



Massachusetts Data Brief

Special Emphasis Report: Drug Overdose Deaths, 1999 – 2013

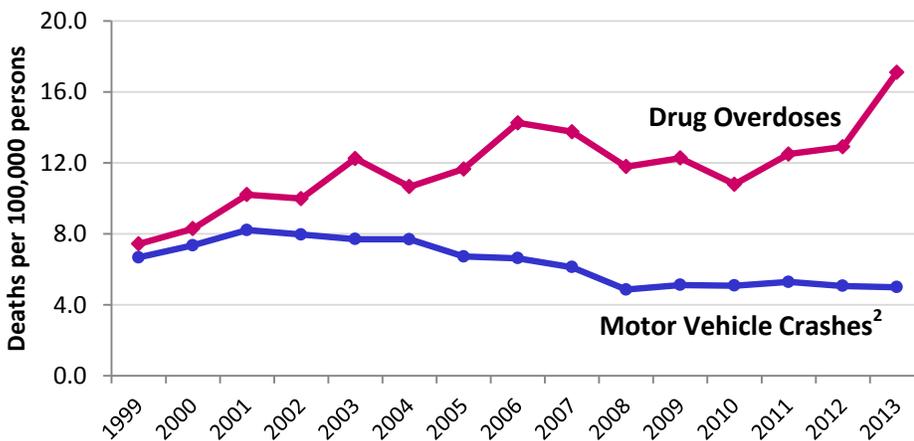
May 2016



Drug Overdose Deaths Remain a Public Health Crisis

This Data Brief summarizes overdose deaths from all drugs in Massachusetts from 1999-2013. Drug overdoses are the leading cause of injury death in Massachusetts and the US. Drug overdoses may involve one or more over-the-counter, prescription and/or illegal drugs. In 2013, a total of 1,157 MA residents died from a drug overdose; an average of three people each day.

Figure 1. Drug Overdose and Motor Vehicle Crash Death Rates¹, MA Residents, 1999-2013



- Between 1999 and 2013, the annual death rate due to drug overdoses in MA more than doubled (7.4 to 17.1 deaths per 100,000 persons)¹.
- Over the same time period, the death rate from motor vehicle crashes² decreased by 25% (6.7 to 5.0 deaths per 100,000 persons).
- In 2013, the death rate due to drug overdoses among MA residents was 3.4 times higher than the death rate from motor vehicle crashes (17.1 vs. 5.0 deaths per 100,000 persons). (Fig. 1)

Characteristics of MA Drug Overdose Deaths

Of the 1,157 drug overdose deaths of MA residents in 2013:

- Two-thirds of victims were male (66%, n=768) and one-third were female (34%, n=389).
- Three-quarters were adults ages 25 to 54 years old (76%, n=882).
- The majority of these overdoses were classified as unintentional (86%, n=999). One in ten were classified as suicides (10%, n=114).
- Many overdose deaths involved more than one type of drug. Eight in ten (82%, n=947) involved at least one opioid-related drug. Opioids include prescription pain killers, heroin and other narcotics.
- One in five overdose deaths involved cocaine (22%, n=254) and one in six involved benzodiazepines (16%, n=190), with or without other drugs. (Table 1)

Table 1. Characteristics of Drug Overdose Deaths, MA Residents, 2013 (N = 1,157)

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Sex	Male	768 66%
	Female	389 34%
Age Group ³ (years)	15-24	95 8%
	25-39	408 35%
	40-54	474 41%
	55-64	140 12%
	65+	39 3%
Intent ⁴	Unintentional	999 86%
	Suicide	114 10%
	Undetermined	43 4%
Drug Type ⁵	Opioids	947 82%
	Cocaine	254 22%
	Benzodiazepines	190 16%
	Other/unknown only	127 11%

1. Rates are age-adjusted rates per 100,000 MA residents.

2. Motor vehicle crash deaths include motor vehicle occupants, motorcyclists, pedestrians and pedal cyclists.

3. 0-14 age group not included due to low count (n = 1). Percentage may not total 100% due to rounding.

4. Homicide not included due to low count (n = 1).

5. Includes all intents. Categories are not mutually exclusive, therefore percents do not total 100%. See reverse side for drug definitions. Overdose categories are based on CDC definitions and may differ from those used in other DPH publications.



Massachusetts Data Brief

Special Emphasis Report: Drug Overdose Deaths, 1999 – 2013

May 2016

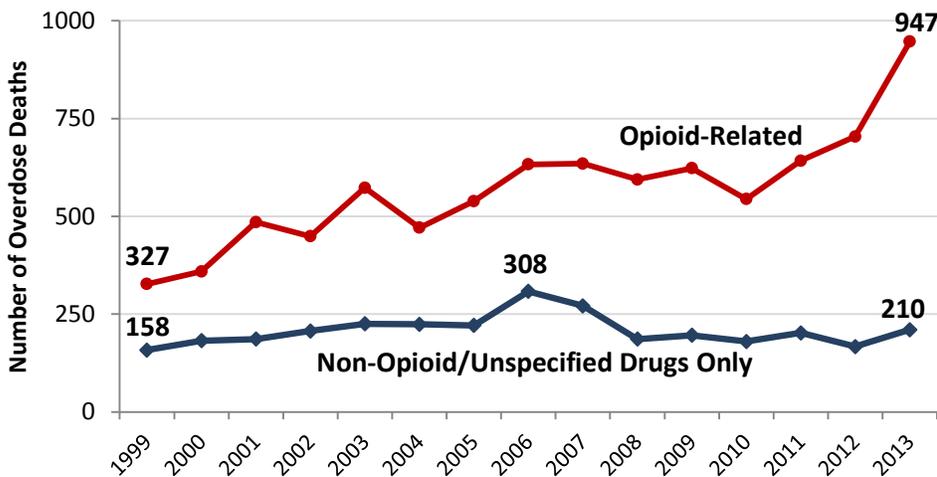


Opioid Overdose Deaths

Opioid drugs, which include prescription pain killers, heroin and other narcotics, have contributed to an increasing number of fatal drug overdoses among MA residents over the past decade. Figure 2 compares the number of drug overdose deaths (of any intent) between 1999 and 2013 that involved an opioid drug with the number that were not known to involve an opioid drug.⁶



Figure 2. Opioid and Non-Opioid Drug Overdose Deaths, All Intent⁶, MA Residents, 1999-2013



- The number of fatal overdoses involving one or more opioid drugs nearly tripled between 1999 and 2013, increasing from 327 to 947 deaths.
- The number of opioid overdose deaths increased an average of 5% per year between 1999 and 2013.
- The number of drug overdose deaths not known to involve opioids increased an average of 6% per year through 2006, then decreased at a similar rate through 2013.

6. Categories are mutually exclusive. Non-opioid overdoses include those involving unspecified drugs. Counts include all intents and therefore differ from counts in other DPH reports that focus on drug overdoses of unintentional or undetermined intent only.

Additional drug overdose prevention information and resources available at: www.mass.gov/opioids and www.mass.gov/dph/bsas

Additional overdose/poisoning data available at: www.mass.gov/dph/isp, under “Injury Reports and Publications”

Data sources: Deaths - MA Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, MDPH. Cases include MA residents who die in or out-of-state.

Definitions: Drug categories are based on CDC definitions and may differ from those used in other DPH publications.

Drug overdose (or “poisoning”) - an ICD-10 underlying cause of death code of X40-X44, X60-X64, X85 or Y10-Y14.

Opioids - poisoning cases with an ICD-10 code of T40.0-T40.4 or T40.6 in any contributing cause-of-death field.

Cocaine – poisoning cases with an ICD-10 code of T40.5 in any contributing cause-of-death field.

Benzodiazepines – poisoning cases with an ICD-10 code of T42.4 in any contributing cause-of-death field.