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The Opioid Crisis in Minnesota

No state has been untouched by the national opioid epidemic. Preliminary 2021 data from MDH showed a 35% increase in the total number of overdose deaths involving opioids since 2020.

There were 1,286 overdose deaths overall in Minnesota in 2021, a 22% increase from the year before. That's an average of more than three people dying every day from an overdose of any drug type.

It was the highest recorded number of Minnesota overdoses in history.

“The opioid crisis is a public health emergency impacting virtually all of our communities throughout Minnesota,” said Michael Swanoski, Senior Associated Dean of the College of Pharmacy at the University of Minnesota.

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401 **2000-2017**
**Opioid-involved
deaths**

.....

Differences in Race

Minnesota’s racially and ethnically diverse populations have been hit especially hard by the opioid crisis.¹

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Drug overdose mortality rates by race (2010-2016)*



** Refers to all drug overdoses, including opioids, methadone, heroin, synthetic opioids, cocaine, psychostimulants and benzodiazepines.*

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In Minnesota, American Indians are seven times as likely to die from a drug overdose as Whites, and African Americans are twice as likely to die from a drug overdose as Whites. (Minnesota Department of Health)

African Americans and American Indians have higher rates of opioid disorder and overdose. The Minnesota Department of Health cites these reasons, among others:

- Higher incidence of historical trauma
- Higher incidence of adverse childhood experience
- Lack of access to medical care and/or non-opioid treatment options
- Stigma in pursuing chemical health treatment and recovery support
- Lack of access to culturally responsive treatment programs
- Racial bias on the part of providers

Age Distributions of Drug Overdose Deaths by Age

36% American Indians
(Ages 25-34)

33% African Americans
(Ages 45-54)

23% White
(Ages 25-54)

Geographical Differences

Both the seven-county metro (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington) and Greater Minnesota have been affected by opioid use disorder. In 2021, there was a larger percentage increase in drug overdose deaths in Greater Minnesota (23%) than in the metro area (20%).

In 2021, there were 11,443 Minnesotans treated for Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), compared to 9,599 the year before. In 2021, seven out of ten patients had not completed their OUD treatment at the time of discharge – for reasons such as leaving without staff approval, being transferred to a different facility, or incarcerated. (Minnesota Department of Health)



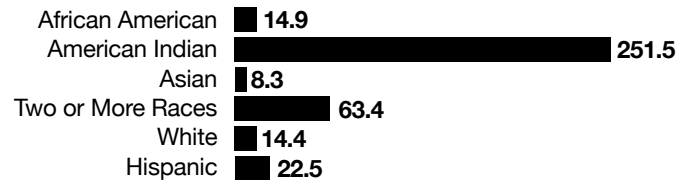
Children

When a woman engages in risky opioid use during pregnancy, she risks exposing her unborn baby to opioids. This can result in newborns showing signs of withdrawal, a phenomenon known as neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). There were 379 documented cases of NAS in Minnesota in 2021, down slightly from 395 the year prior.

Older children of adults with opioid use disorder are also being affected. Children entering foster care because of parental drug use decreased from 1,652 in 2020 to 1,582 in 2021. However, less than half of the children were eventually reunited with their original caregiver -- the first time since 2016.

2016 Children Entering Foster Care

Drug use of parents cited as the reason (per 10K children)



- 1 The Opioid Epidemic in Minnesota (Minnesota Department of Human Services)
- 2 Preliminary 2017 Drug Overdose Deaths (Minnesota Department of Health)
- 3 Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Data Brief (Minnesota Department of Health)
- 4 Race Rate Disparity in Drug Overdose Death (Minnesota Department of Health)
- 5 Opioid Dashboard (Minnesota Department of Health)
- 6 Opioid Abuse and Dependence – Minnesota (American Medical Association)