

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Massachusetts Opioid Summary

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<https://www.drugabuse.gov>

Massachusetts Opioid Summary

Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths

Massachusetts ranked among the top ten states with the highest rates of drug overdose deaths involving opioids. In 2017, there were 1,913 drug overdose deaths involving opioids in Massachusetts—a rate of 28.2 deaths per 100,000 persons, which is twofold higher than the national rate of 14.6 deaths per 100,000 persons. The greatest increase in opioid deaths was seen in cases involving synthetic opioids (mainly fentanyl): a rise from 67 deaths in 2012 to 1,649 deaths in 2017 (Figure 1). Deaths involving prescription opioids totaled 321 in 2017 and have remained steady since 2015. Heroin involved deaths decreased 25 percent over the past 2-years with a total of 466 deaths in 2017.

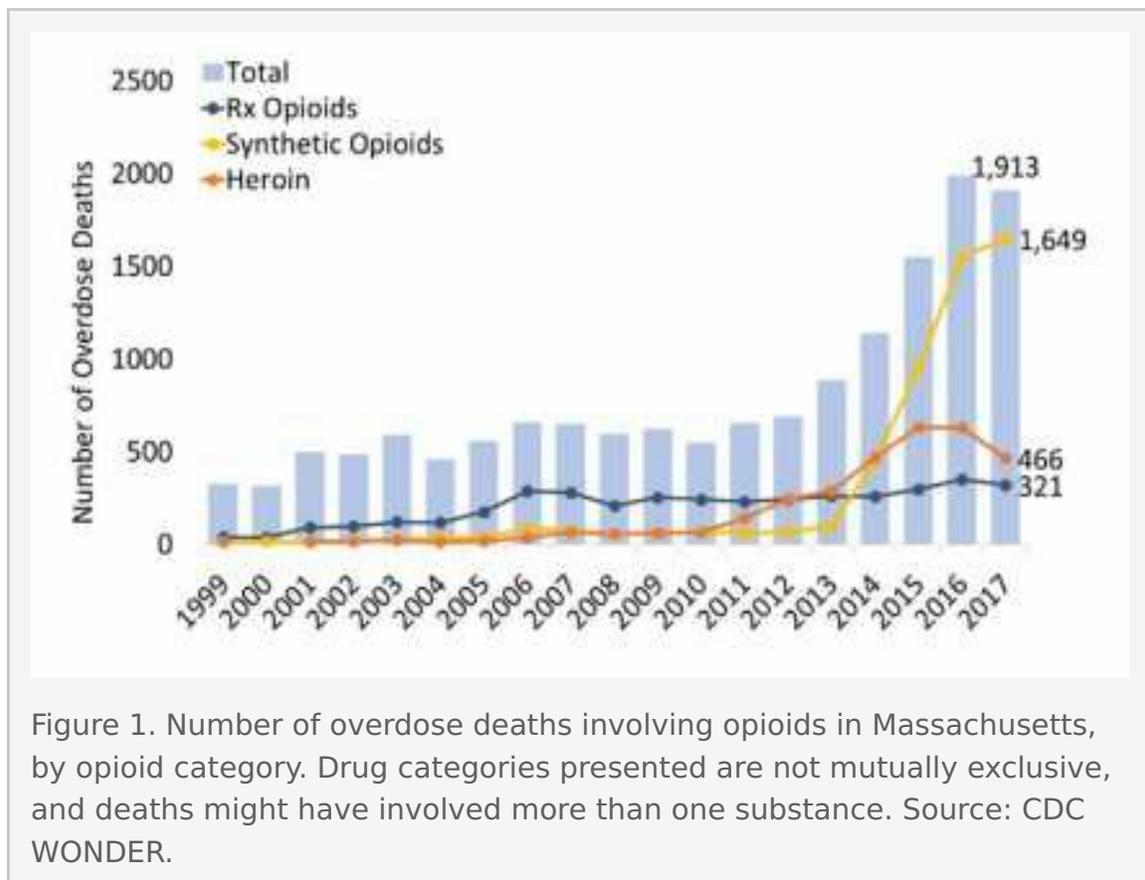
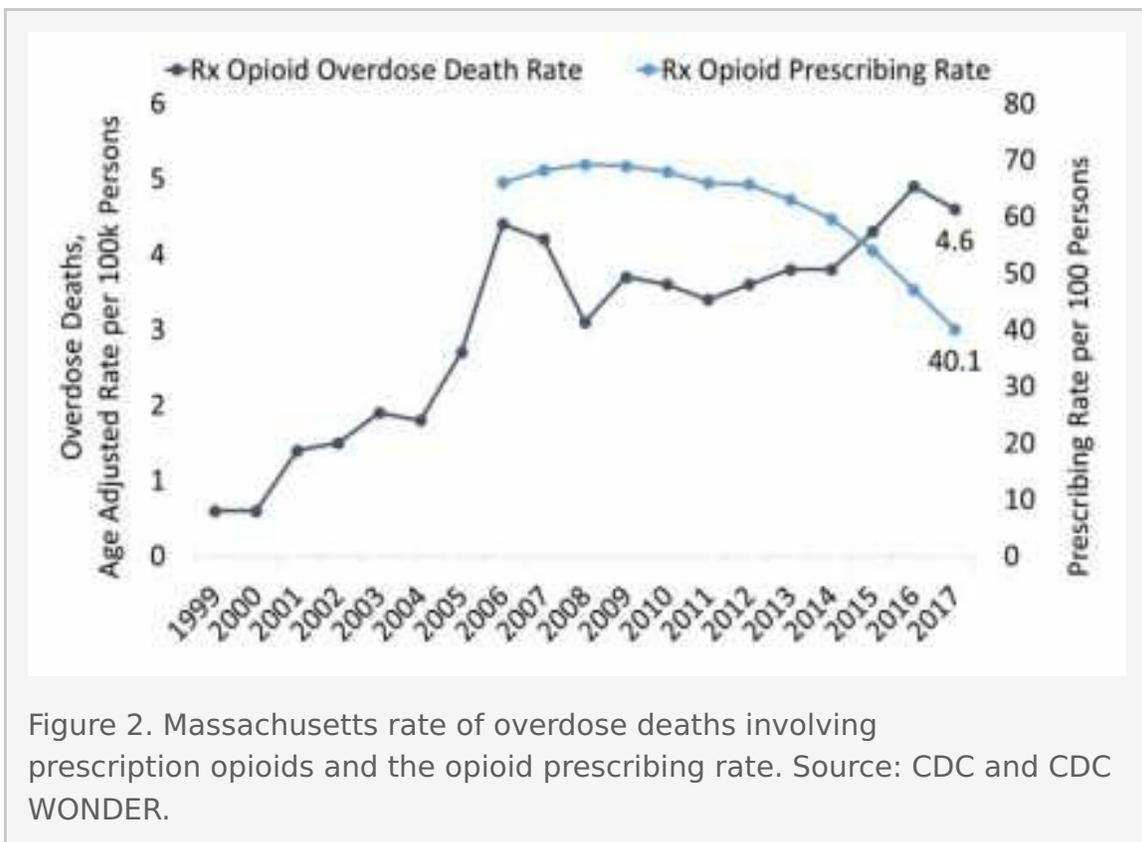


Figure 1. Number of overdose deaths involving opioids in Massachusetts, by opioid category. Drug categories presented are not mutually exclusive, and deaths might have involved more than one substance. Source: CDC WONDER.

Opioid Pain Reliever Prescriptions

In 2017, Massachusetts had one of the lowest opioid prescribing rates in the United States. Providers in Massachusetts wrote 40.1 opioid prescriptions for every 100 persons (Figure 2), compared to the average U.S. rate of 58.7 prescriptions ([CDC](#)). While the rate of overdose deaths involving opioid prescriptions is among the lowest in the nation, the rate has seen an overall upward trend since 1999. In the past year, however, the rate saw a soft decline to 4.6 deaths per 100,000 persons.

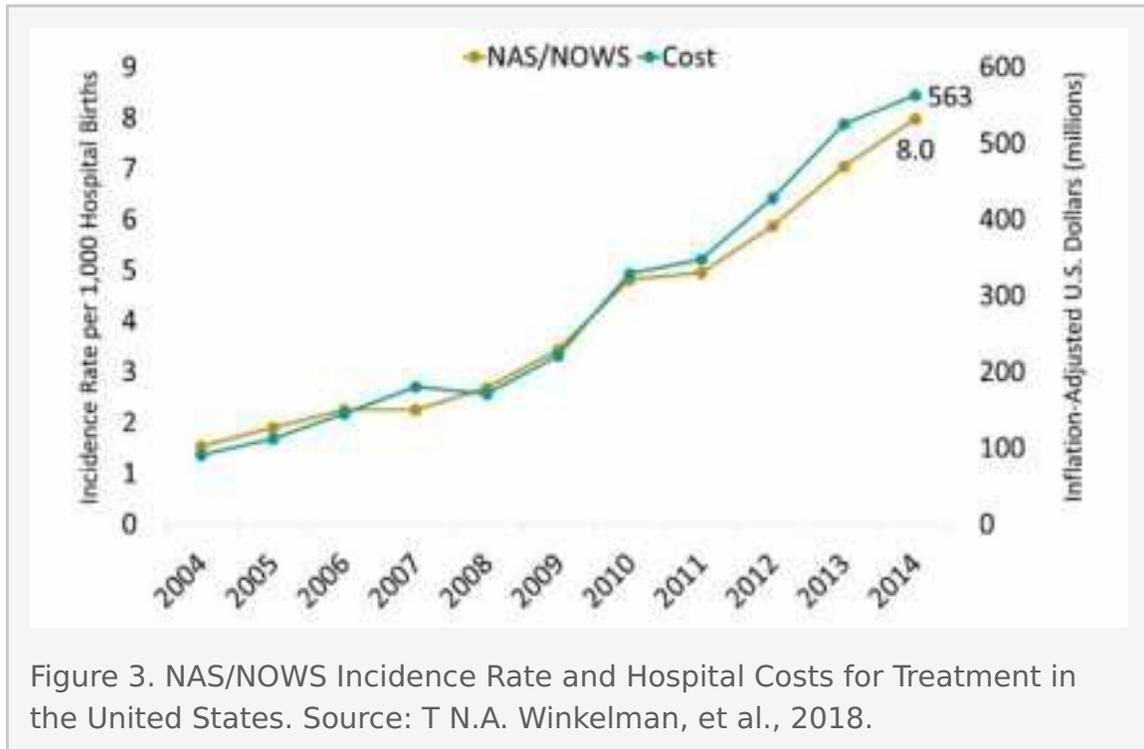


Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)

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. That is one baby born with

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).

In 2015, the rate of NAS/NOWS in Massachusetts was about 14.5 cases per 1,000 hospital births ([Massachusetts NAS Dashboard](#)).



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

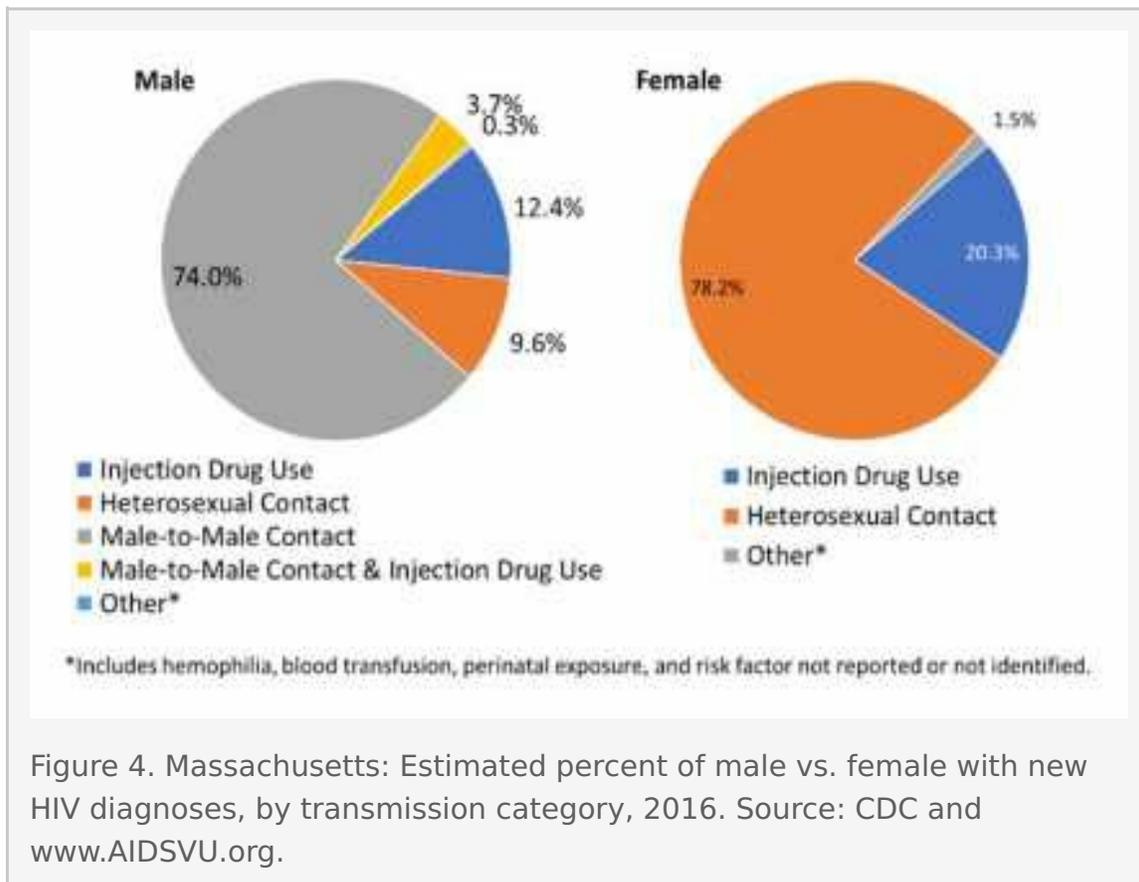


Figure 4. Massachusetts: Estimated percent of male vs. female with new HIV diagnoses, by transmission category, 2016. Source: CDC and www.AIDSVU.org.

- 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](#)).
- 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](#)).
- State Incidence:** Of the new HIV cases in 2016, 710 occurred in Massachusetts. Among males, 16.1 percent of new HIV cases were attributed to IDU or male-to-male contact and IDU. Among females, 20.3 percent of new HIV cases were attributed to IDU (Figure 4) ([AIDSVU](#)).
- State Prevalence:** In 2015, an estimated 19,665 persons were living with a diagnosed HIV infection in Massachusetts—a rate of

338 cases per 100,000 persons. Of those, 26.5 percent of male cases were attributed to IDU or male-to-male contact and IDU. Among females, 31.5 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:** There were approximately 424 new cases of acute HCV (6.2 per 100,000 persons) reported in Massachusetts in 2016 ([CDC](#)).
- **State Prevalence:** In Massachusetts, there are an estimated 38,400 persons living with Hepatitis C (2013-2016 annual average), a rate of 720 cases per 100,000 persons ([HepVu](#)).

The National Institute of Health Funds Center of Excellence in Pain Education



Massachusetts is home to one of the eleven Centers of Excellence in Pain Education (CoEPes): The Harvard School of Dental Medicine and

Brigham and Women's Center of Excellence in Pain Education. The CoEPEs act as hubs for the development, evaluation, and distribution of pain management curriculum resources for medical, dental, nursing, pharmacy and other schools to improve how health care professionals are taught about pain and its treatment.

Additional Resources

- Commonwealth of Massachusetts, [MA Responds to the Opioid Epidemic](#) and [Current Opioid Statistics](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Opioid Overdose](#)



NIH RePORTER

FY2018 NIH-funded projects related to opioid use and use disorder in Massachusetts: 45

[VIEW RESULTS](#)

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

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 estimated to be 13.9 times the number of

reported cases in any year.