

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) **Alaska Opioid Summary**

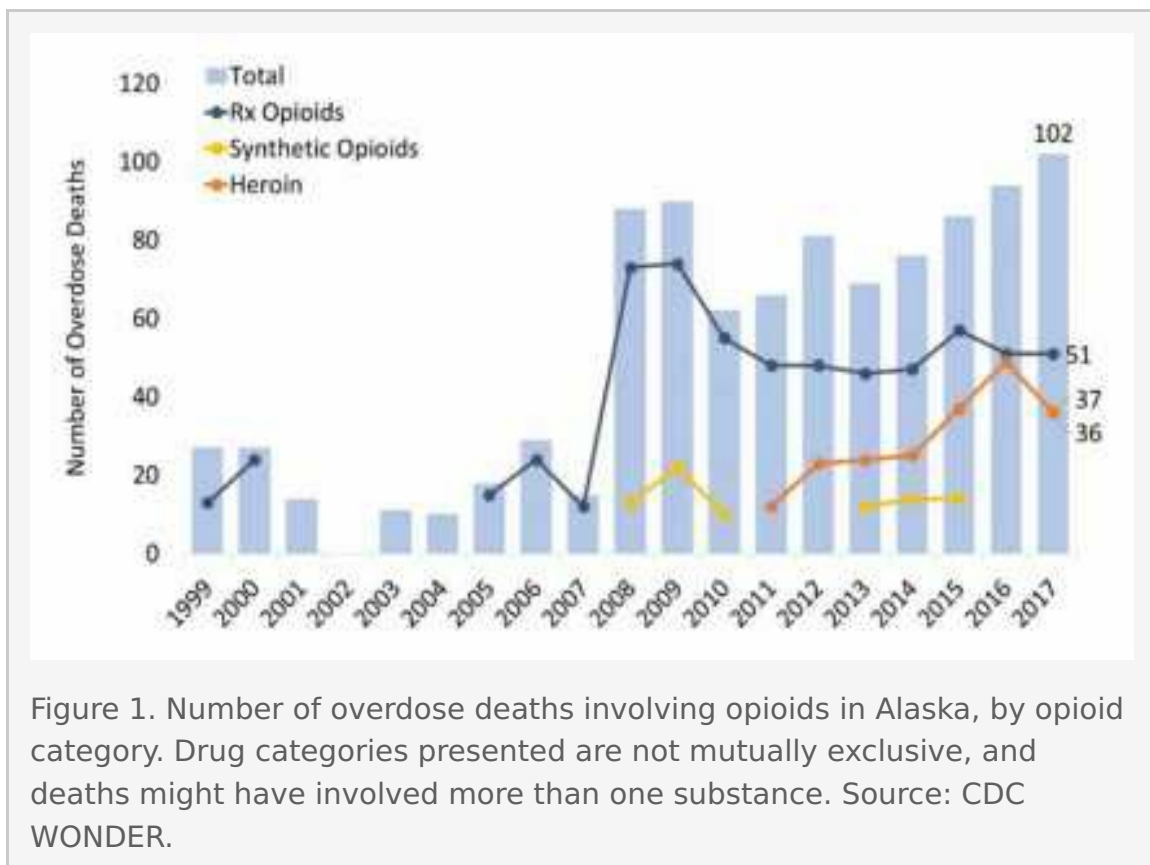
Last Updated March 2019

<https://www.drugabuse.gov>

Alaska Opioid Summary

Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths

In 2017, there were 102 overdose deaths involving opioids in Alaska — a rate of 13.9 deaths per 100,000 persons compared to the average national rate of 14.6 deaths per 100,000 persons. Cases involving heroin decreased slightly in 2017 to 36 deaths following an increasing trend through 2016. Deaths involving synthetic opioids other than methadone (mainly fentanyl) have not been consistently reported but 37 deaths were recorded in 2017. Deaths involving prescription opioids have remained level since 2010, with 51 cases reported in 2017 (Figure 1).



Opioid Pain Reliever Prescriptions

In 2017, Alaska providers wrote 52.0 opioid prescriptions for every 100

persons (Figure 2). The average U.S. rate in the same year was 58.7 prescriptions per 100 persons ([CDC](#)).

The rate of overdose deaths involving opioid prescriptions has not significantly changed since 2010 with an age adjusted rate of 7.0 deaths per 100,000 persons in 2017.

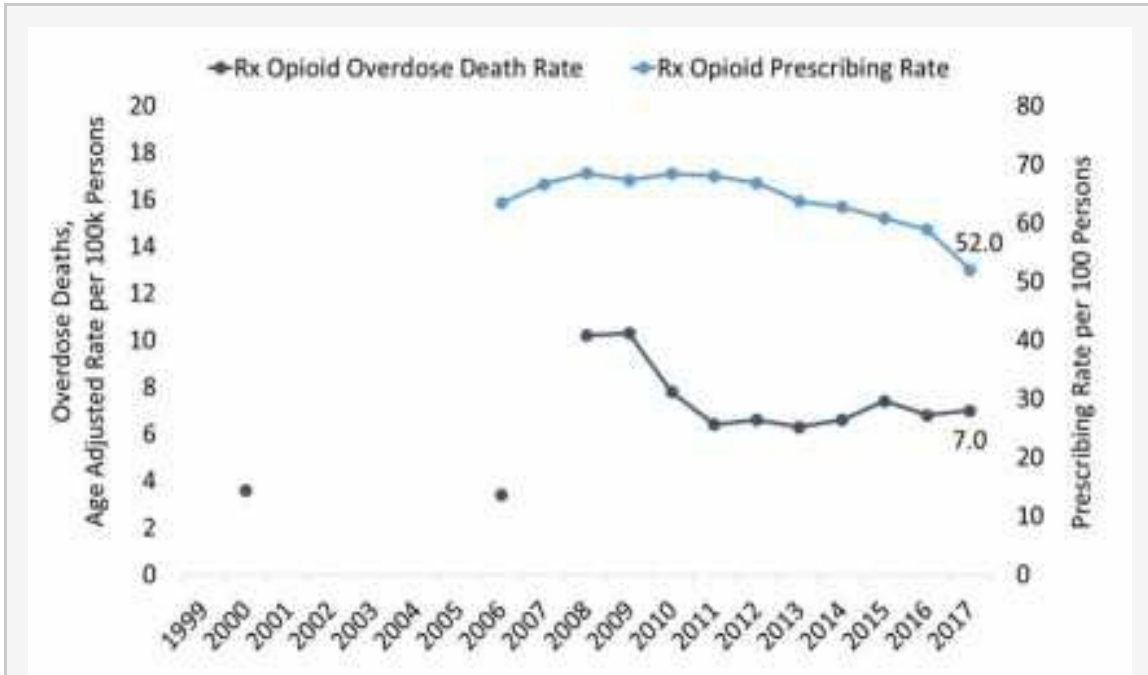
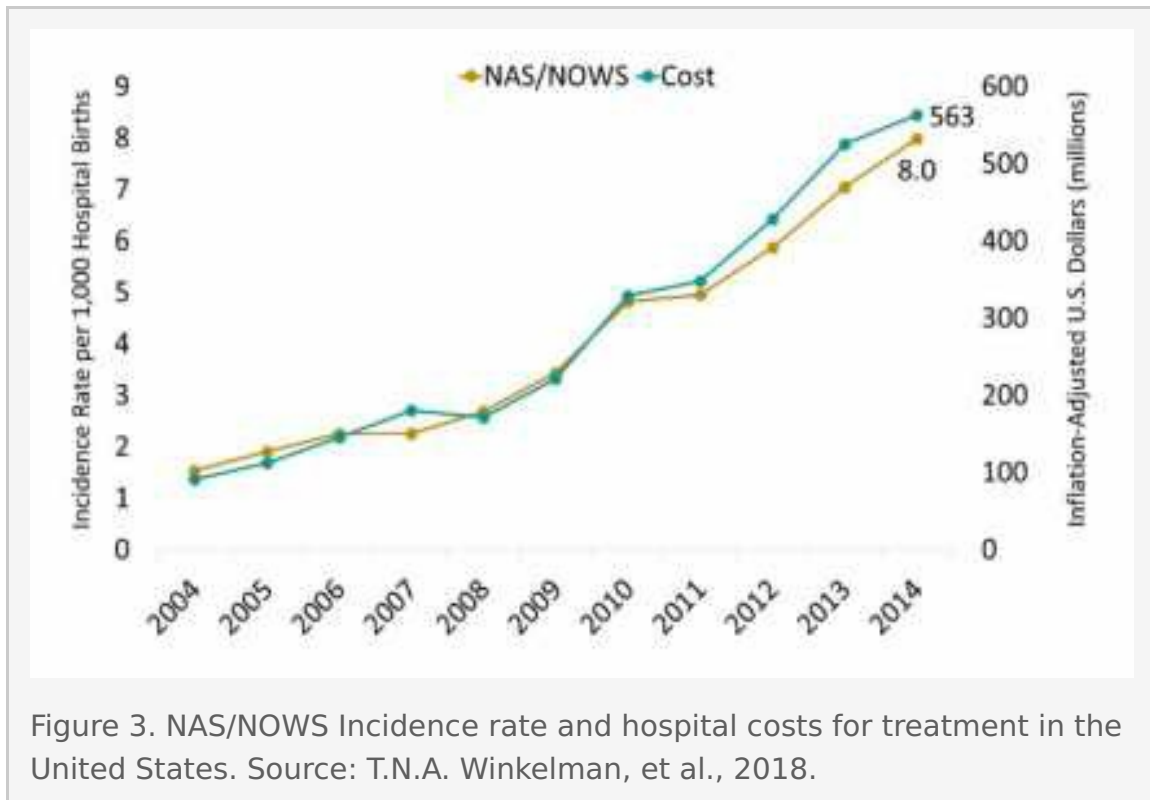


Figure 2. Alaska rate of overdose deaths involving prescription opioids and the opioid prescribing rate. Source: CDC and CDC WONDER.

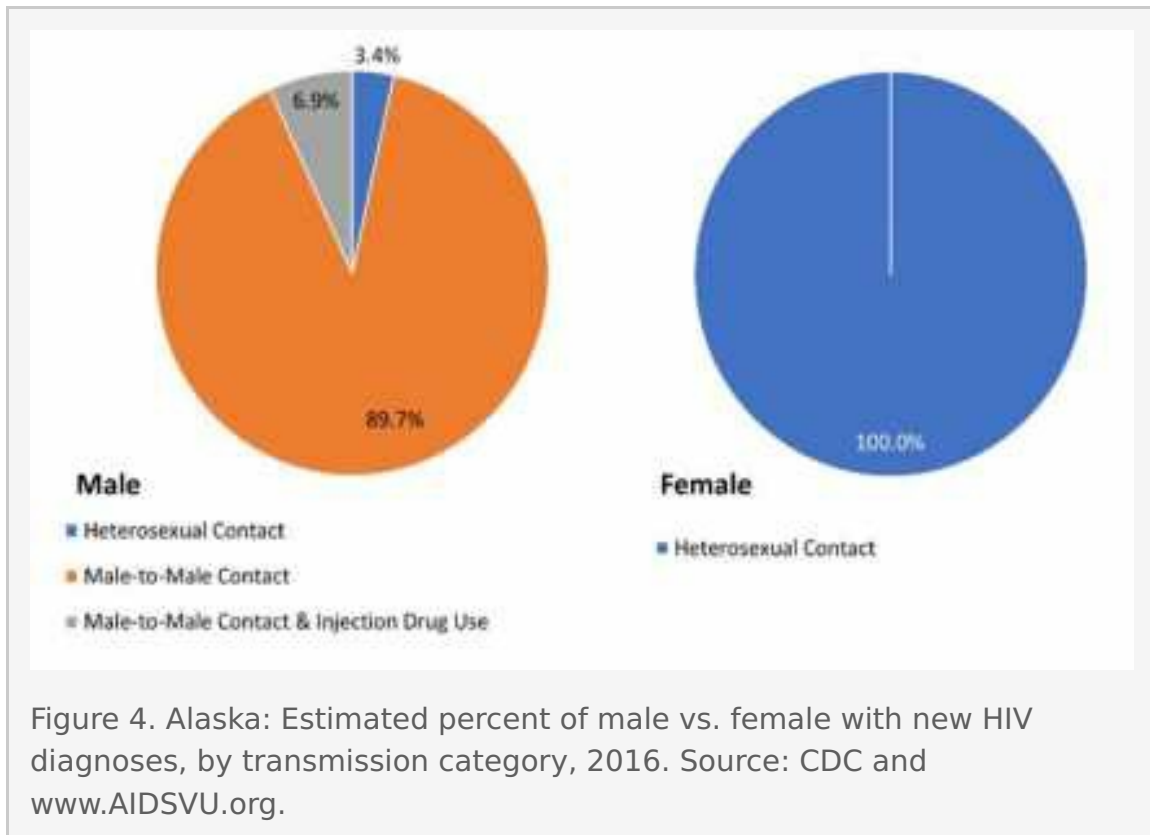
Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)

NAS or neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome (NOWS) may occur when a pregnant woman uses drugs such as opioids during pregnancy. A recent national study revealed a fivefold increase in the incidence of NAS/NOWS between 2004 and 2014, from 1.5 cases per 1,000 hospital births to 8.0 cases per 1,000 hospital births. This is the equivalent of one baby born with symptoms of NAS/NOWS every 15 minutes in the United States. During the same period, hospital costs for NAS/NOWS births increased from \$91 million to \$563 million, after adjusting for inflation (Figure 3).

To date, there is no standard in NAS/NOWS provider and hospital coding practices ([CDC](#)). As a result, there is variability in trends and in the rate reported by states. The most recent data on the number of babies born with NAS/NOWS in Alaska is from 2015 Medicaid Claims data. The annual number of Medicaid enrolled infants with NAS increased from 15 cases in 2004 to 100 cases in 2015 ([Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services](#)).



HIV Prevalence and HIV Diagnoses Attributed to Injection Drug Use (IDU)



- U.S. Incidence:** In 2016, 9 percent (3,480) of the 39,589 new diagnoses of HIV in the United States were attributed to IDU. Among males, 6.3 percent (2,530) of new cases were transmitted via IDU or male-to-male contact and IDU. Among females, 2.3 percent (950) were transmitted via IDU ([CDC](http://www.CDC.gov)).
- U.S. Prevalence:** In 2016, 991,447 Americans were living with a diagnosed HIV infection—a rate of 306.6 cases per 100,000 persons. Among males, 19.9 percent (150,466) contracted HIV from IDU or male-to-male contact and IDU while 21 percent (50,154) of females were living with HIV attributed to IDU ([CDC](http://www.CDC.gov)).
- State Incidence:** Of the new HIV cases in 2016, 37 occurred in Alaska. Among males, 10.3 percent of new HIV cases were attributed to IDU or male-to-male contact and IDU. Among females, there were no new HIV cases attributed to IDU (Figure 4) ([AIDSVU](http://www.AIDSVU.org)).
- State Prevalence:** In 2015, an estimated 657 persons were living with a diagnosed HIV infection in Alaska—a rate of 109 cases per 100,000 persons. Of those, 21.2 percent of cases among males were attributed to IDU or male-to-male contact and IDU. Among

females, 16 percent were living with HIV attributed to IDU ([AIDSvu](#)).

Hepatitis C (HCV) Prevalence and HCV Diagnoses Attributed to Injection Drug Use¹

- **U.S. Incidence:** In 2016, there were an estimated 41,200 new cases of acute HCV² ([CDC](#)). Among case reports that contain information about IDU, 68.6 percent indicated use of injection drugs ([CDC](#)).
- **U.S. Prevalence:** An estimated 2.4 million Americans are living with HCV based on 2013-2016 annual averages ([CDC](#)).
- **State Incidence:** This data is unavailable for the state of Alaska ([CDC](#)).
- **State Prevalence:** In Alaska, there are an estimated 5,300 persons living with Hepatitis C (2013-2016 annual average), a rate of 970 cases per 100,000 persons ([HepVu](#)).

Additional Resources

- Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, [Alaska Opioid Policy Task Force](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Opioid Overdose](#)



NIH RePORTER

FY2018 NIH-funded projects related to opioid use and use disorder in Alaska: 0

[Find treatment in Alaska \(SAMHSA\)](#)

Notes

1. Not all states collect or report data on the incidence or prevalence of Hepatitis C or on how Hepatitis C is transmitted. When available, the data will be included.
2. Actual acute cases are estimated to be 13.9 times the number of reported cases in any year.