Fatal and Non-fatal Drug Overdoses in Pennsylvania, 2019

Through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded grants, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) has collected both fatal and non-fatal overdose data for the past few years from a variety of sources†.

As of September 6, 2021, there were 4,458 drug overdose deaths in Pennsylvania in 2019. Key findings include:

- Of the 4,458 any drug overdose deaths identified in 2019, 84 percent (3,728) have been confirmed to be opioid-related, a 0.2 percent increase compared to 2018 (3,720), and a 20 percent decrease compared to 2017 (4,645) after the Opioid Command Center was established.
  - Of the 3,728 confirmed opioid-related overdose deaths, 42 percent (1,553) also involved a stimulant such as cocaine and/or methamphetamine contributing to their cause of death, which is a 12 percent increase compared to 2018 (1,386).
  - In 2019, 10 percent (424) of overdose deaths involved a stimulant without an opioid. For comparison, eight percent (353) of overdose deaths involved a stimulant without an opioid in 2018.
  - Three percent (155) of overdose deaths are missing toxicology information; four percent (171) of 2018 overdose deaths were missing toxicology information.
- On average, approximately 12 Pennsylvanians died from drug overdose every day in 2019.
- There was a non-statistically significant increase in drug overdose deaths in Pennsylvania (less than one percent) compared to 2018, and a decrease of 17 percent compared to 2017 after the Opioid Command Center was established.
- Based on death record data, over half of drug overdose deaths occurred in the decedent’s own home (57 percent), highlighting the importance of getting naloxone into the hands of community members, particularly friends and family of people who use opioids.
- 27 percent of overdose deaths occurred among those 25-34 years of age, followed by 26 percent among those 35-44.
- 78 percent of drug overdose decedents were White, 16 percent were Black, and six percent were of all additional races, and less than one percent were of unknown race.
- 91 percent drug overdose decedents were non-Hispanic, eight percent were Hispanic, and less than one percent were of unknown ethnicity.

Additional detailed findings will be available on the Interactive Data Report.

† Fatal overdose data includes death record data from the Bureau of Health Statistics and Registries at DOH, as well as toxicology and coroner/medical examiner records data through partnerships with individual county coroners/medical examiners and the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. Counts do not include Homicides or Suicides. Non-fatal overdose data includes syndromic surveillance data through our partnerships with emergency departments. Death data for 2019 is current as of September 2021.

†† Counts for counties with overdose death counts between 1 and 9 are suppressed.
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Rate of Fatal and Non-fatal Overdose Trends per 10,000 Population for Any Drug* Overdose, by Month, 2019

Rate of Fatal and Non-fatal Overdose Trends per 10,000 Population for Any Opioid§ Overdose, by Month, 2019

Any Drug Overdose Deaths by Race, 2019
- White: 78%
- Black: 16%
- Other: 6%
- Unknown: 6%

Any Drug Overdose Deaths by Age Group, 2019
- 15-24: 21%
- 25-34: 26%
- 35-44: 27%
- 45-54: 16%
- 55-64: 4%
- 65+: 4%

Any Drug Overdose Deaths by Ethnicity, 2019
- Hispanic: 91%
- Non-Hispanic: 8%

* “Any Drug” Overdoses include overdoses from illicit, prescription or over-the-counter drugs, excluding alcohol-only related overdoses.
§ “Any Opioid” Overdoses include overdoses from illicit or prescription opioids, including heroin and fentanyl.
††Overdose deaths include those with a manner of death of “Accidental” or “Undetermined.” Counts/rates do not include “Homicides” or “Suicides.” NOTE: For prosecution purposes, some counties certify “Accidental” and/or “Undetermined” overdose deaths as “Homicides.”