

# Unlocking the Opioid Crisis

Pursuing a community free from addiction, overdose, & drug-induced death



Substance abuse aggravates existing social, economic, and personal challenges across all types of communities. A resident may have substance use disorder if they have a compulsive urge to use drugs, even when not medically necessary.

Substance use disorders are a consequence of complicated relationships between genetics and psychological and environmental conditions. Because of this, the indicators below will not be comprehensive, but they will help your community begin to address conditions that make addiction more likely.

In this report, we'll examine key aspects of vulnerability to substance use disorder, including:

- Mental Health
- Hopelessness
- Social Isolation
- Education
- Behaviors
- Accessibility
- Drug Overdose Death Rates

## Mental Health

At its core, using substances gives people a temporary refuge from their **physical and psychological pain**. Opioid tolerance and dependence can develop after just five days<sup>1</sup>, and people with an untreated psychiatric disorder are at greater risk<sup>2</sup> for developing a substance use disorder.

 **28.4%**  
People  
Less Than 7 Hours Sleep Among Adults

 **11.4%**  
People  
Poor Mental Health Among Adults

Sources: CDC BRFSS PLACES 2020

## Hopelessness

Some psychological pain is community-wide. These measures help identify hopelessness in situations where getting ahead seems impossible.

These indicators [contribute to poor mental health](#)<sup>2</sup> and lack of sleep.

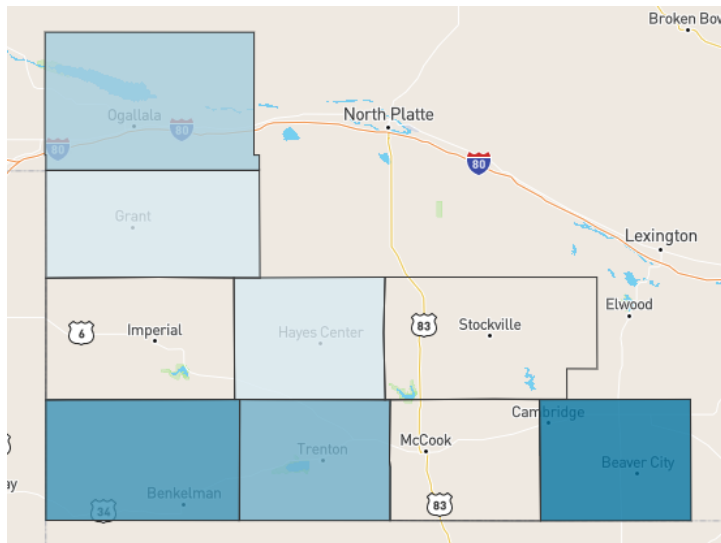
### Hopelessness

#### Southwest Nebraska

Worked Full Time Past Year with Income Below Poverty Level	1.2%
People Below Poverty Level	10.8%
Low Income Population	29.7%
Unemployment Rate	3%
Health Insurance Coverage - Uninsured per civilian noninstitutionalized capita	8.4%
Overcrowded Housing Units	148 Housing units
Median Household Income	\$54,936 USD

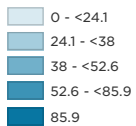
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2017-2021

### Violent crime rate per 100,000 people



© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

#### Crime Rates by Type - Violent



Sources: FBI UCR 2021

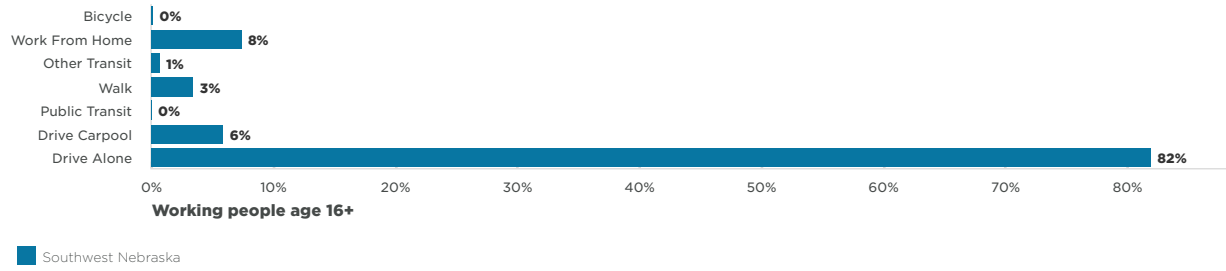
## Social Isolation

Social isolation can create and feed into feelings of hopelessness and build the perception that no one cares or wants to help. Commute means of transportation and walkability scores are proxies for the built environment's ability to encourage frequent connections among community members, reducing social isolation.

A lengthy commute and commuting alone can negatively impact mental health and limit residents' opportunities to forge social connections. Walkability may improve happiness and satisfaction and [reduce](#)

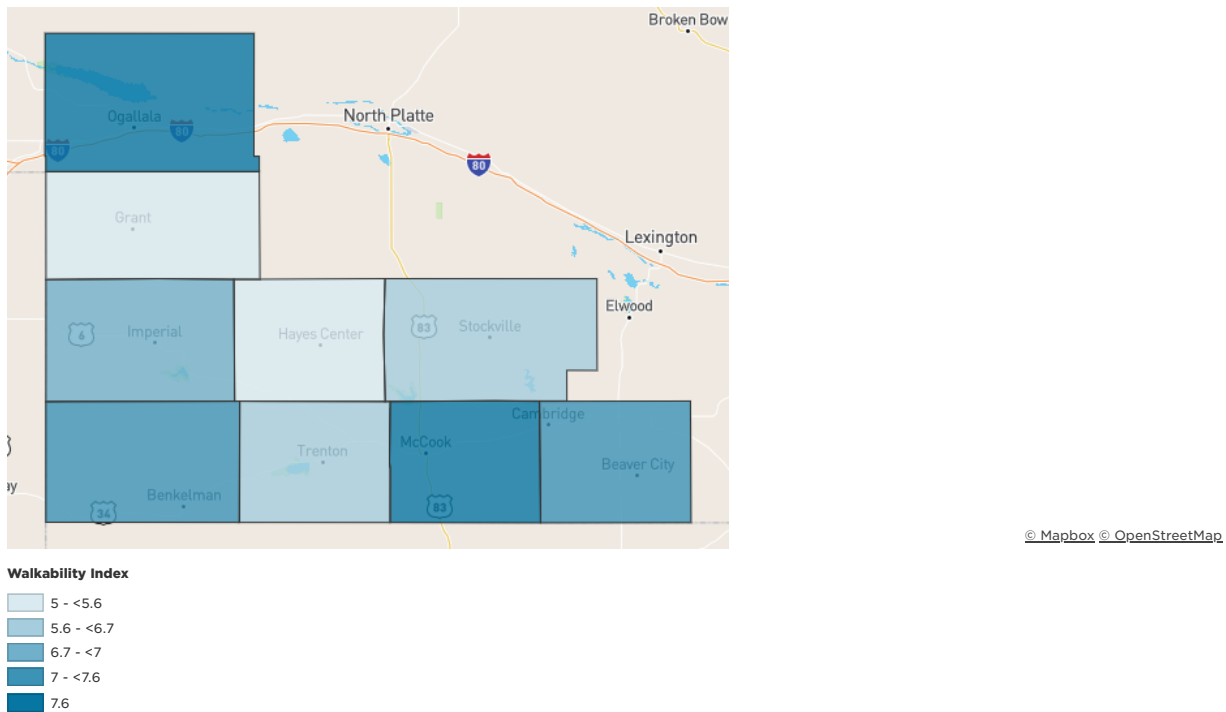
loneliness<sup>1</sup>. Walkability scores range between 1 and 20; the lower the score, the less walkable the area.

### How Working Adults Typically Travel to Work



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2017-2021

### Walkability Index



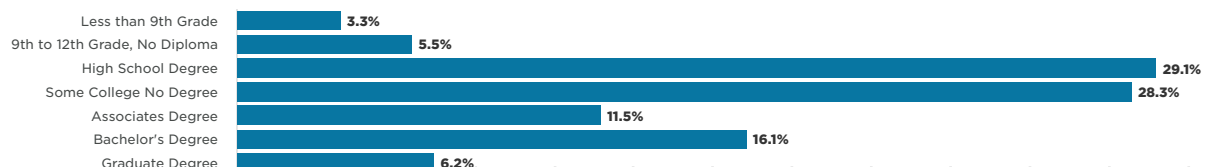
Sources: EPA 2019

## Education

Education is a key aspect of substance use disorder, both as a prevention method and as a risk factor based on educational attainment.

Young adults not attending college may have a greater rate of methamphetamine use. In addition, lower levels of educational attainment could also be related to higher rates of opioid prescriptions<sup>2</sup> in the emergency room. Education can play into hopelessness too, especially if a resident's education does not match their income.

### Highest Level of Education Completed



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2017-2021

## Behaviors

Isolation and hopelessness are informed by and interact with residents' behaviors, including risk-taking such as criminal activity. Co-occurring substance use, such as tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana, is a key behavior that increases the risk for addiction.



**17%**  
**People**

**Regular Smoking Among Adults**  
 Southwest Nebraska



**18.9%**  
**People**

**Binge Drinking Among Adults**  
 Southwest Nebraska

Sources: CDC BRFSS PLACES 2020

## Accessibility

The conditions for addiction can exist without resulting in a substance use disorder. Access to opioids is the missing piece that catalyzes these conditions into a potentially dangerous combination. Current insurance plans tend to make opioids cheap and enable their use as a first step in treating chronic pain.

Opioid Dispensing Rate	Rate per 100 persons
Nebraska	48
Perkins County, NE	86.9
Chase County, NE	70.7
Keith County, NE	47.4
Red Willow County, NE	45.3
Furnas County, NE	31.6
Dundy County, NE	30.8
Hitchcock County, NE	17.4
Frontier County, NE	5
Hayes County, NE	2.3

Sources: CDC NCIPC 2020

## Outcomes

Unfortunately, those living in rural communities face unique factors which put them at higher risk for developing a substance use disorder. A lack of local treatment options means that many suffer, without getting the help they need.

For too many, the ultimate outcome of substance use disorder is death. Illegal drugs have a particularly high risk of being laced with additional, unknown substances that could create further dependence or cause an accidental overdose. Ensuring that overdose-reversing drugs such as Narcan are available and accessible in the community is one way to help improve the health and safety of those with substance use disorder.

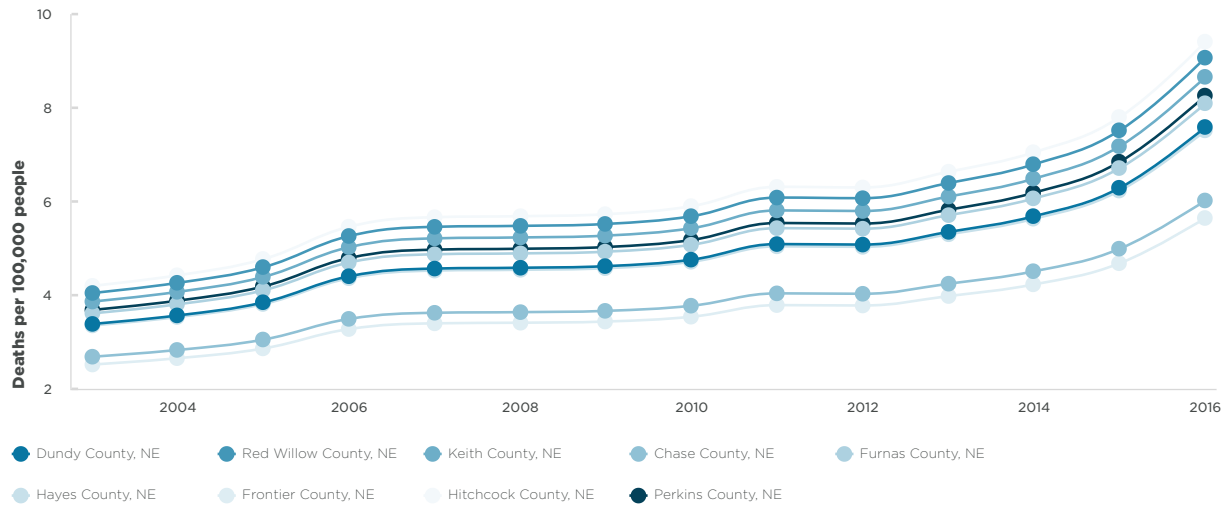
**Substance Use Treatment Facilities**

Facilities

Red Willow County, NE	1
Keith County, NE	1

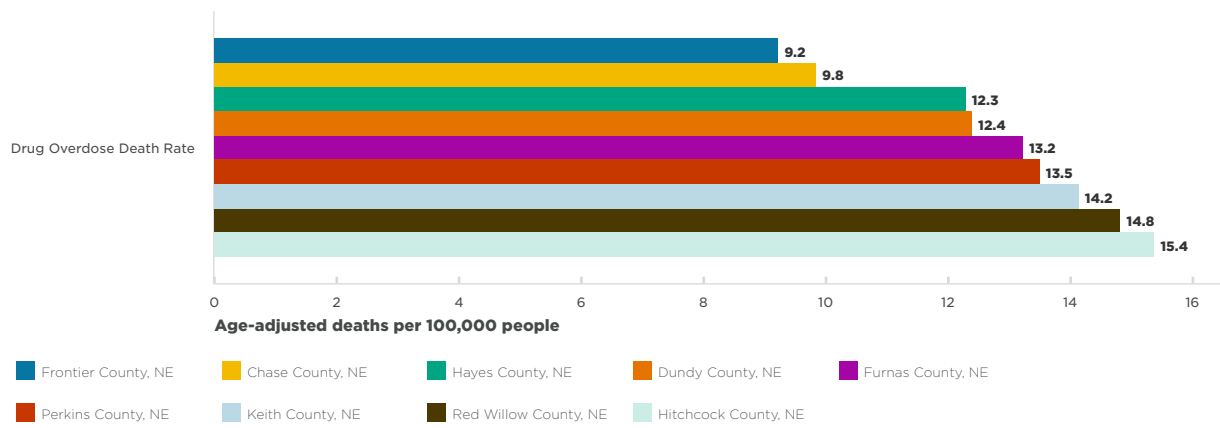
Sources: SAMHSA N-SUMHSS 2021

**Age-Adjusted Drug Overdose Death Rate \*Select your county to see the results in your community\***



Sources: CDC

**Drug Overdose Death Rate**



Sources: CDC 2021

