

MOVCAC – Wetzel County Excess Death Analysis

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Based on population numbers provided by [West Virginia Demographics](#), Wetzel County ranks thirty-eighth in the state with 13,890 total residents. MOVCAC has performed numerous detailed analyses on Wood County excess death. Via that analysis, we confirmed that 2021 saw the highest levels of death experienced in recent history. Based on that analysis and the publication of the 2021 vital statistics by the WV DHHR, we are finally able to provide an analysis of this excess death phenomenon for each county in West Virginia.

As you will see in the age-range details below, Wetzel County was unique in the way that they have experienced excess death. The increase in death in 2020 was half of what the state as a whole experienced. However just like forty-seven of the fifty-five West Virginia counties, Wetzel County set its record for total death in 2021. What is unique about Wetzel County and 2021 is that each of the age-ranges, where a value greater than zero was reported in 2021, set a record for total death:

Year	Total WV Death	Percent Change
2011	21,870	
2012	21,651	-1.00%
2013	21,846	0.90%
2014	22,164	1.46%
2015	22,643	2.16%
2016	22,721	0.34%
2017	23,290	2.50%
2018	23,462	0.74%
2019	23,291	-0.73%
2020	26,108	12.09%
2021	29,402	26.24%

Year	Total Wetzel County Death	Percent Change
2011	227	
2012	223	-1.76%
2013	221	-0.90%
2014	218	-1.36%
2015	210	-3.67%
2016	196	-6.67%
2017	251	28.06%
2018	235	-6.37%
2019	221	-5.96%
2020	236	6.79%
2021	322	45.70%

Data source - https://dhhr.wv.gov/HSC/SS/Vital_Statistics/Pages/Vital_Statistics.aspx

Note – While each of the other years in the tables above are compared to the prior year, 2021 is compared to the pre-pandemic year of 2019. It makes no sense to compare 2021 to an already pandemic-effected elevated death total in 2020.

The 45.7% increase in total death in 2021 (over the pre-pandemic year of 2019) ranks third highest in the state. In order to understand how each county performed during the height of the pandemic, I compared 2021 death to 2019 and 2021 death to 2020 and ranked each county by percent increase. Wetzel County is only one of three counties (Wirt and Lewis were the other two) to rank in the top six for increase in death in both year comparisons.

2021 Change Over 2019					2021 Change Over 2020				
County	2019	2020	2021	Change	County	2019	2020	2021	Change
1 Wirt	57	69	87	52.63%	1 Tyler	115	98	144	46.94%
2 Lewis	232	268	352	51.72%	2 Wetzel	221	236	322	36.44%
3 Wetzel	221	236	322	45.70%	3 Lewis	232	268	352	31.34%
4 Summers	180	222	261	45.00%	4 Webster	124	119	153	28.57%
5 Wyoming	291	379	414	42.27%	5 Harrison	921	866	1,103	27.37%
6 Taylor	190	253	270	42.11%	6 Wirt	57	69	87	26.09%
7 Berkeley	1,097	1,372	1,535	39.93%	7 Randolph	383	391	486	24.30%
8 Doddridge	68	91	95	39.71%	8 Mason	390	398	493	23.87%
9 Wayne	523	636	722	38.05%	9 Nicholas	351	354	438	23.73%
10 Preston	358	439	491	37.15%	10 Braxton	180	172	210	22.09%

What happened in Wetzel County in 2021? The pandemic was new in 2020 and there were no vaccines available until 2021. Wouldn't common sense tell you that our 2020 experience should be worse than 2021?

The age-ranged tables that follow were created by compiling each year’s age-ranged data provided on the “Age at Death by County of Residence” table in the appendix section of each year’s [Vital Statistics Report published by DHHR from 2011 to 2020](#). The 2021 report no longer contains these detailed schedules. We contacted the DHHR for the 2021 details and were provided a spreadsheet containing the county level detail.

Age Ranges of Concern

The following are the tables for age ranges with the most alarming trends culminating in 2021. Please note, many of these deaths are occurring in our working age citizens. Shouldn’t this be investigated by our elected officials?

(*)Note – For each of the age ranges below, the two highest years in regards to total death are identified by the bold boxes. The percent change column is comparing totals for each year to the prior year for years 2011 through 2020. For the 2021 percent change calculation, the next highest death total is identified and used as the comparison year.

The most concerning thing to note about Wetzel County is that EVERY age range that had a value over zero in 2021 either tied (25-34) or set the record for death in Wetzel County.

Age Range 25-34		
Year	Total Death	Percent
2011	5	
2012	2	-60.00%
2013	2	0.00%
2014	2	0.00%
2015	4	100.00%
2016	2	-50.00%
2017	6	200.00%
2018	5	-16.67%
2019	1	-80.00%
2020	6	500.00%
2021 *	6	0.00%

Age Range 35-44		
Year	Total Death	Percent
2011	3	
2012	7	133.33%
2013	5	-28.57%
2014	3	-40.00%
2015	5	66.67%
2016	7	40.00%
2017	4	-42.86%
2018	5	25.00%
2019	4	-20.00%
2020	2	-50.00%
2021 *	9	28.57%

The 25-34 age range tied the record at 6 in 2021. Death in the 35-44 range had been declining since 2016. Again, 2021 set the record for death.

Age Range 45-54

Year	Total Death	Percent Change
2011	19	
2012	16	-15.79%
2013	12	-25.00%
2014	12	0.00%
2015	9	-25.00%
2016	11	22.22%
2017	14	27.27%
2018	11	-21.43%
2019	13	18.18%
2020	16	23.08%
2021 *	21	10.53%

Age Range 55-64

Year	Total Death	Percent Change
2011	20	
2012	33	65.00%
2013	27	-18.18%
2014	25	-7.41%
2015	29	16.00%
2016	31	6.90%
2017	26	-16.13%
2018	28	7.69%
2019	26	-7.14%
2020	20	-23.08%
2021 *	50	51.52%

The 45-54 age range set its record in 2011 and had never been above sixteen since. All of a sudden, 2021 sets the record.

All of the above age ranges make up the working-age population of Wetzel County. Are we investigating any of this excess death? Do we care about the 51.52% rise in death in the 55-64 age range where the previous record was set a decade earlier?

Age Range 65-74

Year	Total Death	Percent Change
2011	44	
2012	36	-18.18%
2013	57	58.33%
2014	40	-29.82%
2015	45	12.50%
2016	37	-17.78%
2017	47	27.03%
2018	53	12.77%
2019	44	-16.98%
2020	49	11.36%
2021 *	63	10.53%

Age Range 75-84

Year	Total Death	Percent Change
2011	67	
2012	67	0.00%
2013	57	-14.93%
2014	62	8.77%
2015	54	-12.90%
2016	54	0.00%
2017	83	53.70%
2018	63	-24.10%
2019	61	-3.17%
2020	75	22.95%
2021 *	87	4.82%

Age Range 85+

Year	Total Death	Percent Change
2011	65	
2012	58	-10.77%
2013	57	-1.72%
2014	71	24.56%
2015	60	-15.49%
2016	51	-15.00%
2017	65	27.45%
2018	67	3.08%
2019	70	4.48%
2020	63	-10.00%
2021 *	75	5.63%

In the age ranges above, none of the increases are as outlandish as the 55-64 age range. However, each set a new record in 2021.

The state as a whole is showing astounding increases in death for 2021. Unlike all other counties in West Virginia, Wetzel County set records in each age range where a value greater than zero exists in the 2021 date provided by DHHR.

Below is the raw data extracted from DHHR reporting since 2011 for Wetzel County:

Wetzel County Excess Death Analysis 2011 - 2021															
Year	Age-Range Detail														Calculated
	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+	Total	
2011	1	0	0	0	3	0	5	3	19	20	44	67	65	227	
2012	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	7	16	33	36	67	58	223	
2013	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	5	12	27	57	57	57	221	
2014	0	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	12	25	40	62	71	218	
2015	2	0	0	0	0	2	4	5	9	29	45	54	60	210	
2016	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	7	11	31	37	54	51	196	
2017	2	0	0	1	1	2	6	4	14	26	47	83	65	251	
2018	0	0	0	0	1	2	5	5	11	28	53	63	67	235	
2019	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	13	26	44	61	70	221	
2020	1	0	0	0	2	2	6	2	16	20	49	75	63	236	
2021		0	-	-	-		6	9	21	50	63	87	75	311	

DHHR purposely suppressed all values between 1-4 in the detail provided in 2021. For that reason, the calculated total in 2021 of 311 does not tie to the West Virginia Death By County table on page one where 322 Wetzel County deaths are recorded. Many changes were made to the DHHR reporting in 2021. In addition to the suppression of death values of 1 through 4, the report no longer provides County-Level detail, or ICD-10 (cause of death code) detail.

As you can see, there are no deaths reported in the 2021 DHHR detail for the following age ranges:

- <1
- 1-4
- 5-9
- 10-14
- 15-19
- 20-24

In every other age range, Wetzel County set the record for deaths.

If you are concerned about this catastrophic rise in Wetzel County death (as documented by your state), please consider sharing this information with state leaders responsible for representing your population.

Delegates –

- CHARLES R. SHEEDY SR. (R) – MARSHALL - charles.sheedy@wvhouse.gov
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Senators –

- MICHAEL J. MARONEY (R) – MARSHALL - mike.maroney@wvsenate.gov
- CHARLES H. CLEMENTS (R) – WETZEL - charles.clements@wvsenate.gov

Please note – After the election, your delegate or senator may change. After November 5, 2024, please refer to the new rosters as published on the legislature’s website –

House Roster - <https://www.wvlegislature.gov/house/roster.cfm>

Senate Roster - <https://www.wvlegislature.gov/Senate1/roster.cfm>