



# Brief: Addiction Crisis Numbers – Berks County, Pennsylvania, and United States

## Overview

Addressing the national addiction and overdose crisis requires a comprehensive multi-year strategy to educate the public and policymakers, reduce stigma and misunderstanding of addiction, better integrate substance misuse screening and treatment into mainstream health care, build and stabilize the addiction treatment workforce, increase access to treatment, and foster more effective approaches to care for substance use disorders.

Decades of research and data demonstrate addiction is a preventable disease. When left untreated, it can be fatal. Unfortunately, most people who need treatment do not seek it. In 2017 an estimated 20.7 million Americans aged 12 or older needed treatment for a substance use disorder, but only 4 million received any kind of treatment and only 2.5 million received that treatment at a specialty facility — a disparity known as the “**treatment gap**.”

The millions of Americans in long-term recovery from addiction demonstrate that recovery is possible, and they share the message that while addiction is a chronic disease, treating it is possible. In doing so, they help lift the stigma, misunderstanding, and shame that prevent too many Americans from seeking help for substance use disorders.

## Berks County (2017)

- 116 overdose deaths were reported with fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine listed as the most frequently identified substances (84% of deaths)
- 70 Police naloxone reversals
- 755 cases of seized heroin
- 545 in Chester County
- 65 percent increase in drug-related overdose deaths from 2015-2017 in Berks; 95% Chester

## Pennsylvania

- According to a report published by Senator Robert Casey’s Office for the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in 2018, the economic cost of OUDs was \$53.77 billion in 2016 in Pennsylvania.
- In 2017, there were 5,456 drug-related overdose deaths.
- Of the 171 emergency rooms in the state, 152 report overdose visits to the Department of Health.

## Brief: Addiction Crisis

From a drug user health survey of 400 opioid users conducted by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health:

- The majority (57.1 percent) of respondents (n=382) indicated having used pills before heroin.
- Among the reasons cited for first heroin use, only 8.3 percent cited “pain” (5.2 percent) or “doctor stopped prescribing pills” (3.1 percent).
- Other reasons included: “Cheaper”, “curiosity/experimentation”, “other drugs less effective” “friends/family using” (11.8 percent); “easy to find/buy” (10 percent); “pressure from friends, relatives, sex partner” (9.7 percent); grief/depression (6.3 percent).
- When questioned regarding drug treatment (n=400):
  - The majority of respondents (73 percent) indicated being “very interested” in stopping drug use.
  - Nearly 54 percent of respondents indicated that they had received treatment during the past 12 months.
  - Roughly 27 percent of respondents indicated that they were currently in treatment; of this group, buprenorphine was the most commonly identified treatment type.

## National

### Fatal overdose (2017)

- Drug overdose deaths, including those involving opioids, continue to increase in the United States. Deaths from drug overdose are up among both men and women, all races, and adults of nearly all ages.
- More than **702,000** Americans have died from drug overdoses from 1999 to 2017 – about 10 percent of them in 2017 alone (70,237 drug overdose deaths). These numbers are underreported due to incomplete data and inconsistent death certificate information.
- Opioids—mainly synthetic opioids (other than methadone)—are currently the main driver of drug overdose deaths. Opioids were involved in 47,600 overdose deaths in 2017 (67.8% of all drug overdose deaths).
- From 2016 to 2017, overdose deaths in which cocaine was the primary contributing drug increased 34 percent. In 2017 the number of individuals using cocaine within the past month increased to over 2 million, averaging approximately 2,800 first time cocaine users per day.
- In 2017, the states with the highest rates of death due to drug overdose were West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, and Kentucky.

### Nonfatal overdose (2015)

- For every drug overdose that results in death, there are many more nonfatal overdoses, each one with its own emotional and economic toll.
- An estimated 316,900 hospitalizations occurred for all drug-related poisonings in the US
  - An estimated 78,840 hospitalizations occurred for opioid-related poisonings
- An estimated 547,543 emergency department (ED) visits occurred for all drug-related poisonings
  - An estimated 140,077 ED visits occurred for opioid-related poisonings

## Brief: Addiction Crisis

### Opioid Prescribing

- A total of 56,935,332 persons, or 17.4% of the population, filled at least one prescription for an opioid.
- 14.8% of males filled at least one prescription for an opioid in 2017, and 19.9% of females filled at least one prescription for an opioid.
- A total of 191,146,822 opioid prescriptions were dispensed by retail pharmacies; the total opioid prescribing rate was 58.5 prescriptions per 100 persons.
- Pennsylvania experienced 5,456 drug-related overdose deaths in 2017. This number represents a rate of 43 deaths per 100,000, far exceeding the national average of 22 per 100,000 in 2017.
- The high availability and corresponding demand leading to the misuse of illicit and prescription opioids is a crisis without geographic, demographic, or socioeconomic boundaries in Pennsylvania.

### Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[Annual Surveillance Report](#)

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

[DEA Announces 5,456 Drug-Related Overdose Deaths in Pennsylvania in 2017](#)

Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)

[National Drug Control Strategy \(January 2019\)](#)

Open Data PA

[Pennsylvania Opioid Data Dashboard](#)

Overdose Free PA, DEA and University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy

[The Opioid Threat in Pennsylvania](#)

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

[2017 National Survey on Drug Use & Health \(NDSUH\)](#)

Please contact BK McDonough, Government Affairs, for more information.

O: 800-678-2332, 6191 | M: 610-781-7367 | E: [bmcdonough@caron.org](mailto:bmcdonough@caron.org)