



MA Prescription Monitoring Program County-Level Data Measures (Calendar Year 2023 Quarter 4 and 2024 Quarter 1)

Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Health Professions Licensure, April 2024

The Department of Public Health's (DPH) Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PMP) serves as a repository of data for all prescription drugs dispensed statewide, including those prescriptions that are sought after for illicit and non-medical use and thus represent the highest potential for abuse (federal Schedules II – V, including certain narcotics, stimulants and sedatives). The PMP also enables prescribers and dispensers to access a patient's prescription history and can be used as a clinical decision-making tool, allowing the provider to have a holistic view of the patient's medications.

When interpreting PMP county-level data, it is important to emphasize that increases or decreases in a single measure may not indicate an increase or decrease in prescription misuse or abuse. Put simply, use does not always equate to abuse. There are many factors that might explain an unusually high rate of prescribing in a given area. For instance, an area which contains a large number of residents in long-term care facilities may result in a high rate of opioid prescribing.

These datasets inform critical discussions about opioid prescribing, provide an important baseline to better inform future policy decisions and allow the state and stakeholders to more meaningfully measure whether policy initiatives are effective.

Effective October 6, 2014, all hydrocodone combination drug (HCD) products (e.g., Vicodin) were reclassified from Schedule III to Schedule II. This reclassification during the last quarter of 2014 makes comparisons over time difficult to interpret. Beginning with CY 2015 data, reports of Schedule II products will include all HCD prescriptions.

Individuals with activity of concern "thresholds" for this report are based on a 3-month time period. MDPH has previously released annual county-level reports that provide thresholds based on a 12-month time period. Although the numbers (or rates) generated may appear to be comparable, they represent different time periods and are **NOT** an apples-to-apples comparison. The results are only comparable when the thresholds (e.g., 4 different providers and 4 different pharmacies), time interval (e.g. over a three-month period), and drug products analyzed (e.g. Schedule II opioids) are the same. Meaning, the total number (or rates) of individuals who received Schedule II-V opioid prescriptions from 4 or more providers and had them filled at 4 or more pharmacies in a 3-month period cannot and should not be compared with the total number of individuals (or rates) who received Schedule II-V opioid prescriptions from 4 or more providers and had them filled at 4 or more pharmacies in a 12-month period.

October - December 2023 (Quarter 4)

County (County classifications are by patient zip code; patient state must also = MA)	Census Population*	Total Schedule II Opioid Prescriptions	Total Number of Schedule II Opioid Solid Dosage Units	Individuals Receiving Schedule II Opioid Prescription	% of Individuals Receiving Schedule II Opioid Prescription (of total population)	Individuals with Activity of Concern	Rate of Individuals with Activity of Concern (per 1,000)
Barnstable	228,996	20,351	925,764	8,914	3.9	6	0.7
Berkshire	129,026	10,514	541,631	4,629	3.6	<5	NR
Bristol	579,200	49,508	2,856,971	20,075	3.5	10	0.5
Dukes	20,600	1,162	58,327	551	2.7	0	0
Essex	809,829	49,907	2,373,506	23,267	2.9	13	0.6
Franklin	71,029	6,713	390,648	2,752	3.9	<5	NR
Hampden	465,825	36,774	1,970,646	16,609	3.6	12	0.7
Hampshire	162,308	11,800	681,399	5,075	3.1	<5	NR
Middlesex	1,632,002	73,760	3,340,551	36,941	2.3	37	1.0
Nantucket	14,255	681	30,065	335	2.4	0	0
Norfolk	725,981	38,477	1,913,472	18,481	2.5	26	1.4
Plymouth	530,819	37,785	2,010,145	17,501	3.3	14	0.8
Suffolk	797,936	34,211	1,821,638	16,122	2.0	22	1.4
Worcester	862,111	55,357	3,004,354	25,041	2.9	27	1.1
MA	7,029,917	427,000	21,919,116	195,310	2.8	175	0.9

Note 1: Individuals with activity of concern "thresholds" for this report are based ONLY on a 3-month time period; see notes on previous page; CY2023-Q4

Note 2: Counts greater than 0 but less than 5 are not reported. Rates based on these small values also are not reported (NR).

Note 3: Rates of individuals with activity of concern are based on the population of individuals who have received one or more Schedule II opioid prescriptions during the specified time period.

Note 4: Totals for all counties combined exclude a small number of prescription records that could not be assigned a county due to inaccurate zip code/city town information reported to the program.

Note 5: The total sum for the "Number of Individuals Receiving Schedule II Opioid Prescription" will be slightly different than the sum presented for the state in Figure 2 due to a small number of double counting of individuals moving from one county to another during the specified time period.

Note 6: PMP data are preliminary and subject to updates. The MA PMP database is continuously updated to allow for prescription record correction data submitted by pharmacies. This data were extracted on 4/10/2024; Release Date: Apr 2024.

Note 7: Beginning in 3rd quarter of 2016 the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) facilities began submitting data to the MA PMP.

Note 8: UMDI Interim 2020 Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race, and Municipality, UMass Donahue Institute Population Estimates Program, March 1, 2022

Note 9: The total number of individuals with activity of concern for the state (MA) do not include suppressed values.

January – March 2024 (Quarter 1)

County (County classifications are by patient zip code; patient state must also = MA)	Census Population*	Total Schedule II Opioid Prescriptions	Total Number of Schedule II Opioid Solid Dosage Units	Individuals Receiving Schedule II Opioid Prescription	% of Individuals Receiving Schedule II Opioid Prescription (of total population)	Individuals with Activity of Concern	Rate of Individuals with Activity of Concern (per 1,000)
Barnstable	228,996	20,108	903,958	9,009	3.9	10	1.1
Berkshire	129,026	10,836	540,888	4,765	3.7	<5	NR
Bristol	579,200	48,911	2,774,298	20,210	3.5	14	0.7
Dukes	20,600	1,158	58,119	544	2.6	0	0
Essex	809,829	51,020	2,340,954	24,100	3.0	12	0.5
Franklin	71,029	6,650	372,048	2,728	3.8	<5	NR
Hampden	465,825	37,234	1,922,763	16,866	3.6	18	1.1
Hampshire	162,308	12,190	668,507	5,294	3.3	3	0.6
Middlesex	1,632,002	75,622	3,273,740	38,441	2.4	36	0.9
Nantucket	14,255	646	27,591	337	2.4	0	0
Norfolk	725,981	39,013	1,878,166	18,864	2.6	16	0.8
Plymouth	530,819	37,507	1,953,455	17,477	3.3	14	0.8
Suffolk	797,936	34,976	1,809,481	16,737	2.1	20	1.2
Worcester	862,111	56,591	2,946,296	26,008	3.0	17	0.7
MA	7,029,917	432,462	21,470,262	200,333	2.8	162	0.8

Note 1: Individuals with activity of concern "thresholds" for this report are based ONLY on a 3-month time period; see notes on previous page; CY2024-Q1

Note 2: Counts greater than 0 but less than 5 are not reported. Rates based on these small values also are not reported (NR).

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