North Carolina: Opioid-Involved Deaths and Related Harms

Drug-Involved Overdose Deaths

In the U.S., there were 67,367 drug overdose deaths reported in 2018, 4.1% fewer deaths than in 2017.

- The age-adjusted rate declined by 4.6% to 20.7 per 100,000 standard population.\(^1\) The decline follows an increasing trend in the rate from 6.1 in 1999 to 21.7 in 2017.

- Opioids were involved in 46,802 (a rate of 14.6) overdose deaths in 2018—nearly 70% of all overdose deaths.

- Deaths involving synthetic opioids other than methadone (including fentanyl and fentanyl analogs) continued to rise with more than 28,400 (a rate of 9.9) overdose deaths in 2018.

- The number of deaths involving prescription opioids declined to 14,975 (a rate of 4.6) in 2018 and those involving heroin dropped to 14,996 (a rate of 4.7).\(^2\)

In North Carolina, an estimated 79% of drug overdose deaths involved opioids in 2018; a total of 1,783 fatalities and a rate of 17.9 (Figure 1).

- Deaths involving prescription opioids declined from 659 in 2017 (a rate of 6.5) to 489 in 2018 (a rate of 4.7).

- Heroin-involved deaths and those involving synthetic opioids other than methadone (mainly fentanyl and fentanyl analogs) remained stable with a respective 619 (a rate of 6.3) and 1,272 (a rate of 13.0) in 2018.\(^3\)
Opioid Prescriptions

In 2018, North Carolina providers wrote 61.5 opioid prescriptions for every 100 persons compared to the average U.S. rate of 51.4 prescriptions.\(^4\)

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)/Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS)

NAS or NOWS may occur when a woman uses opioids during pregnancy. To date, there is no standard in NAS/NOWS provider and hospital coding practices. As a result, there is variability in the rates reported by states.

- The national incidence rate of NAS/NOWS in 2016 was 7 cases per 1,000 hospital births.\(^6,7\)
- The highest rates were reported among American Indian/Alaska
Native (15.9 per 1,000 births) and White Non-Hispanic (10.5 per 1,000 births) individuals.

- In 2016, hospital costs for NAS/NOWS births totaled $572.7 million, after adjusting for inflation.\(^8\)
- The rate of NAS/NOWS in North Carolina in 2017 was 10.5 cases per 1,000 hospital births and is the most recent data available.\(^6\)-\(^7\)

**New HIV Diagnoses\(^9\) and Prevalence Attributed to Injection Drug Use (IDU)**

U.S. New Diagnoses: In 2017, 9.7% (3,690) of the 38,226 new HIV diagnoses were attributed to IDU. Among males, 8.6% (2,655) of new diagnoses were transmitted via IDU or male-to-male sexual contact and IDU. Among females, 14.2% (1,035) of new diagnoses were transmitted via IDU.\(^10\)

U.S. Prevalence: In 2017, more than 1 million Americans were living with a diagnosed HIV infection—a rate of 367.7. Among
males, 16.4% (125,274) contracted HIV from IDU or male-to-male sexual contact and IDU. Among females, 20.8% (49,288) were living with HIV attributed to IDU.10

- **State New Diagnoses:** Of the new HIV diagnoses in 2017, 1,297 occurred in North Carolina—a rate of 15.0. Among males, 6.6% of new HIV diagnoses were attributed to IDU or male-to-male sexual contact and IDU. Among females, 10.7% of new HIV diagnoses were attributed to IDU (Figure 2).10

- **State Prevalence:** In 2017, an estimated 30,953 persons were living with a diagnosed HIV infection in North Carolina—a rate of 358.5. Of those, 13.4% of male cases were attributed to IDU or male-to-male sexual contact and IDU. Among females, 18.5% were living with HIV attributed to IDU.10

**Hepatitis C (HCV) Incidence and Prevalence Attributed to IDU**11

- **U.S. Incidence:** In 2017, there were an estimated 44,700 new cases of acute HCV. Among case reports that contained information about IDU, 86.6% indicated IDU prior to onset of acute, symptomatic HCV.12

- **U.S. Prevalence:** An estimated 2.4 million Americans are living with HCV (based on 2013-2016 annual average).12

- **State Incidence:** There were approximately 114 new cases of acute HCV (1.1) reported in North Carolina in 2017.10

- **State Prevalence:** In North Carolina, there are an estimated 66,400 persons living with HCV (a rate of 870 based on 2013-2016 annual average).13

**References**
1. Rates are age-adjusted per 100,000 standard population unless otherwise noted.


7. Comparisons with earlier estimates are difficult because of the ICD-10-CM transition in 2015.


9. The term refers to people diagnosed with HIV infection, regardless of the stage of disease at diagnosis.

11. 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.
