



DATA SHORTS

In-State Overdose Deaths of Maryland Residents, 2007 to 2014

As is the case across the nation, deaths due to unintentional drug and/or alcohol overdoses in Maryland have been rising steadily since 2010 and continue on an upward trend. An earlier Data Short (Vol.3, No.10) presented information from a state report on these deaths from 2007 to 2013; that data short examined all deaths that occurred in Maryland, regardless of where the decedent lived.

The current data short looks at overdose deaths and death rates for deaths of Marylanders whose jurisdiction of residence was known and recorded and who died in Maryland. The data included in these analyses does not include the 293 residents of other states who died in Maryland or the 318 individuals whose jurisdiction of residence was not known during the eight year period. Therefore, this Data Short examines only in-state deaths and death rates of Maryland residents and compares some of the characteristics of the Maryland decedents to the Maryland population.

The first two graphs on the right show the number of in-state deaths and death rates (deaths per 100,000 population) due to overdose of Maryland residents from 2007 to 2014. They show that both the number of deaths (top graph) as well as the death rates (bottom graph) have been steadily increasing since 2010. Recently released data for 2015 indicate that unintentional overdose deaths have risen by more than 20% over 2014. Details are available at <http://dhmh.maryland.gov/newsroom/Pages/Maryland-combats-opioid-epidemic---2015-data0609-8056.aspx>.

In-state overdose death rates by jurisdiction for 2014 are shown on the graph next to them. Fourteen of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions have rates above the comparable state rate of 15.7. Baltimore City is the highest in the state; the other 13 that are above the state average are a mix of suburban and rural counties. Care should be taken in interpreting rates in counties with populations of about 50,000 or less (Caroline, Dorchester, Garrett, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Worcester) because one death can have an inordinate effect on the rate.

The final graph compares some demographic information of the in-state decedents to the Maryland population. The average age of those dying from overdose was slightly over half of the life expectancy for all Marylanders; the average age of overdose decedents was 42 years compared with a statewide life expectancy of almost 80. Those dying from overdose were more likely to be male. Of the decedents, 69.5% were males while males are only 48.5% of Maryland's population. Finally, those in the White race category comprised a greater percentage of decedents from overdose (70.3%) than in Maryland's population (61.2%). The percentage of African Americans among decedents (26.3%) was below the African American percentage of Maryland population (31.2%).

Overdose deaths have been rising in Maryland. These deaths cut across geographic and racial lines, and inordinately affect younger people. There is a broad array of efforts that Maryland is making to reduce overdose deaths. Information about these efforts may be found at the website: http://bha.dhmh.maryland.gov/OVERDOSE_PREVENTION/Pages/Index.aspx.

