Project 5: Drugs
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Data

The Big Cities Health Inventory Data Platform is developed and maintained by Drexel
University's Urban Health Collaborative in partnership with the Big Cities Health Coalition
which is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This open-access platform
provides health metrics for 35 of the largest, most urban cities in the United States. As of April
2025, the platform includes 127 metrics across broad categories of public health importance.
Most of the data comes from publicly available sources and spans the years 2010 to 2023. The
data is updated annually, though not every metric is updated each year, depending on the
availability of data from its original source.

Methods

The data platform allows users to compare cities by selecting a primary city—Washington, D.C.,
in this case—and additional cities for comparison, which included all 34 other cities. I focused
on attributes related to mental health and substance abuse, using the most recent year of available
data. I sorted the results from highest to lowest and identified the five cities with metrics higher
than Washington, D.C., and the five cities with metrics lower than Washington, D.C.—unless a
natural cutoff occurred before reaching five cities. Next, I reorganized the results by city to
identify those that appeared at least four times among the cities ranked above or below
Washington, D.C. Based on this analysis of what attributes demonstrate a pattern, five cities were
identified as similar to Washington, D.C., each sharing at least four attributes with comparable
values that are explained and visualized below.
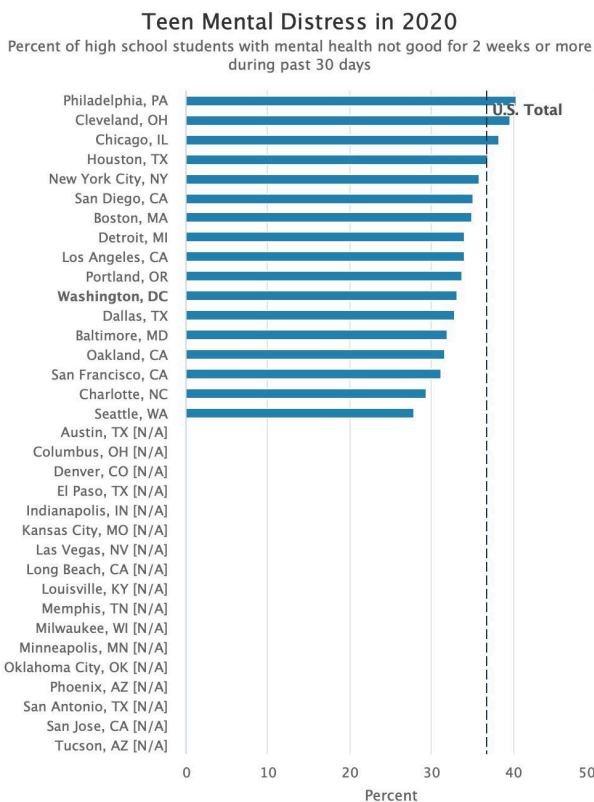
City 1: Portland, OR

Portland, OR is similar to Washington, D.C. based on the attributes of adult smoking in 2023, opioid overdose death in 2023, drug overdose death in 2023, and teen mental distress in 2020.

Specifically, for adult smoking, Portland has 12.8% of adults aged 18+ who are current smokers which is only 1.3% greater than the 11.5% of adults aged 18+ who are current smokers in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for opioid overdose death, Portland has 51.66 opioid-related drug overdose deaths per 100,000 people which is only 3.27 deaths more than the 48.39 opioid-related drug overdose deaths per 100,000 people in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for drug overdose death, Portland has 70.98 deaths from drug overdose per 100,000 people which is only 7.55 deaths more than the 63.43 deaths from drug overdose per 100,000 people in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for teen mental distress, Portland has 33.7% of high school students with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during the past 30 days which is only 0.6% greater than the 33.1% of high school students in Washington, D.C.

Teen Mental Distress in 2020
Percent of high school students with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during past 30 days

Data Source Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
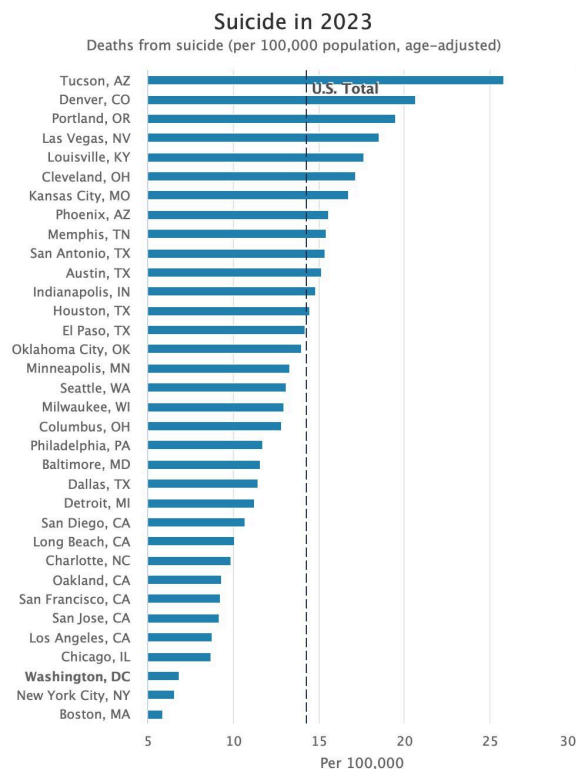
City 2: New York City, NY

New York City, NY is similar to Washington, D.C. based on the attributes of adult smoking in 2023, teen alcohol in 2020, adult mental distress in 2023, and suicide in 2023.

Specifically, for adult smoking, New York City has 12.6% of adults aged 18+ who are current smokers which is only 1.1% greater than the 11.5% of adults aged 18+ who are current smokers in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for teen alcohol, New York City has 20.8% of high school students that drank alcohol in the past month which is only 0.6% greater than the 20.2% of high school students that drank alcohol in the past month in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for adult mental distress, New York City has 16% of adults aged 18+ with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during the past 30 days which is only 0.6% greater than the 15.4% of adults aged 18+ with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during the past 30 days in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for suicide, New York City has 6.57 deaths from suicide per 100,000 people which is only 0.29 deaths fewer than the 6.86 deaths from suicide per 100,000 people in Washington, D.C.

Suicide in 2023
Deaths from suicide (per 100,000 population, age-adjusted)

Per 100,000

Data Source National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
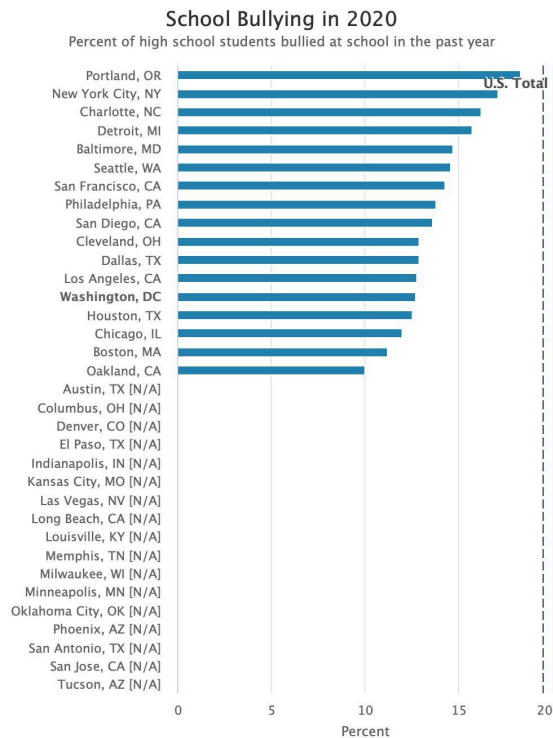
City 3: Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles, CA is similar to Washington, D.C. based on the attributes of adult smoking in 2023, teen alcohol in 2020, school bullying in 2020, and teen mental distress in 2020.

Specifically, for adult smoking, Los Angeles has 12.5% of adults aged 18+ who are current smokers which is only 1% greater than the 11.5% of adults aged 18+ who are current smokers in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for teen alcohol, Los Angeles has 21.2% of high school students that drank alcohol in the past month which is only 1% greater than the 20.2% of high school students that drank alcohol in the past month in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for school bullying, Los Angeles has 12.8% of high school students that were bullied at school in the past year which is only 0.1% greater than the 12.7% of high school students that were bullied at school in the past year in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for teen mental distress, Los Angeles has 34% of high school students with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during the past 30 days which is only 0.9% greater than the 33.1% of high school students with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during the past 30 days in Washington, D.C.

School Bullying in 2020
Percent of high school students bullied at school in the past year
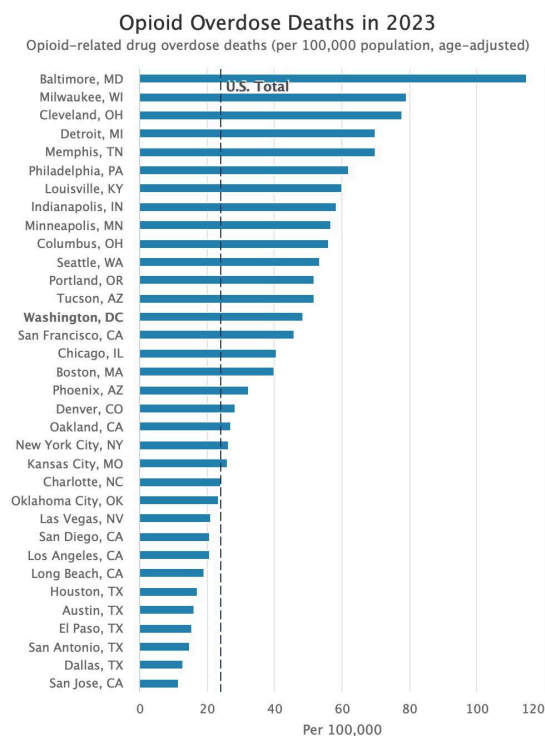
City 4: San Francisco, CA

San Francisco, CA is similar to Washington, D.C. based on the attributes of adult smoking in 2023, opioid overdose death in 2023, drug overdose death in 2023, and teen mental distress in 2020.

Specifically, for adult smoking, San Francisco has 10% of adults aged 18+ who are current smokers which is only 1.5% less than the 11.5% of adults aged 18+ who are current smokers in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for opioid overdose death, San Francisco has 45.7 opioid-related drug overdose deaths per 100,000 people which is only 2.69 deaths fewer than the 48.39 opioid-related drug overdose deaths per 100,000 people in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for drug overdose death, San Francisco has 58.38 deaths from drug overdose per 100,000 people which is only 5.05 deaths fewer than the 63.43 deaths from drug overdose per 100,000 people in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for teen mental distress, San Francisco has 31.1% of high school students with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during the past 30 days which is only 2% less than the 33.1% of high school students with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during the past 30 days in Washington, D.C.

Opioid Overdose Deaths in 2023
Opioid–related drug overdose deaths (per 100,000 population, age–adjusted)

Data Source National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
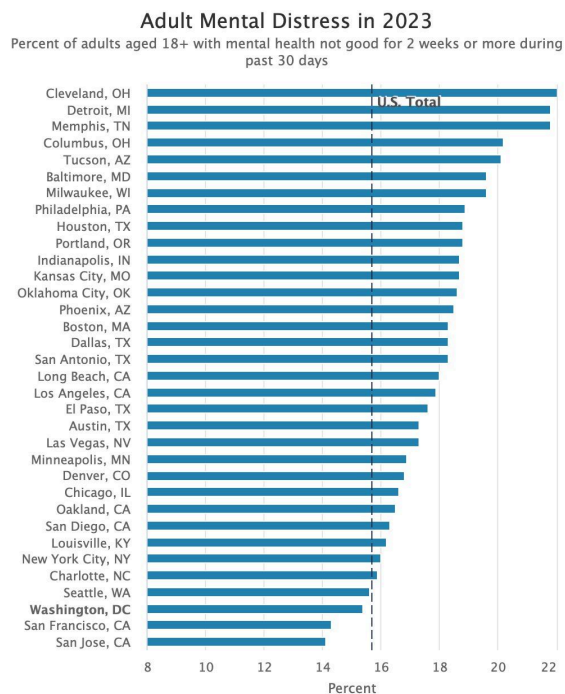
City 5: Seattle, WA

Seattle, WA is similar to Washington, D.C. based on the attributes of opioid overdose death in 2023, teen smoking in 2020, drug overdose death in 2023, and adult mental distress in 2023.

Specifically, for opioid overdose death, Seattle has 53.33 opioid-related drug overdose deaths per 100,000 people which is only 4.94 deaths more than the 48.39 opioid-related drug overdose deaths per 100,000 people in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for teen smoking, Seattle has 4.8% of high school students who are current smokers which is only 0.5% less than the 5.3% of high school students who are current smokers in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for drug overdose death, Seattle has 64.91 deaths from drug overdose per 100,000 people which is only 1.48 deaths more than the 63.43 deaths from drug overdose per 100,000 people in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, for adult mental distress, Seattle has 15.6% of adults aged 18+ with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during the past 30 days which is only 0.2% greater than the 15.4% of adults aged 18+ with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during the past 30 days in Washington, D.C.

Adult Mental Distress in 2023
Percent of adults aged 18+ with mental health not good for 2 weeks or more during past 30 days

Data Source Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Population Level Analysis and Community Estimates (CDC-PLACES) based primarily on the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System