Drug-related deaths in Europe: trends in opioid-related deaths

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No conflict of interest
European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

- Decentralised EU information agency on drugs
- Formally established 1993 in Lisbon
- Working with Focal Points in 30 countries

The hub of drug-related information in the EU

- European drug report, statistics, and various web-based and print products to inform the drugs debate
EU Drugs Strategy 2013–2020:

- High number of DRD in Europe
- Investing in effective measures to reduce overdose deaths is a priority

EU Action Plan on Drugs:

- Decrease number of overdose
- Make preventive interventions available
- Promote exchange of best practices

Source: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html
DRUG-INDUCED DEATHS

Characteristics

22% women  78% men

Mean age at death  39 years

Deaths with opioids present

78%

Age at death

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;25</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25–39</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>40–64</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<td>&gt;64</td>
<td>5%</td>
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Trends in overdose deaths

Number of deaths

8 238 EU

9 461 EU + 2

NB: Data refer to EU Member States, Turkey and Norway (EU + 2).
Drug-induced deaths in the European Union, Norway and Turkey: total number and mortality rates among adults aged 15-64
Number of drug-induced deaths reported in the European Union in 2012 and 2017, or most recent year, by age band

Number of drug-induced deaths reported in the European Union in 2012 and 2017, or most recent year, by age band

Number of deaths

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Key

- 2012
- 2017

emcdda.europa.eu
Drug-induced deaths reported in 2017, or most recent year, by 10-year age band
Drug-induced deaths reported in Europe in 2016

Source: EMCDDA European Drug Report, June 2018
Proportion of drug-related deaths with report of opioids present, 2017 (or most recent year available), from preferred source
A quickly changing heroin market: cluster of carfentyl/heroin related deaths in England in 2017
Sources used by the countries to report drug-related deaths to the EMCDDA, 2017 (or most recent data available)
Proportion of drug-related deaths among men across the European Union, Norway and Turkey, 2017
Proportion of drug-related deaths classified as accidental, suicidal or having an undetermined intent in men and women in the 21 countries with available information, 2017
Conclusions

• Opioid are implicated or present in most overdose deaths in Europe

• Heroin and methadone dominant but increasingly complex opioid picture, including in some countries prescription opioids and illicit opioids (e.g. fentanyl)

• Polydrug toxicity is the norm (4-5 substances found in post mortem)

• Some groups at high risk
  • Poly-morbid ageing heroin/opioid users
  • People released from treatment and prison
  • Suicidal/mental health issues

While opioids dominate, there are differences across Europe in term of age, gender, and substances involved in the deaths → need more epidemiology, national and local risk and needs assessments
Average number of opioid ODs (2009–13) vs ‘best estimate’ of the number of POUs (as proxy)

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