

# Opioid Mortality and Selected Trends

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2018 South Carolina Overdose Mortality Data



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## Executive Summary

Deaths due to drug overdose have been recognized as a significant public health burden in the United States in recent years. Nationally, there has been progress to combat the epidemic as for 2018, there was a reported 67,744 drug overdose deaths, a 4.2% decrease from the previous year across the nation.<sup>1</sup> During the same year, there were 47,016 opioid-involved overdose deaths which is down 2% from the previous year.

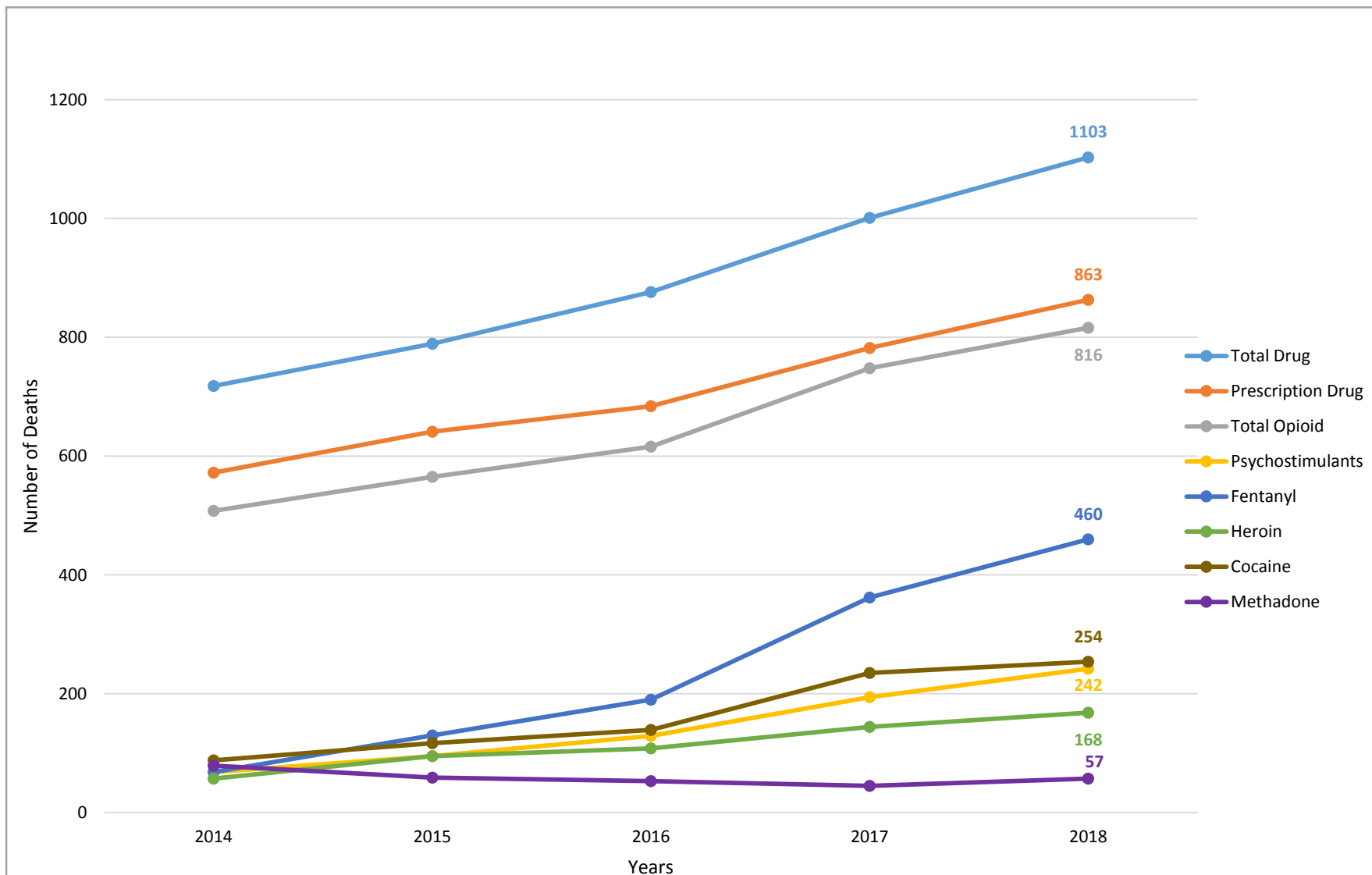
Deaths due to drug overdose as well as deaths due to opioids have both been steadily increasing in South Carolina.<sup>2</sup>

- 1,103 Drug overdose deaths in 2018, which is up 10% from the 1,001 deaths reported in 2017
- 816 Opioid-involved overdose deaths in 2018, which is up 9% from the 748 deaths reported in 2017

<sup>1</sup> Ahmad FB, Escobedo LA, Rossen LM, Spencer MR, Warner M, Sutton P. Provisional drug overdose death counts. National Center for Health Statistics. 2019.

<sup>2</sup> SC DHEC, Vital Statistics

Figure 1. Number of Drug Overdose Deaths  
South Carolina, 2014-2018



Source: SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, Vital Statistics

\*Categories of drugs are not mutually exclusive

Table 1.  
 Number of Drug Overdose Deaths by Drug Category  
 South Carolina, 2014-2018

Year	Total Drug Overdose	Prescription Drugs	Opioids	Psychostimulants with Abuse Potential	Fentanyl	Heroin	Methadone	Cocaine
2014	718	572	508	68	68	57	79	88
2015	789	641	565	95	130	95	59	117
2016	876	684	616	129	190	108	53	139
2017	1,001	782	748	194	362	144	45	235
2018	1,103	863	816	242	460	168	57	254

As displayed in figure 1 and table 1, there has been an increase in drug overdose deaths over the past four years across the different drug categories reported except for Methadone:

- 863 Prescription drug-involved overdose deaths (which include non-opioid prescription drugs) in 2018, which is up 10% from the 782 deaths reported in 2017
- 168 Heroin-involved overdose deaths in 2018, which is up 17% from the 144 deaths reported in 2017
- 242 Psychostimulant-involved overdose deaths (which includes drugs such as amphetamines and methamphetamines) in 2018, which is up 25% from the 194 deaths reported in 2017
- 460 Fentanyl-involved overdose deaths in 2018, which is up 27% from the 362 deaths reported in 2017
  - largest increase in deaths by a drug category from 2017 to 2018 and overall from 2014 to 2018 (576% increase)
- 57 Methadone-involved overdose deaths in 2018, which is up 26% from the 45 deaths reported in 2017 but down 28% overall from 2014 which is consistent with national trends, as methadone is used for the treatment of opioid use disorder.
- 254 Cocaine-involved overdose deaths in 2018, which is up 8% from the 235 deaths reported in 2017

Looking at the breakdown of counties in South Carolina (Table 2), a number of counties had a substantial increase from 2017 to 2018 in opioid-involved overdose deaths with Greenville county seeing a significant 79.5% increase (from 73 to 131).

- Overall, there were 5 counties that had 10 or more reported opioid-involved overdose deaths in 2018 and had an increase in the number of deaths by 50% or more from 2017

On the opposite spectrum, there were counties that saw substantial decreases in opioid-involved overdose deaths from 2017 to 2018 including the following:

- Lancaster- 47.8% decrease (23 to 12)
- Anderson- 31.8% decrease (22 to 15)
- Richland- 28.2% decrease (71 to 51)

Efforts around response and prevention, such as unified task forces and coalitions, have been implemented across numerous counties including the counties listed above, which may have contributed to the decline in the overdose death rate.

In 2017, Governor Henry McMaster declared the state's opioid crisis to be a public health emergency and established the state's Opioid Emergency Response Team (OERT). The SC OERT developed a multilateral strategy to prevent and treat the misuse of prescription opioids and use of illicit opioids in order to strengthen public health, security, safety, and the economic well-being of the citizens of South Carolina.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> South Carolina Opioid Emergency Response Plan, SCOERP

Table 2.  
Change in Drug Overdose Deaths by County and Drug Category  
South Carolina, 2017-2018<sup>1</sup>

County of Death	Total Drug Overdose			Opioids		
	2017	2018	Percent Change	2017	2018	Percent Change
<b>South Carolina</b>	1001	1,103	10.2	748	816	9.1
Abbeville	8	3		6	1	
Aiken	40	34	-15.0	31	27	-12.9
Allendale	-	1		-	-	
Anderson	32	28	-12.5	22	15	-31.8
Bamberg	-	-		-	-	
Barnwell	4	4		3	2	
Beaufort	25	16	-36.0	18	14	-22.2
Berkeley	27	32	18.5	23	24	4.3
Calhoun	-	2		-	2	

<sup>1</sup>Percent change not calculated for counties with fewer than 10 deaths in 2018.

\* Statistically significant at 95% confidence interval

Table 2. Continued  
 Change in Drug Overdose Deaths by County and Drug Category  
 South Carolina, 2017-2018<sup>1</sup>

County of Death	Total Drug Overdose			Opioids		
	2017	2018	Percent Change	2017	2018	Percent Change
<b>South Carolina</b>	1001	1,103	10.2	748	816	9.1
Charleston	118	121	2.5	94	100	6.4
Cherokee	1	4		1	2	
Chester	5	3		5	3	
Chesterfield	4	3		3	1	
Clarendon	4	4		2	3	
Colleton	6	10	66.7	5	6	
Darlington	9	6		8	5	
Dillon	6	4		4	3	
Dorchester	28	36	28.6	20	30	50.0

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\* Statistically significant at 95% confidence interval



Table 2. Continued  
 Change in Drug Overdose Deaths by County and Drug Category  
 South Carolina, 2017-2018<sup>1</sup>

County of Death	Total Drug Overdose			Opioids		
	2017	2018	Percent Change	2017	2018	Percent Change
<b>South Carolina</b>	1001	1,103	10.2	748	816	9.1
Edgefield	2	-		1	-	
Fairfield	3	1		2	-	
Florence	31	37	19.4	26	26	0.0
Georgetown	18	23	27.8	14	16	14.3
Greenville	107	172	60.7	73	131	79.5
Greenwood	16	25	56.3	14	19	35.7
Hampton	1	1		-	1	
Horry	103	105	1.9	77	85	10.4
Jasper	6	8		3	7	

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County of Death	Total Drug Overdose			Opioids		
	2017	2018	Percent Change	2017	2018	Percent Change
<b>South Carolina</b>	1001	1,103	10.2	748	816	9.1
Kershaw	7	13	85.7	4	11	175.0
Lancaster	24	14	-41.7	23	12	-47.8
Laurens	12	16	33.3	7	12	71.4
Lee	1	-		1	-	
Lexington	49	55	12.2	36	42	16.7
McCormick	-	2		-	1	
Marion	2	1		-	-	
Marlboro	-	1		-	-	
Newberry	2	2		-	1	

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Table 2. Continued  
 Change in Drug Overdose Deaths by County and Drug Category  
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County of Death	Total Drug Overdose			Opioids		
	2017	2018	Percent Change	2017	2018	Percent Change
<b>South Carolina</b>	1001	1,103	10.2	748	816	9.1
Oconee	22	17	-22.7	18	15	-16.7
Orangeburg	9	10	11.1	5	8	
Pickens	27	34	25.9	19	22	15.8
Richland	93	85	-8.6	71	51	-28.2
Saluda	2	-		1	-	
Spartanburg	69	82	18.8	47	56	19.1
Sumter	7	29	314.3	6	17	183.3
Union	4	-		3	-	
Williamsburg	7	4		5	2	
York	60	55	-8.3	45	43	-4.4

<sup>1</sup>Percent change not calculated for counties with fewer than 10 deaths in 2018.

\* Statistically significant at 95% confidence interval