

Preliminary 2020 Drug Overdose Deaths

TRENDS AND CHANGES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

NOTE: Data contained within this report are preliminary and likely to change when finalized. The results throughout the report are indicative, not definitive, of the final 2020 drug overdose deaths.

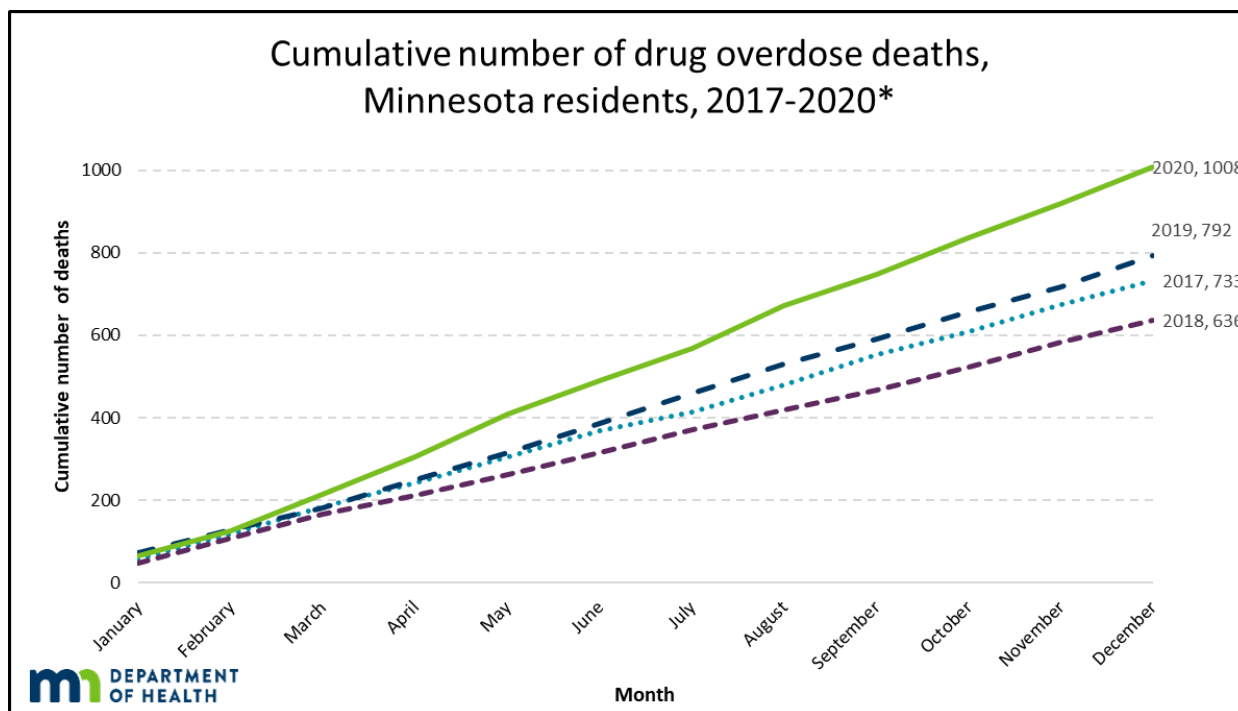
Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) previously reported a 31% increase in preliminary drug overdose death data when comparing January through June 2019 to January through June 2020 (373 to 490 deaths). This report updates those results with full-year preliminary 2020 data, highlighting the sustained increases in drug overdose deaths along with the types of drugs causing this increase.

Statewide drug overdose deaths

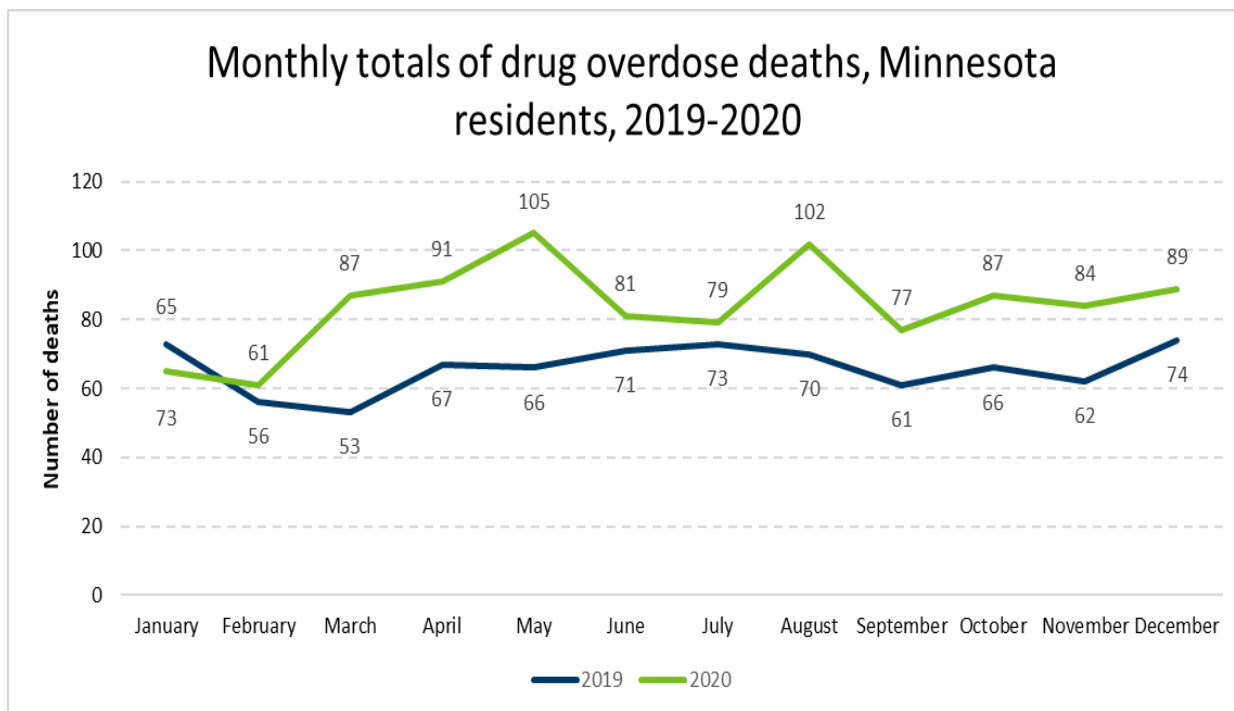
Preliminary statewide data show that drug overdose deaths increased 27% from 2019 to 2020 (792 to 1,008 deaths) (Figure 1). Compared to 2019, drug overdose deaths increased in March, peaked in May, with a second peak in August 2020 (Figure 2). March 2020, when the impacts of the pandemic began, including Minnesota’s first stay at home order, saw the largest monthly increase (64%, 53 to 87 deaths) compared to 2019. The trend of each individual monthly drug overdose death total being higher than the previous year continued throughout 2020.

Figure 1: The number of drug overdose deaths in 2020 is higher when compared to 2017-2019



SOURCE: Minnesota death certificates, Injury and Violence Prevention Section, Minnesota Department of Health, 2017-2020
 *NOTE: 2020 data are preliminary and likely to change when finalized.

Figure 2: Drug overdose deaths increased in March, peaked in May, with a second peak in August 2020



SOURCE: Minnesota death certificates, Injury and Violence Prevention Section, Minnesota Department of Health, 2019-2020
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Seven-county Metro compared to Greater Minnesota

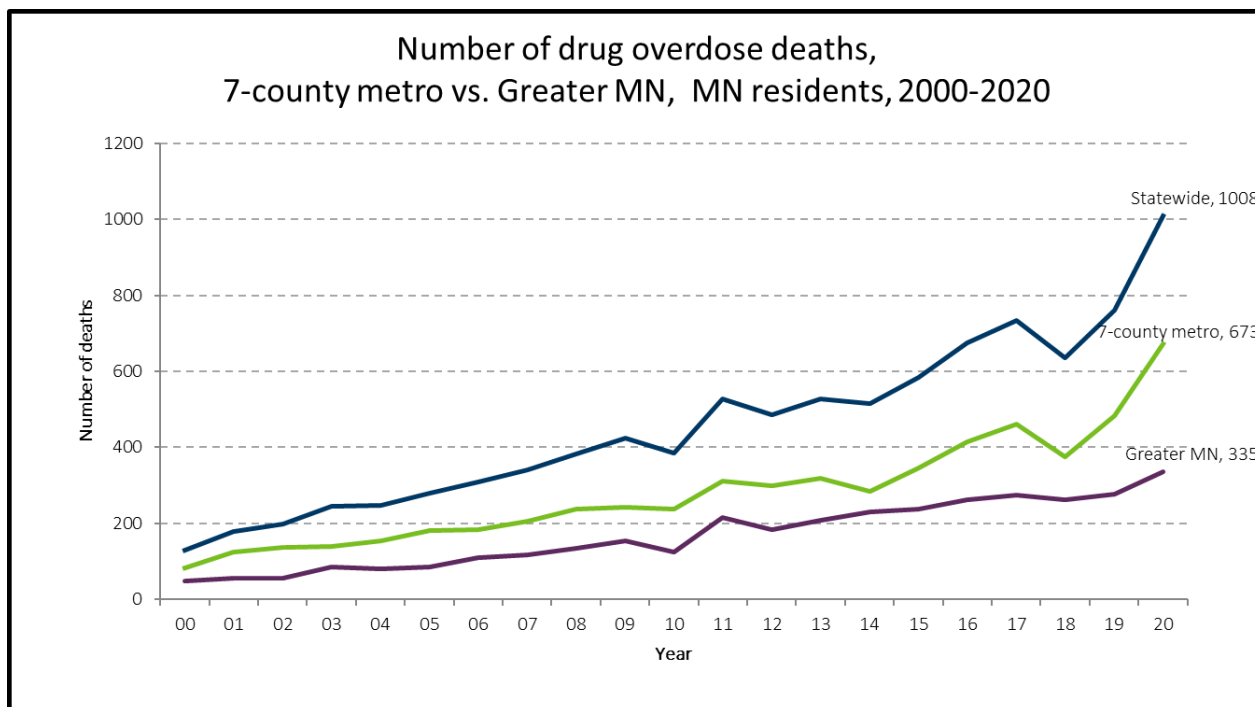
Preliminary data show increases in drug overdose deaths in both the Seven-county Metro (the Metro) and Greater Minnesota from 2019 to 2020, with a significantly larger increase in the Metro.

In the Metro, drug overdose deaths increased 40% from 2019 to 2020 (483 to 673 deaths) (Figure 3). The largest quarterly increase in 2020 was from Quarter 1 to Quarter 2; drug overdose deaths increased 24% (145 to 180 deaths) in 2020 compared to 14% (116 to 132 deaths) in 2019.

In Greater Minnesota, drug overdose deaths increased 21% from 2019 to 2020 (276 to 335 deaths) (Figure 3). In Greater Minnesota, the increase from Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 in 2020 (43%, 68 to 97 deaths) was substantially larger than in 2019 (10%, 59 to 65 deaths) and larger than the increase in the Metro over the same period (Figure 3).

In both the Metro and Greater Minnesota, the number of drug overdose deaths were relatively stable from July through December 2020, although the numbers were significantly higher from previous years. The preliminary 2020 data also continue the trend of a greater number of drug overdose deaths in the Metro, with the difference between Greater Minnesota greatly expanding (Figure 3).

Figure 3: In 2020 there were increases in drug overdose deaths in the Metro and Greater Minnesota, with the gap between the two greatly expanding



SOURCE: Minnesota death certificates, Injury and Violence Prevention Section, Minnesota Department of Health, 2000-2020

*NOTE: 2020 data are preliminary and likely to change when finalized

Drug overdose deaths by drug category

Drug overdose deaths across all drug categories, both opioid and non-opioid, increased from 2019 to 2020 (Figure 4). This includes increases in drug categories that had previously decreased or were stable from previous years.

Opioid-involved drug overdose deaths

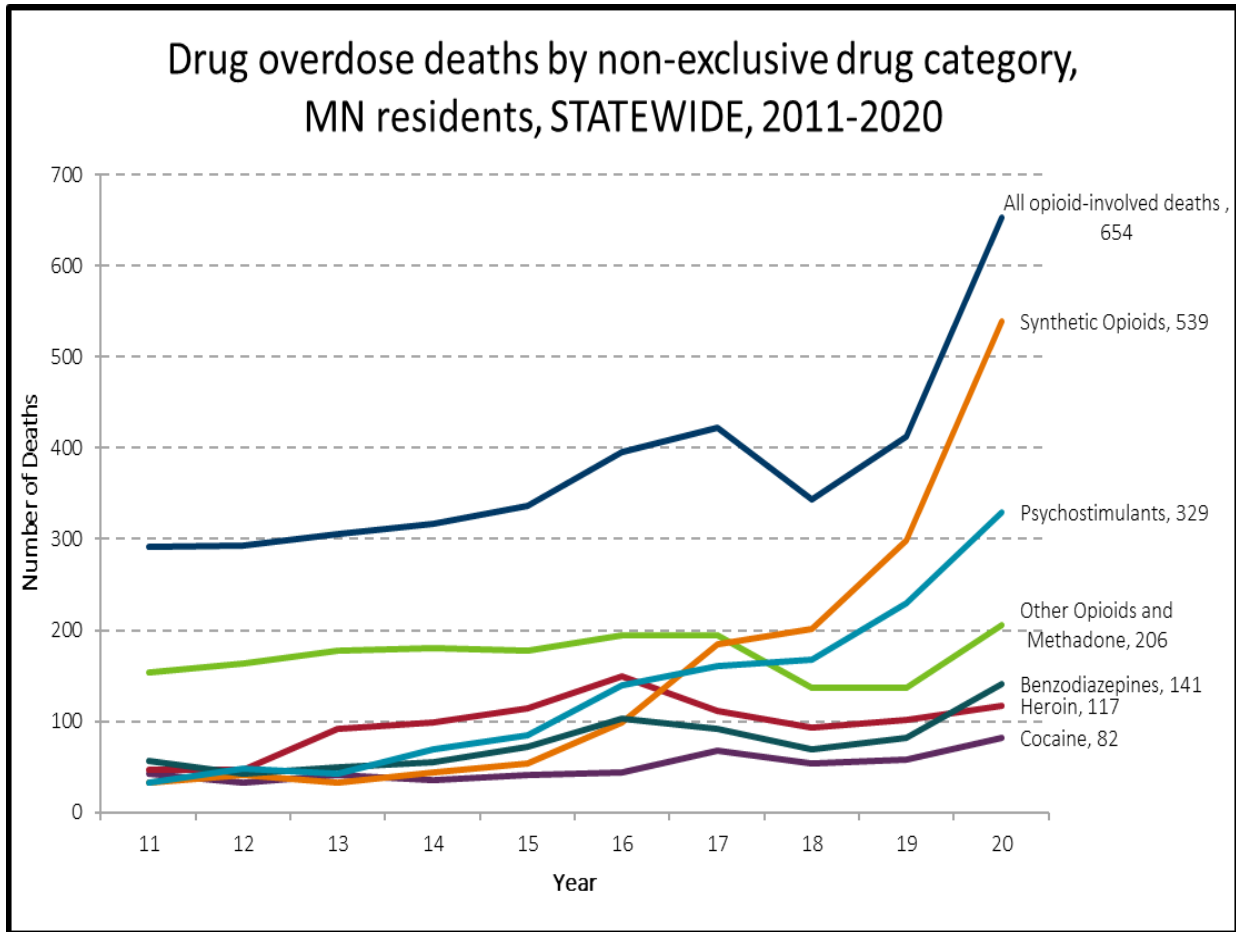
Preliminary data show a 59% increase from 2019 to 2020 for all opioid-involved deaths among Minnesota residents (412 to 654 deaths) (Figure 4). Deaths involving synthetic opioids, including fentanyl and fentanyl analogues, increased 81% (298 to 539 deaths), and were involved in 82% of all opioid-involved deaths. Deaths involving commonly prescribed opioids (i.e., other opioids and methadone) increased 53% (135 to 207 deaths). Deaths involving heroin increased 15% (102 to 117 deaths) (Figure 4).

Non-opioid drug overdose deaths

Preliminary data also show a large increase for deaths involving non-opioids from 2019 to 2020. (Figure 4). Psychostimulant-involved deaths, which includes methamphetamine, increased 44% (229 to 329 deaths) during this period. Deaths involving benzodiazepines increased 70% (83 to 141 deaths). Deaths involving cocaine increased 41% (58 to 82 deaths).

PRELIMINARY 2020 DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS

Figure 4: There was a large increase in all-opioid involved deaths, mainly driven by synthetic opioids, with continued increases in psychostimulant involved deaths



SOURCE: Minnesota death certificates, Injury and Violence Prevention Section, Minnesota Department of Health, 2011-2020

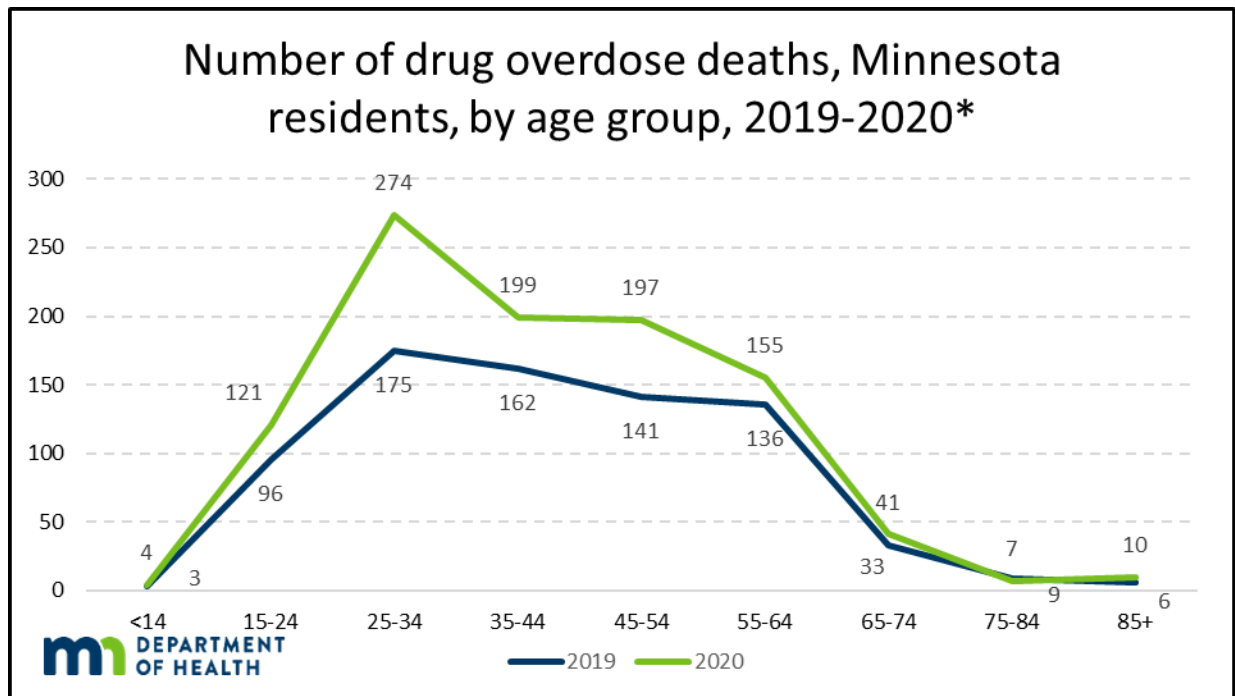
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NOTE: Drug categories are non-exclusive.

Age of drug overdose deaths

Preliminary data for 2020 show Minnesota residents aged 25 to 34 years experienced the greatest number of drug overdose deaths, increasing 57% from 2019 (175 to 274 deaths) (Figure 5). Additionally, there were increases in drug overdose deaths across all age groups from 15-74 years. Minnesota residents aged 15 to 24 years experienced a 26% increase in drug overdose deaths (96 to 121 deaths); Minnesota residents aged 35 to 44 years experienced a 23% increase in drug overdose deaths (162 to 199 deaths); Minnesota residents aged 45 to 54 years experienced a 40% increase in drug overdose deaths (141 to 197 deaths)

Figure 5: Adults aged 25 to 34 years had the highest number of drug overdose deaths and saw the largest increase from 2019



SOURCE: Minnesota death certificates, Injury and Violence Prevention Section, Minnesota Department of Health, 2019-2020
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