

Opportunity, Health and Mortality: A Focus on Young Adults in Ohio

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Introduction

- Opportunity varies significantly by community, yet little is known about how opportunity is linked to the health and mortality of Ohio's young adults.
- This study asks: **Is opportunity associated with health behaviors, health outcomes and mortality among Ohio's young adults?**

Data and Methods

- The **Opportunity Index** (1-100) is defined as the overall potential opportunity for a given county calculated using a series of measures on the health of the economy, educational, and community environment.
- **Mortality** is measured as deaths per 100,000 population and are age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population. Data are from the Centers for Disease Control.
- **Health Outcomes / Health Behaviors:** 2015 Ohio Medicaid Assessment Survey.
- **Mental Distress:** Impairment in work/usual activities due to mental health for ≥ 14 days.
- **Fair/Poor Health:** Self reported health.
- **Obese:** BMI ≥ 30
- **Current Smoker:** Smokes every/some days.
- **Binge Drinking:** 5/4 or more drinks on one occasion for men/women at least once in the past month.
- **Misuse of Prescription Drugs:** using a prescription pain reliever in a way not prescribed by the doctor in the past year.

Figure 1: Health Outcomes Among Ohio Adults (Ages 19 to 34)

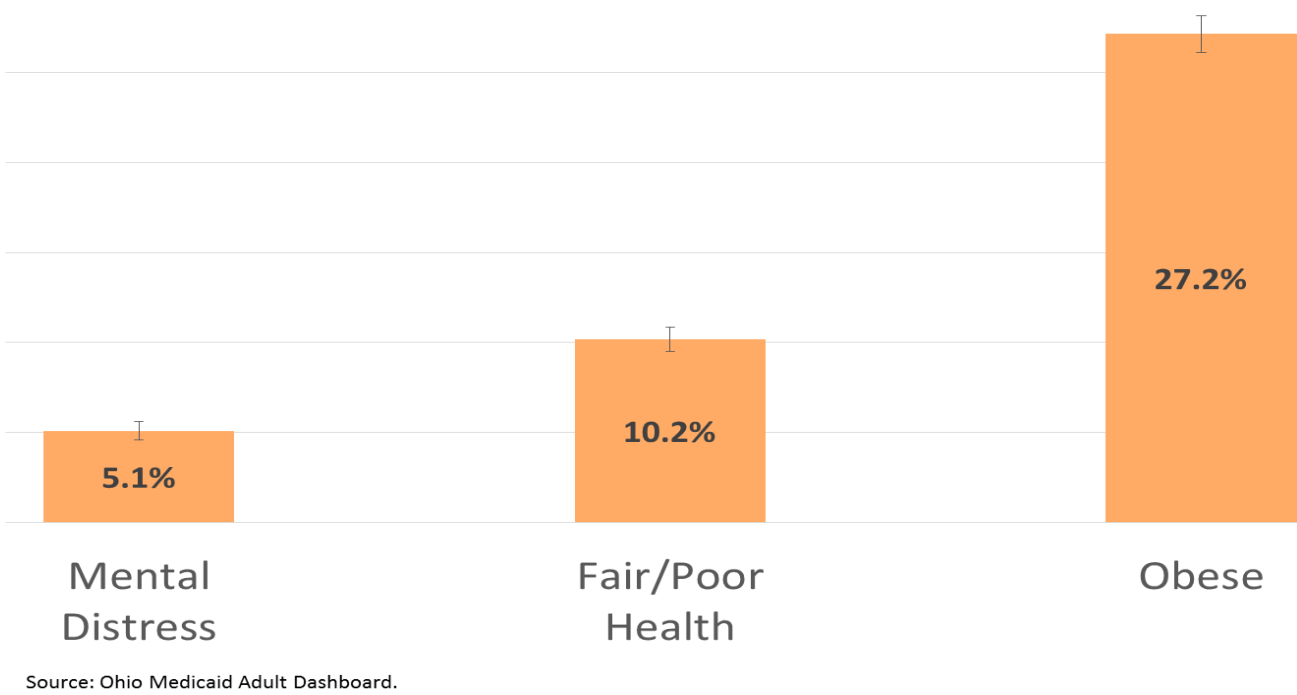


Figure 2: Health Behaviors Among Ohio Adults (Ages 19 to 34)

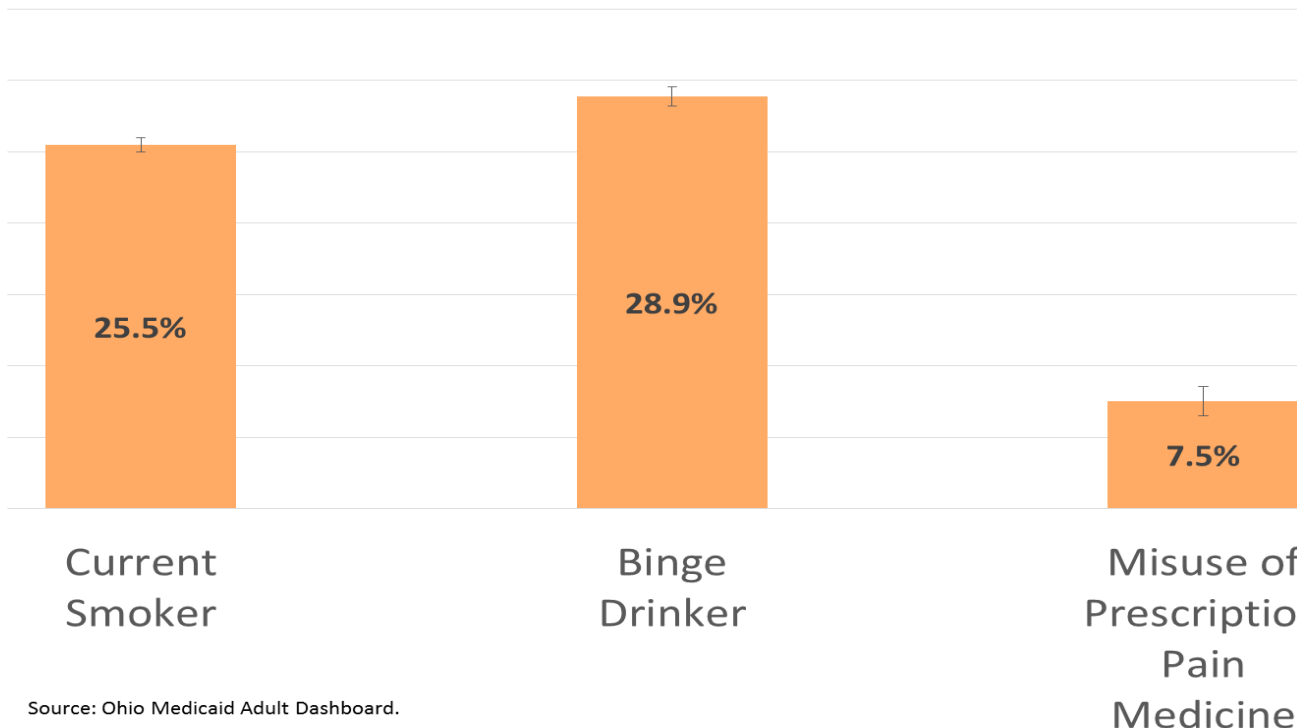


Figure 3: Select Characteristics by High/Low Opportunity Score

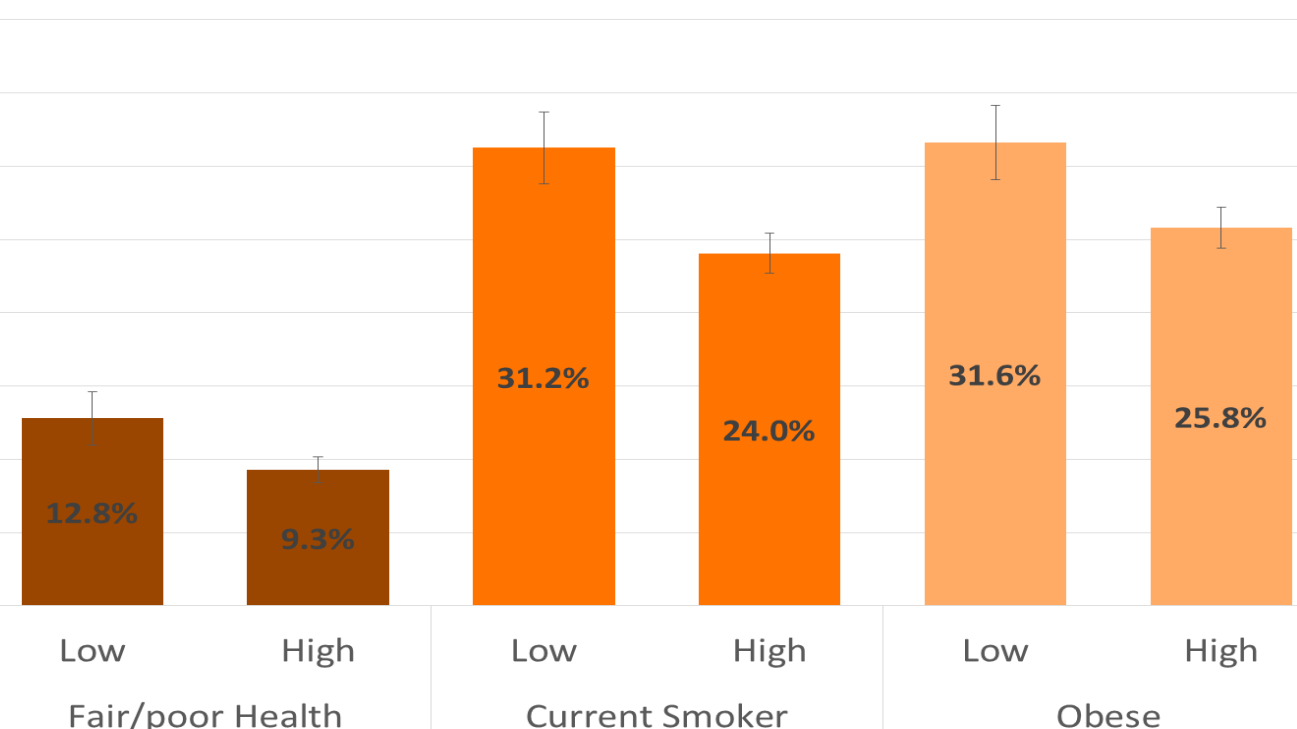


Figure 4: Correlation of County Opportunity Score and Mortality Rate, Ohioans (Ages 15 to 34)

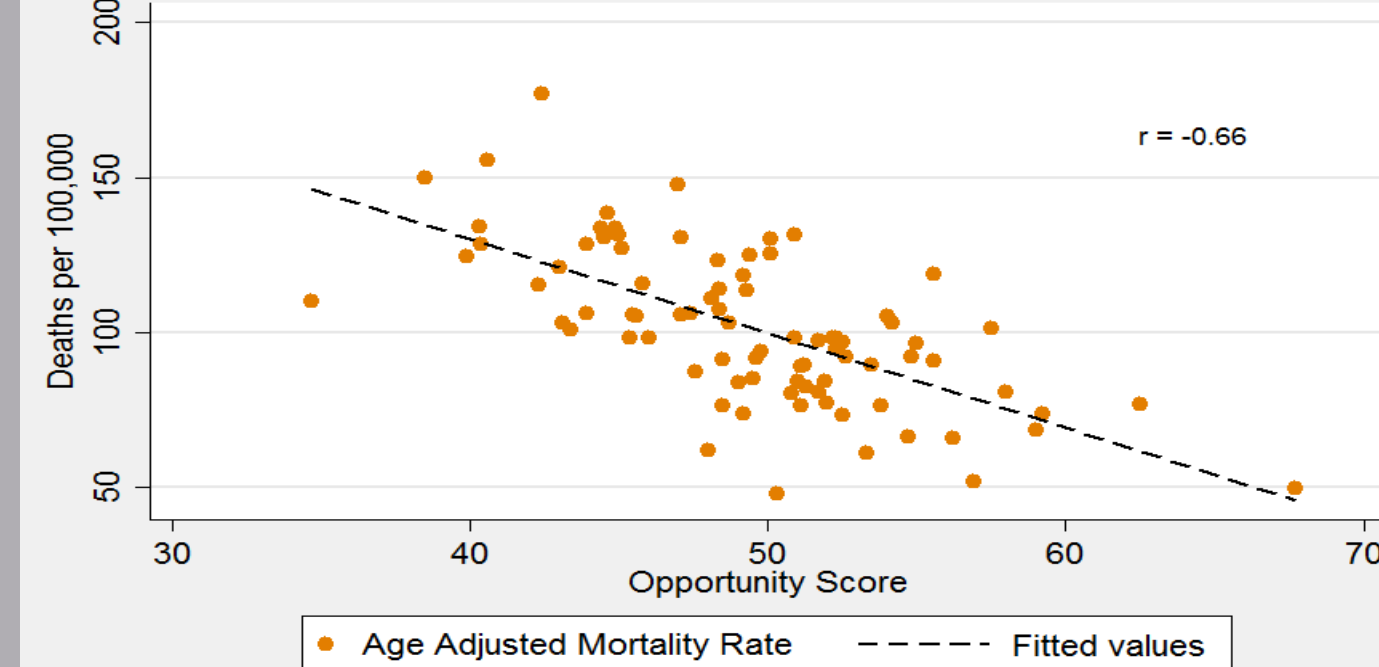


Figure 5: Leading Causes of Death Among Ohioans, Ages 15 to 34, 2014

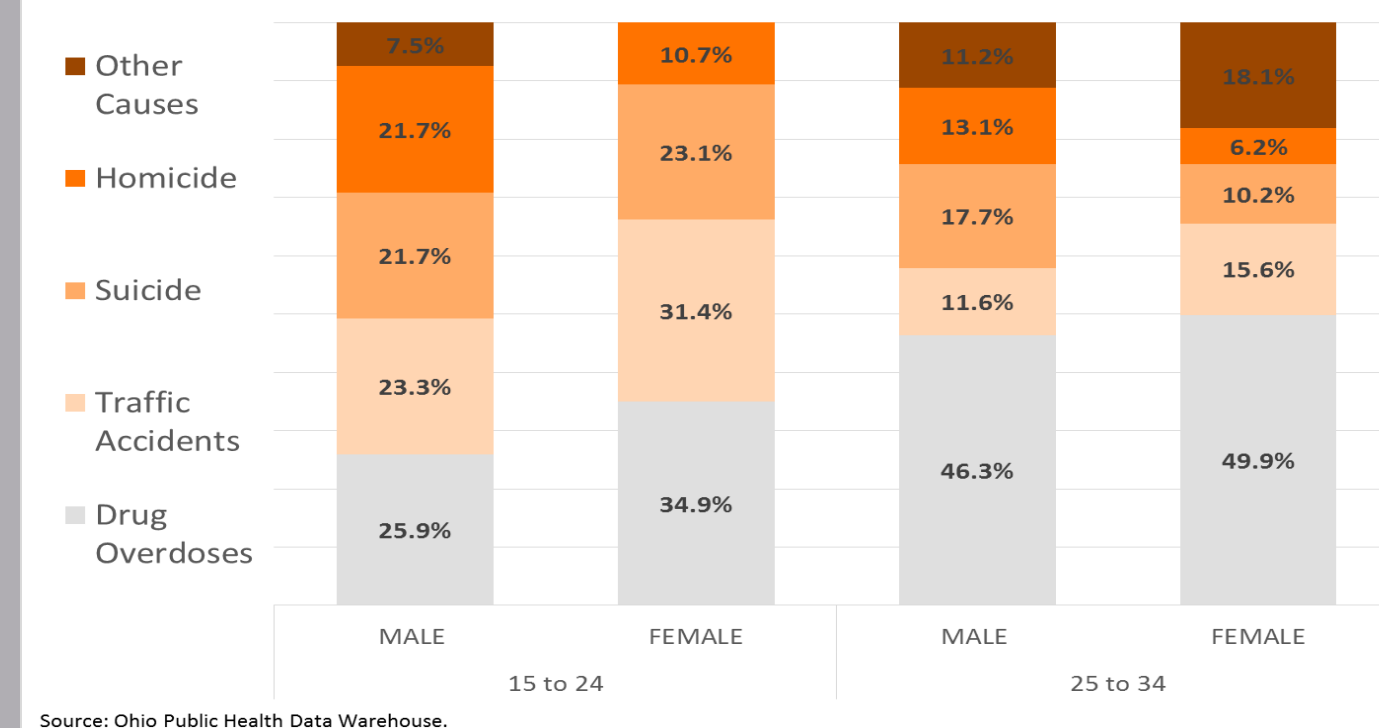
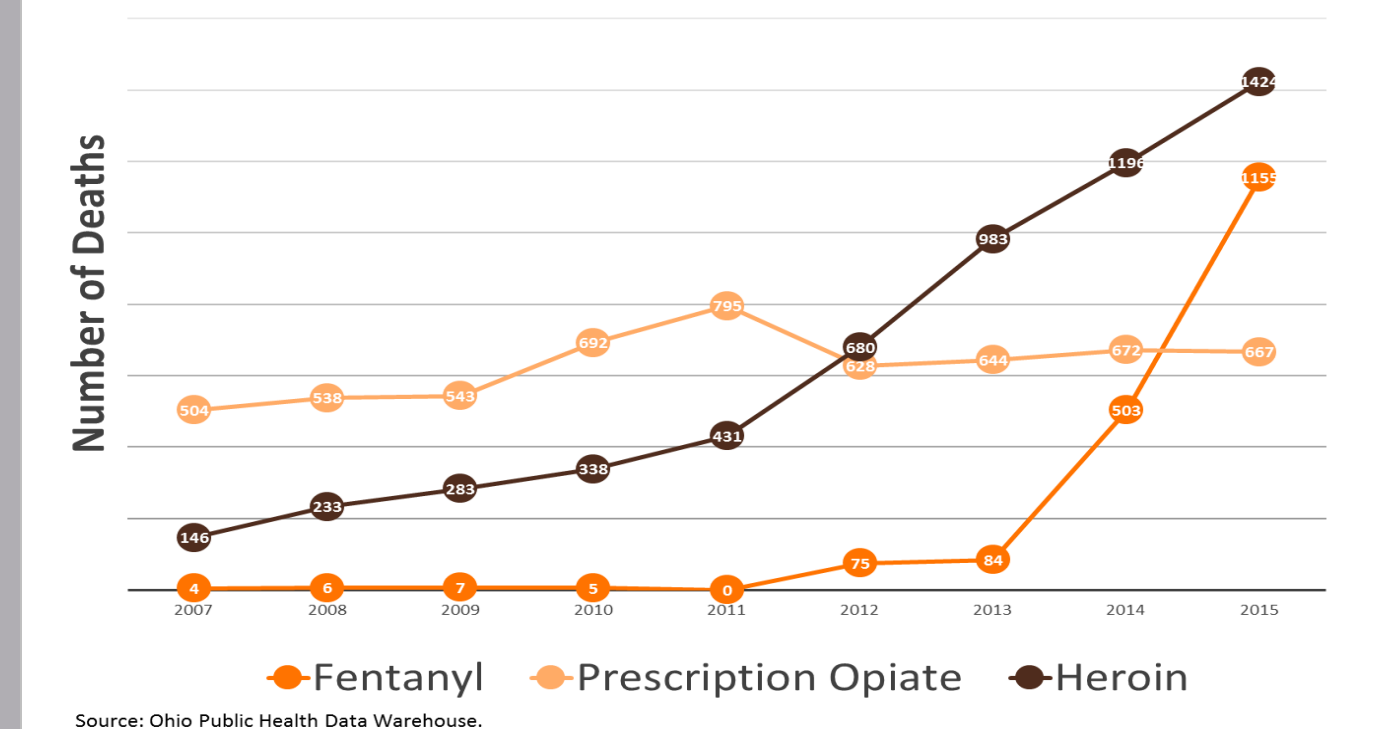


Figure 6: Trends in Unintentional Drug Deaths, Ohio All Ages 2007 - 2015



Results

- Opportunity is closely related to the well-being of Ohio's young adult population.
- At the county-level, **higher levels of opportunity are significantly associated with lower rates of fair/poor health, smoking, and obesity** (Figure 3).
- **Higher levels of county-level opportunity are associated with a lower risk of mortality among Ohio young adults** (Figure 4).
- Drug overdoses account for the highest proportion of deaths among Ohioans ages 15 to 34 (Figure 5).
- The number of unintentional drug deaths among younger adults in Ohio has increased at an alarming rate (Figure 6).

Discussion

- These findings suggest that there is a link between economic opportunity and health and mortality of young adults in Ohio.
- Future research should examine the links between changes in economic opportunity over time and changes in health behaviors.
- Future research should also investigate the underlying causal mechanisms between economic opportunity and health behaviors (in particular, drug use), health outcomes, and mortality among Ohioans.