

Medication & Drug Overdose Deaths, 2018

An epidemic of unintentional medication and drug overdose deaths continues to affect North Carolina. While the number of these deaths increased by more than 700 percent from 1999 through 2017, numbers decreased by 6% in 2018 (Fig. 1). The percent of unintentional medication and drug overdose deaths involving multiple substances is on the rise, and we continue to see increases not only in opiate-involved overdose deaths, but also stimulant-involved overdose deaths. It is important to keep in mind that we cannot tell from death certificates if individuals are intentionally using more than one substance. Fentanyl is now infiltrating both opiate and stimulant products, which may be adding to the potency of these products, and in turn, leading to increased risk of unintentional overdose deaths.

Figure 1. Medication and Drug Overdose Deaths by Intent: N.C. Residents, 2018

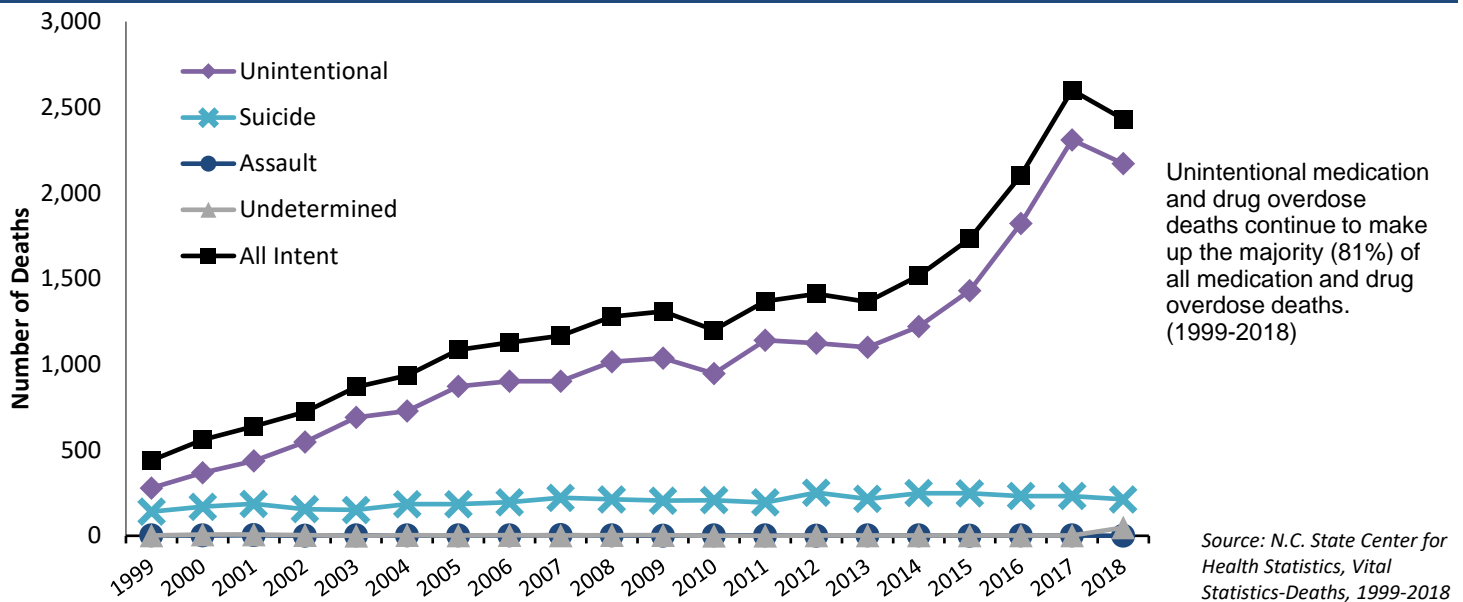


Table 1. Unintentional Medication & Drug Overdose Deaths by Selected Demographics: N.C. Residents, 2018

	Number	Percent	Rate	
Sex				
Female	690	33.2%	12.9	Males continue to die from unintentional overdose at higher rates (27.5 per 100,000 N.C. residents) than females (12.9 per 100,000 N.C. residents).
Male	1,391	66.8%	27.5	
Race				
White*	1,662	79.9%	25.1	American Indians and whites have the highest rates of unintentional overdose deaths (32.4 and 25.1 per 100,000 N.C. residents, respectively) among state residents.
Black*	292	14.0%	12.7	
American Indian*	40	1.9%	32.4	Unintentional overdose death rates are highest among ages 25-34 (42.6 per 100,000 N.C. residents) and ages 35-44 (41.1 per 100,000 N.C. residents).
Asian/Pacific Islander*	9	0.4%	2.6^	
Hispanic	57	2.7%	5.7	
Age Group				
0-14	2	0.1%	**	Please note: Demographic overdose rates vary across type of substance involved.
15-24	180	8.7%	13.0	
25-34	594	28.5%	42.6	
35-44	533	25.6%	41.1	
45-54	432	20.8%	31.4	
55-64	280	13.5%	20.8	
65-84	50	2.4%	3.3	
>84	10	0.5%	5.4	

* Non-Hispanic
 **Rates are not reported for <5 deaths
 ^Rates are unstable for 5-9 deaths; interpret with caution
 Rates are per 100,000 NC residents
 Source: N.C. State Center for Health Statistics



Figure 2. Substances Contributing to Unintentional Overdose Deaths: N.C. Residents, 1999-2018

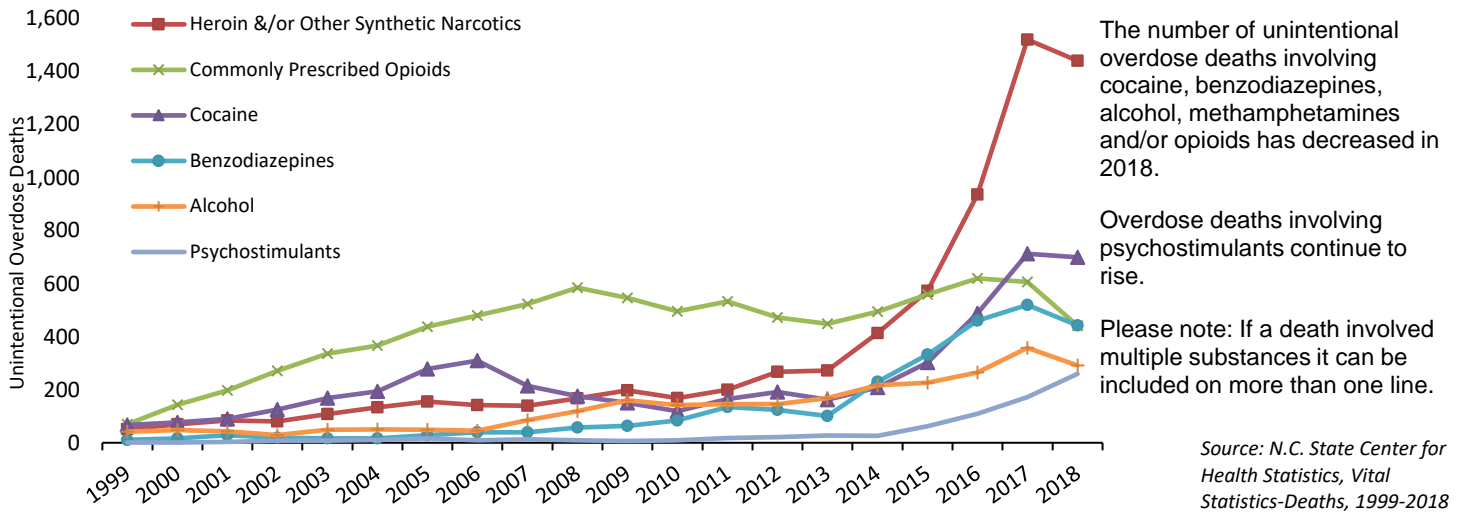
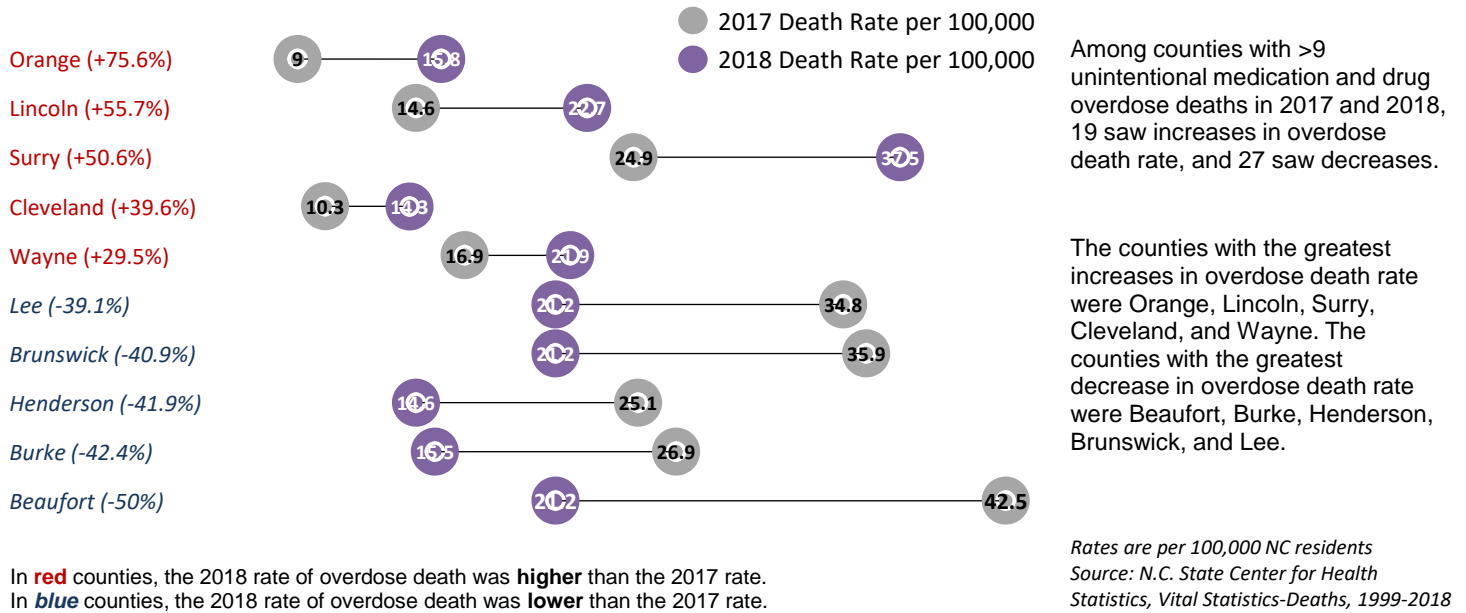


Figure 3. Largest Increases and Decreases in Unintentional Overdose Death Rate by County, 2017-2018



Additional Resources for Addressing Drug Overdose in North Carolina

[North Carolina's Opioid Action Plan](#)

The OAP was developed with community partners to combat the opioid crisis and will be continuously updated as we make progress on the epidemic.

[North Carolina Opioid Action Plan Dashboard](#)

Track and monitor the N.C. Opioid Action Plan data metrics; includes data for the state as well as local counties.

[Syringe Exchange Programs in North Carolina](#)

List of where to find your local syringe exchange program, including hours of operation and counties served.

[Naloxone in North Carolina](#)

Provides general information and where to locate naloxone in your community



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Public Health

Injury Epidemiology & Surveillance Unit/ 919-707-5425 / www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov
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