

MOVAC – McDowell County Excess Death Analysis

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Based on population numbers provided by [West Virginia Demographics](#), McDowell County ranks thirty-third in the state with 17,439 total residents. MOVAC 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 can see from the two tables below, McDowell County’s total death experience closely mirrored the increases realized at the state level if you only look at the 2020 and 2021 increases. When looking at the previous nine years, 2020 is not at all out of line with historical trends. And although 2021 set the record for the 11-year span, that record only eclipsed the previous record set in 2012 by 6.31%:

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 McDowell County Death	Percent Change
2011	381	
2012	396	3.94%
2013	369	-6.82%
2014	305	-17.34%
2015	348	14.10%
2016	337	-3.16%
2017	294	-12.76%
2018	372	26.53%
2019	317	-14.78%
2020	366	15.46%
2021	426	34.38%

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.

McDowell County definitely fared better than most in West Virginia when only looking at the total death. Even so, the age-ranged analysis below shows very concerning increases.

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.

Age Range 55-64		
Year	Total Death	Percent Change
2011	79	
2012	60	-24.05%
2013	66	10.00%
2014	52	-21.21%
2015	71	36.54%
2016	64	-9.86%
2017	58	-9.38%
2018	67	15.52%
2019	57	-14.93%
2020	82	43.86%
2021 *	88	7.32%

Age Range 65-74		
Year	Total Death	Percent Change
2011	61	
2012	89	45.90%
2013	83	-6.74%
2014	59	-28.92%
2015	84	42.37%
2016	73	-13.10%
2017	70	-4.11%
2018	86	22.86%
2019	78	-9.30%
2020	110	41.03%
2021 *	120	9.09%

The increase in death for 55-64-year-olds in McDowell County from 2019 to 2020 looks astounding upon first glance. However, 2019 was one of the lowest death totals in the nine pre-pandemic years. If we instead compare 2020 to the average for the previous nine years (63.78), we still see an alarming increase of 28.57%. That increase is then eclipsed by another 7.32% in 2021. Why are we setting such large records of death in this working-age category in 2020 and 2021?

For the 65-74 age range, McDowell County saw record total death in 2020. Then, 2021 saw that total death rise again by 9.09% to a new record. Why are we seeing record death levels in 2021?

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

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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>