

Blacks Experiencing Fast-Rising Rates of Overdose Deaths Involving Synthetic Opioids Other Than Methadone



To understand the current opioid epidemic, it is critical to know which opioid drugs are contributing the most to overdose deaths involving opioids.

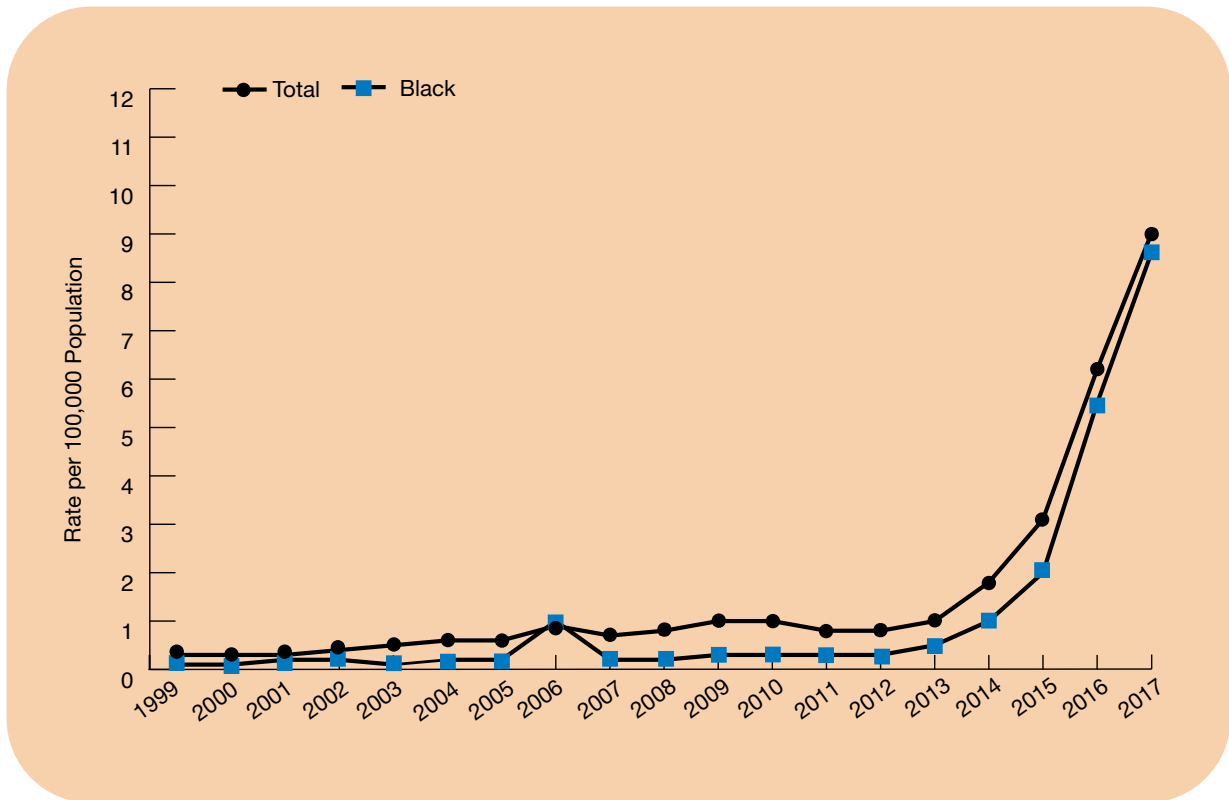
The measure of drug overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids other than methadone describes individuals who have died from synthetic opioids such as fentanyl (illicit and prescription) and tramadol. Recent data have shown that fentanyl-related overdose deaths are heavily contributing to the opioid crisis, with a steep rise in rates starting in 2013. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that the age-adjusted rate for the number of drug overdose deaths involving fentanyl increased from 0.6 per 100,000 population in 2013 to 5.9 per 100,000 population in 2016.¹

Trends in Overdose Deaths Involving Synthetic Opioids Other Than Methadone

Although opioid-related overdose death rates are higher for Whites and rates vary by gender within racial groups, Blacks are experiencing fast-rising rates of drug overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids other than methadone (Figures 1 and 2).¹ Members of Black communities have expressed concern about the availability of resources to address this problem and stigma related to opioid use.

Acknowledgment: This data spotlight was developed in collaboration with the Office of Behavioral Health Equity, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Figure 1. Outcome: Drug overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids other than methadone per 100,000 population, total and Black populations, 1999-2017

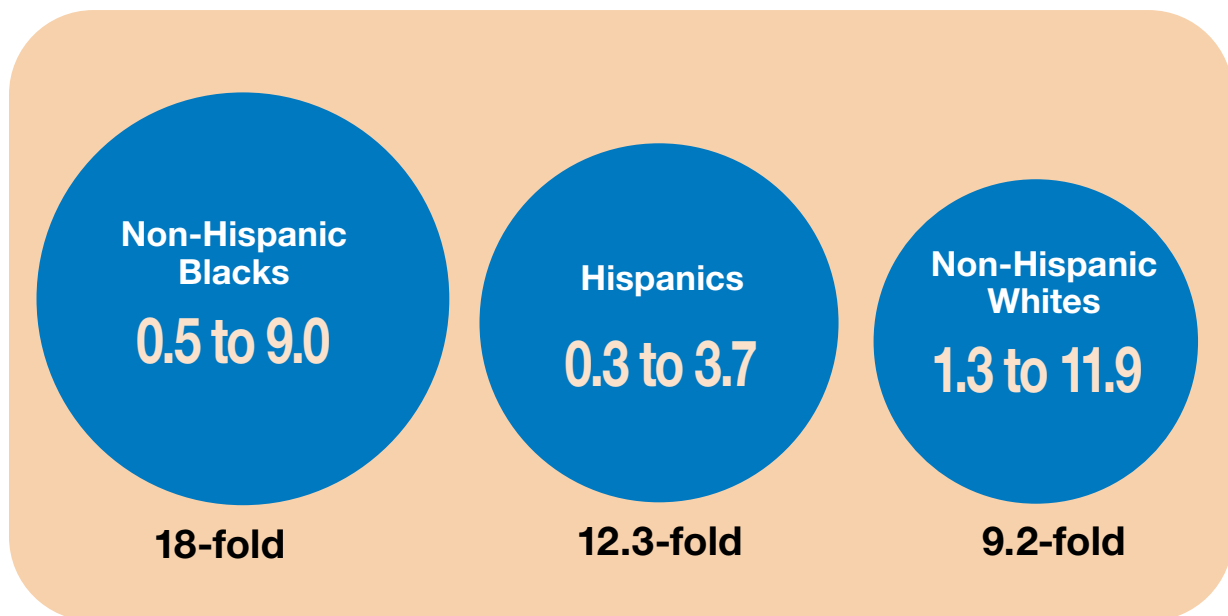


Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System – Mortality, 1999-2017.

Note: For this measure, lower rates are better.

- ◆ From 1999 to 2017, the overall rate of drug overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids other than methadone increased from 0.3 per 100,000 population to 9.0 per 100,000 population among the total population, and from 0.1 per 100,000 population to 8.6 per 100,000 population among the Black population (Figure 1).

Figure 2. Magnitude of increase in drug overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids other than methadone per 100,000 population, by ethnicity, 2013-2017



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System – Mortality, 2013-2017.

Note: For this measure, lower rates are better.

- ◆ Since 2013, a sharp increase in drug overdose deaths involving synthetics other than methadone has occurred across ethnic populations (Figure 2).
- ◆ Despite non-Hispanic Whites having the highest mortality rate due to synthetic opioids other than methadone in 2017, non-Hispanic Blacks experienced the highest change in rate compared with other ethnic populations from 2013 to 2017.
- ◆ From 2013 to 2017, non-Hispanic Blacks had an 18-fold increase in mortality due to synthetic opioids other than methadone.
- ◆ In comparison, from 2013 to 2017, Hispanics had a 12.3-fold increase and non-Hispanic Whites had a 9.2-fold increase in mortality due to synthetics other than methadone.

The data represented here can be accessed on [CDC WONDER](#) and AHRQ's Quality and Disparities Reports (QDR) [Opioids web page](#).

Federal Resources To Address the Opioid Epidemic

The Department of Health and Human Services has several initiatives addressing the opioid epidemic:

- ◆ CDC has developed [Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Opioid Overdose: What's Working in the United States](#). This guide supports community leaders, local and regional organizers, nonprofit groups, law enforcement agencies, public health organizations, and members of the public in understanding and navigating effective strategies to prevent opioid overdose in their communities.
- ◆ SAMHSA's State Targeted Response Technical Assistance (STR-TA), known as the [Opioid Response Network](#), was created to support efforts to address opioid use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery, and to provide education and training at the local level on evidence-based practices. This network provides local training and education free of charge for specific needs at the community level to address the opioid crisis.
- ◆ SAMHSA has also developed an [Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit](#). This toolkit offers strategies to healthcare providers, communities, and local governments for developing practices and policies to help prevent opioid-related overdoses and deaths.
- ◆ SAMHSA's National Network to Eliminate Disparities in Behavioral Health (NNED) includes resources focused on opioids and communities of color on the NNEDshare website. Two examples include a SAMHSA/NNED webinar series, [Strategies to Address the Opioid Epidemic in Black and Hispanic/Latinx Communities](#), and a Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health webinar series on the [opioid crisis and racial/ethnic minority populations](#).

1. Spencer MR, Warner M, Bastian BA, et al. Drug overdose deaths involving fentanyl, 2011-2016. Natl Vital Stat Rep 2019;68(3). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68_03-508.pdf. Accessed February 20, 2020.

