighborhoods, they happen more than anywhere else in the state.

Here, in this Census tract, the drug overdose death rate is six times higher than the state average, claiming 195.3 lives per every 100,000 people.

A few blocks from this intersection, [outreach workers from Brandywine Counseling and Community Services offer free syringes \(/story/news/local/heroindelaware/2017/12/27/delawares-needle-exchange-program-gives-consistency-amid-turmoil/961020001/\)](#) once a week in exchange for used needles. People come regularly, relying on the consistency of the van and its services to keep them safe and alive.

In this place, heroin is a part of life.

Buy Photo



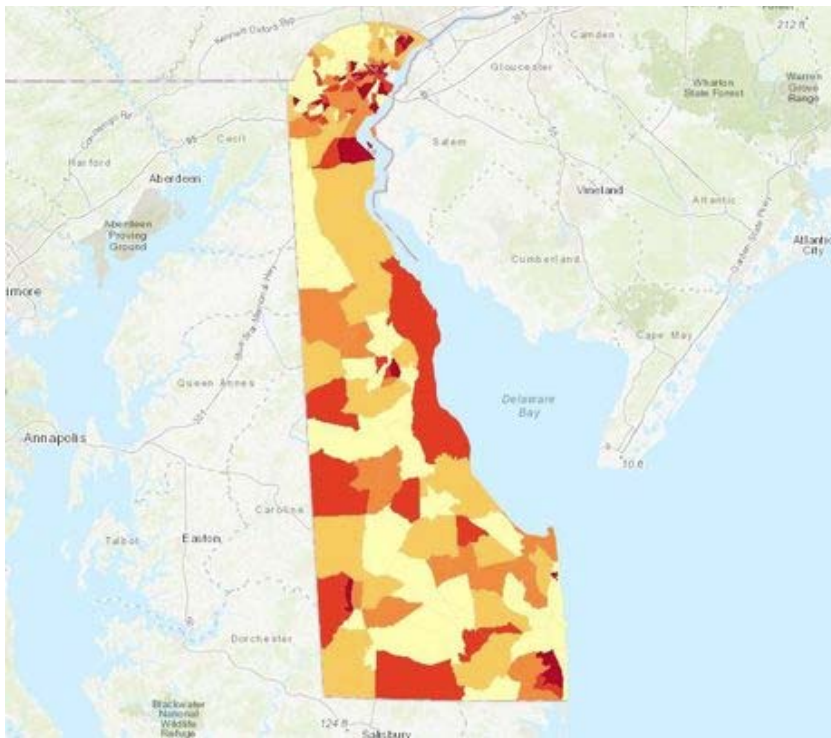
Andre Rider, an outreach worker for Brandywine Counseling, talks with a frequent visitor of the needle exchange van before she turned in her used needles for new ones. *(Photo: Jennifer Corbett, The News Journal)*

But this little sliver of Wilmington is not alone. The deaths occur nearly everywhere in the state.

Go to Delaware City, where the death rate is nearly as high as this part of Wilmington. Or try the Brookland Terrace and Anglesey neighborhoods near Prices Corner where overdose deaths are also nearly as frequent.

Researchers from the University of Delaware are now using this data to answer questions (<http://udel.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=f6bfa2985e3747d9bae1d70a9326ff0b#>) like where are the most deaths happening and who are they affecting? They're also trying to determine what the driving factor is behind these deaths.

Especially when the state has lost 246 people so far this year to suspected drug overdoses.



This map, produced by University of Delaware researchers, shows overdose concentration throughout the state in 2017. The darker the color, the more overdoses occurred in that specific area. (Photo: Horn, Brittany)

What is this project and how can I use it?

The university's Center for Health and Drug Studies publicly launched Tuesday the Delaware Opioid Metric Intelligence Project, a series of maps that show where Delaware overdoses are happening, who they're affecting and where those in need can find help.

The data, which ranges from 2013 to 2017, can be broken up by Census tract, zip code, house district or county.

[Explore the full map at the bottom at this page.](#)

Viewers can also learn characteristics of that particular community or area like the population, median home value, percentage of people living in poverty and the percentage of people who are uninsured.



This neighborhood in the area of N. Jackson Street and W. 7th Street is one of the top overdose concentrations areas in the state. (Photo: Suchat Pederson, *The News Journal*)

Led by the university's Tammy Anderson and her co-investigator, Daniel O'Connell, the project – funded by the National Institute of Justice – aims to be a resource not only for policymakers and leaders trying to fight the epidemic, but also for Delaware residents in need of answers and help. UD researchers James Highberger, Jascha Wagner, Logan Neitzke-Spruill and Joshua Stout also contributed to this project.

Though this data doesn't give any particular identifiers about the people dying in these areas, it shows a clear picture of Delaware's battle with addiction and where death is occurring.

New Castle County is hit hardest

New Castle County remains the area of the state most impacted in the heroin and opioid epidemic by far. Wilmington's concentration of overdoses adds to those numbers, as do the pockets throughout the county of high rates of death.



New Castle County had the highest rate of drug overdose deaths in 2017, followed by Sussex County and then Kent County. (Photo: Horn, Brittany)

However, that wasn't always the case. When the state began tracking data in 2013, Kent County led in overdose deaths for the first two years. Sussex County also carried much of the state's burden – a trait that many in the state attribute to lack of resources there.

Police and other agencies continue to struggle to get a grasp of how and what is driving the epidemic in Delaware's more rural regions, and how to ensure services are reaching those who don't live in one of the area's cities or towns.

[Heroin epidemic moves into Delaware's small towns and swamps police \(/story/news/local/heroindelaware/2018/08/02/policing-delaware-heroin-addiction-sussex-county-delaware/825054002/\)](https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/local/heroindelaware/2018/08/02/policing-delaware-heroin-addiction-sussex-county-delaware/825054002/)

In Sussex, death both spread out, concentrated

Last year, Sussex County saw the highest rates of overdose deaths in parts of Seaford, Ocean View and Rehoboth Beach. Though the rates aren't nearly as high as in some parts of Wilmington and New Castle County, they starkly differ from surrounding areas in Sussex.

In Seaford, the Atlanta Estates/Heritage Village neighborhood (or Census tract) reported an overdose death rate of nearly 96 people per 100,000. All of those deaths were related to opioids, according to the map.



A man walks along the streets of Seaford where DuPont once offered thousands of jobs keeping the town prosperous. (Photo: Jennifer Corbett, The News Journal)

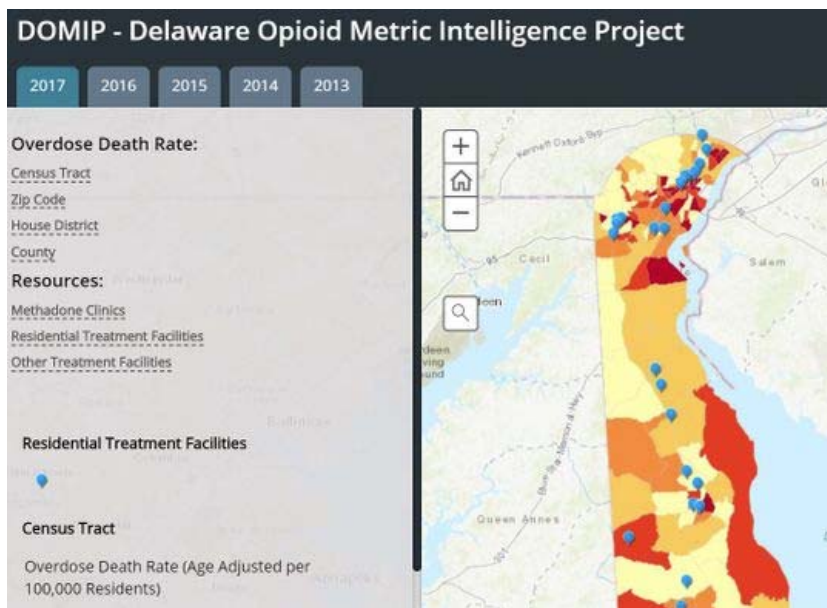
Along the coast, the Town Center in Ocean View reported an overdose death rate nearly just as high, with a little more than 93 people dying per 100,000, according to the map. About 80 percent of those deaths were opioid-related.

[More than half of July's overdoses happened in Sussex County, prompting state warnin \(/story/news/local/heroindelaware/2018/07/18/delawares-overdose-spike-hits-sussex-county-7-12-deaths/797394002/\)](https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/local/heroindelaware/2018/07/18/delawares-overdose-spike-hits-sussex-county-7-12-deaths/797394002/)

And in Rehoboth Beach, in the areas of Bayard Avenue and Stockley Street, the numbers are higher than anywhere else. About 112 people die from drug overdoses per 100,000. All stem from opioids.

Help exists. Here's where it's available

The map can also serve as a resource for those looking for services and treatment in their area. Multiple layers exist on the map to allow viewers to find nearby methadone clinics, residential treatment facilities and other treatment facilities.



This screenshot of the Delaware Opioid Metric Intelligence Project shows where residential treatment facilities are located throughout the state. (Photo: Delaware Opioid Metric Intelligence Project)

When map users click on the marker, they're provided with the name of the facility, its location and a contact phone number to get in touch.

The goal is to create both a resource for policymakers and for residents trying to better understand the epidemic.

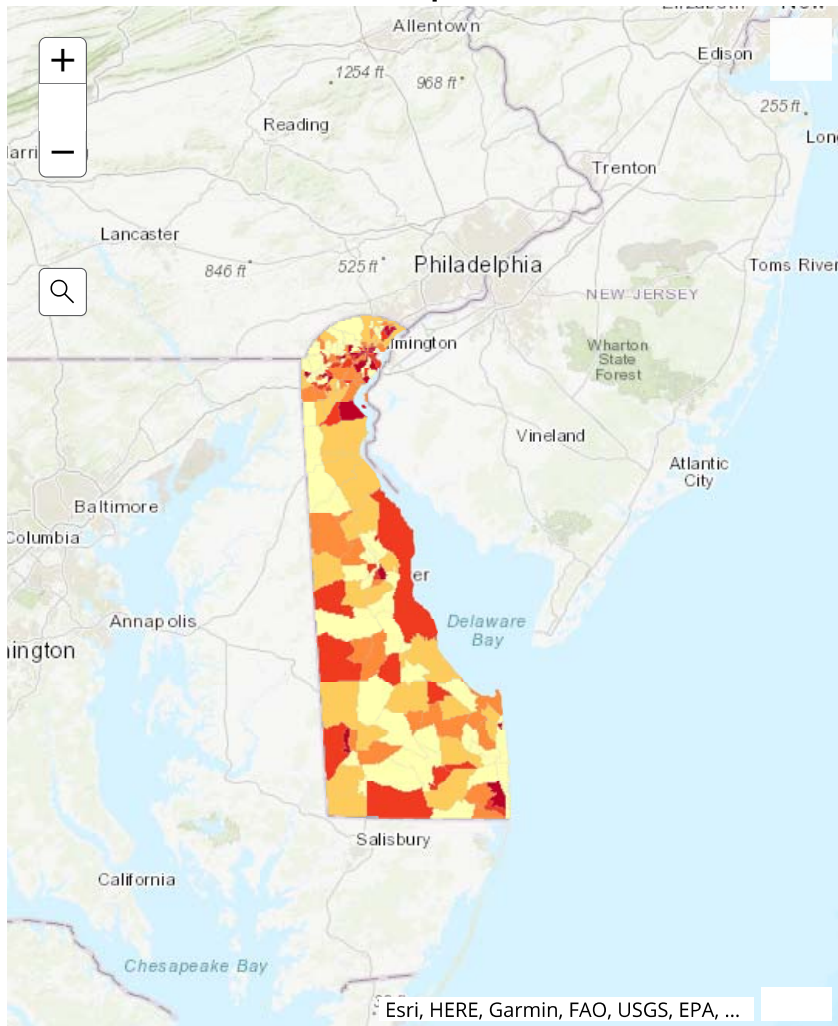
Anderson and her colleagues in a recent paper stressed that there is more to understanding the data than just looking at geography. Further differences exist within urban communities – which remain more impacted by overdose deaths than rural areas – than may meet the eye.

The paper, titled "Understanding Geographic and Neighborhood Variations in Overdose Death Rates," ultimately calls for further study and renewed efforts to understand how different communities are impacted.

It says, in closing: "Inevitably, this calls for interventions that are equally far-reaching, but also tailored to suit the needs of the diverse populations that are disproportionately affected."

Explore the map yourself:

DOMIP - Delaware Opioid Metric Intell...



2017

Next: 2016

esri A Story Map



DELAWARE'S STRUGGLE WITH ADDICTION

[The Newark man whose overdose death prompted a federal drug indictment \(/story/news/crime/2018/10/26/newark-delaware-man-whose-overdose-death-prompted-federal-drug-indictment/1760001002/\)](#)

[These injections can help Delawareans overcome their heroin addiction \(/story/news/local/heroindelaware/2018/10/18/these-injections-can-help-delawareans-overcome-their-heroin-addiction/1564267002/\)](#)

[What heroin costs Delaware — in lives and money \(/story/news/local/heroindelaware/2017/11/29/what-heroin-opioids-cost-delaware/842267001/\)](#)

Contact Brittany Horn at (302) 324-2771 or bhorn@delawareonline.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@brittanyhorn](https://twitter.com/brittanyhorn).