

# Drug Overdose Fact Sheet 2016-2020

Drug overdoses occur when an individual consumes enough of a drug (whether it is prescription, illicit, over-the-counter, etc.) to cause harmful effects. In the most serious cases, drug overdoses can result in death. Over the past decade, overdose deaths from opioids such as heroin and fentanyl have become a national health crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened this ongoing public health issue.

## Summary

### Trends over time

Drug overdose deaths increased from 2016 to 2020 in the County [Figure 1] even though emergency department (ED) visits for drug overdoses decreased [not shown]. Drug overdose deaths have been more common in the County compared to California as a whole [Figure 1].

### Leading cause of death

Drug overdoses caused 1,425 deaths in the County from 2016 to 2020. They were the leading cause of death of County residents younger than 65 from 2016 to 2020 [Figure 2].

### Most commonly detected substances

Among deaths in which a specific substance could be identified from death certificate information, the stimulant methamphetamine was the most commonly identified substance, followed by fentanyl, cocaine, alcohol, and heroin [Figure 3].

### Multi-substance use

Using two or more substances simultaneously was 3.5 times more common among overdose deaths compared to ED visits for overdoses [Figure 4]. From 2016 to 2020, 12% of overdose ED visits involved more than one drug. For the same time period, nearly half of overdose deaths involved more than one drug.

Data Sources: Sacramento County Public Health Epidemiology Unit and California

Figure 1. Overdose deaths per 100,000 people, 2016-2020 (N = 1,425)

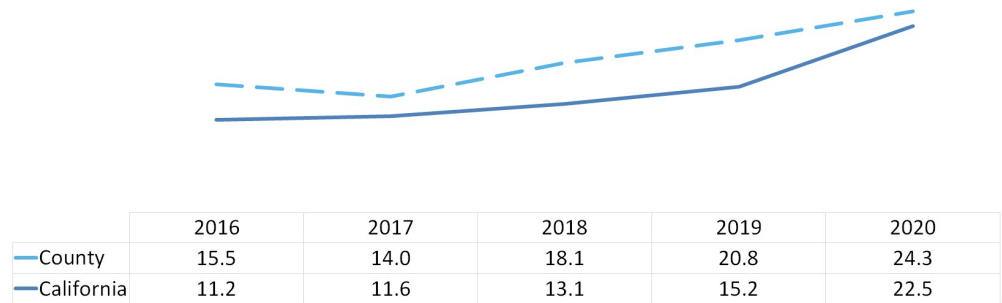


Figure 2. Top 5 causes of death among people younger than 65, Sacramento County, 2016-2020 (N = 4,082)

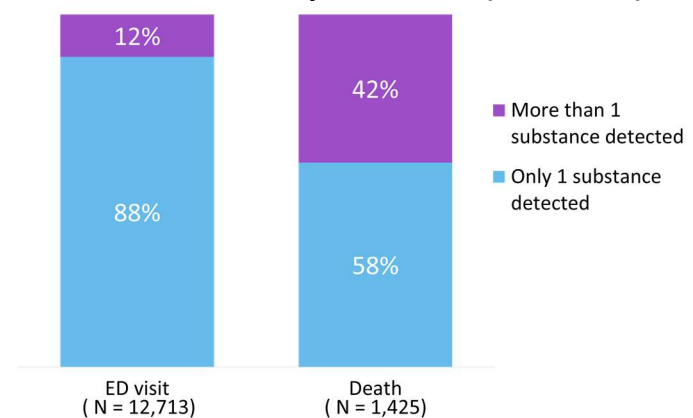
1. Drug overdoses (N = 1,425)
2. Diabetes (N = 739)
3. Unintentional motor vehicle collisions (N = 731)
4. Alcoholic liver disease (N = 606)
5. Cerebrovascular diseases (N = 581)

Figure 3. Five most commonly detected substances among overdose deaths, Sacramento County, 2016-2020 (N = 1,425)

Substance	N	Percent (%)
1. Methamphetamine	626	43.9
2. Fentanyl	155	10.9
3. Cocaine	130	9.1
4. Alcohol	128	9.0
5. Heroin	110	7.7

\*Categories are not mutually exclusive; Overdoses may be due to multiple substances

Figure 4. Presence of multiple substances in overdose ED visits and deaths, Sacramento County, 2016-2020 (N = 14,138)



## Demographics

### Race/ethnicity

There were large disparities in overdose deaths across different racial and ethnic groups in the County [Figure 5]. Overdose death rates were the highest among Blacks in 2020 compared to other racial/ethnic groups, followed by Whites. Blacks also had the greatest increase in overdose death rates (+170.6%) from 18.7 per 100,000 individuals in 2016 to 50.6 in 2020. The overdose death rates among Whites increased by 34.3% from 21.6 deaths per 100,000 individuals in 2016 to 29.0 in 2020. Death rates more than doubled for Hispanics, increasing from 8.5 deaths per 100,000 individuals in 2016 to 19.2 in 2020. Overdose deaths remained relatively consistent for Asians over the five-year period.

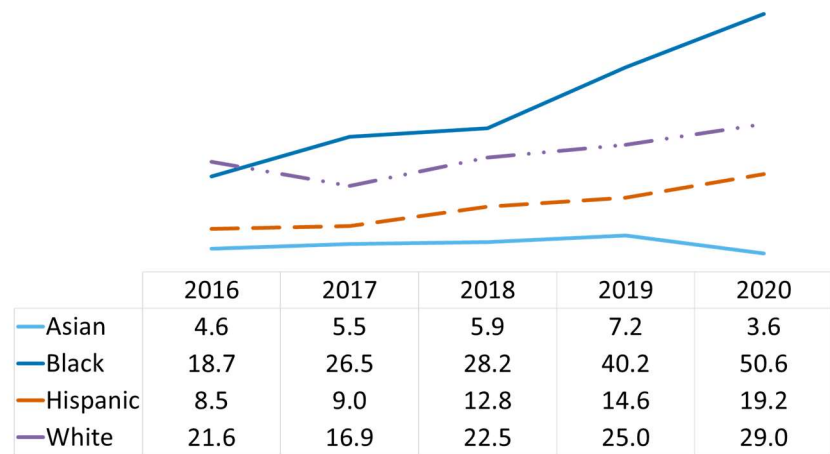
### Age

Overdose deaths increased across almost all age groups from 2016 to 2020 [Figure 6]. Overdose deaths were consistently the highest among residents 50-64 years old, increasing from 38.0 to 50.7 deaths per 100,000 individuals. Overdose death rates increased for residents 18-49 years old and for residents 65 or over from 16.9 and 6.5 deaths per 100,000 individuals to 27.8 and 18.1, respectively.

### Sex

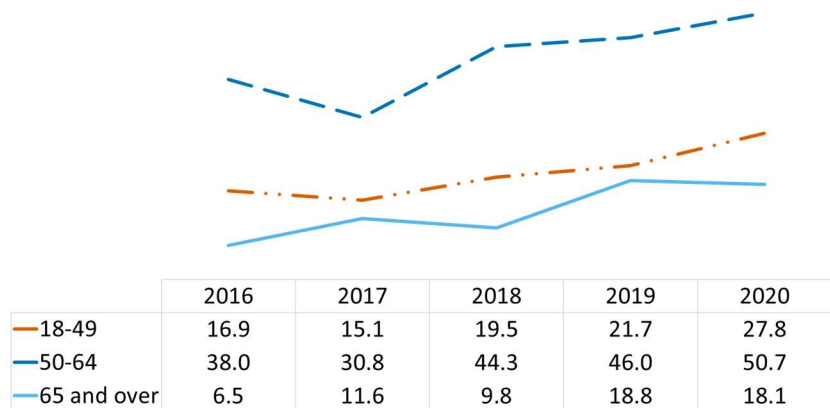
Among emergency room visits for drug overdoses, 56.7% of patients were female and 43.3% of patients were male. However, over two-thirds of overdose deaths were among men [Figure 7].

**Figure 5. Overdose deaths per 100,000 people by select race/ethnicity, Sacramento County, 2016-2020 (N = 1,377)**



\*American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (NHPI) not displayed due to small number of events

**Figure 6. Overdose deaths per 100,000 people by age group, Sacramento County, 2016-2020 (N = 1,425)**



\*Age group 0-17 not displayed due to small number of events

**Figure 7. Overdose ED visits and deaths by sex, Sacramento County, 2016-2020 (N = 14,138)**

