

Fatal Opioid-Related Overdoses Continue to Rise in Bristol County and Across the State

Fatal overdoses on the Southcoast and across Massachusetts continue to rise, according to health and law enforcement officials.

Bristol County is averaging four overdose-related deaths a week in 2016, according to statistics provided by the Bristol County District Attorney's Office.

As of September 25, 150 overdose-related deaths had been reported, signaling a rise from 2014, 122 deaths reported, and 2015, 159 deaths were reported.

Fatalities in New Bedford nearly doubled from 2014 to 2015, jumping from 27 confirmed deaths to 48.

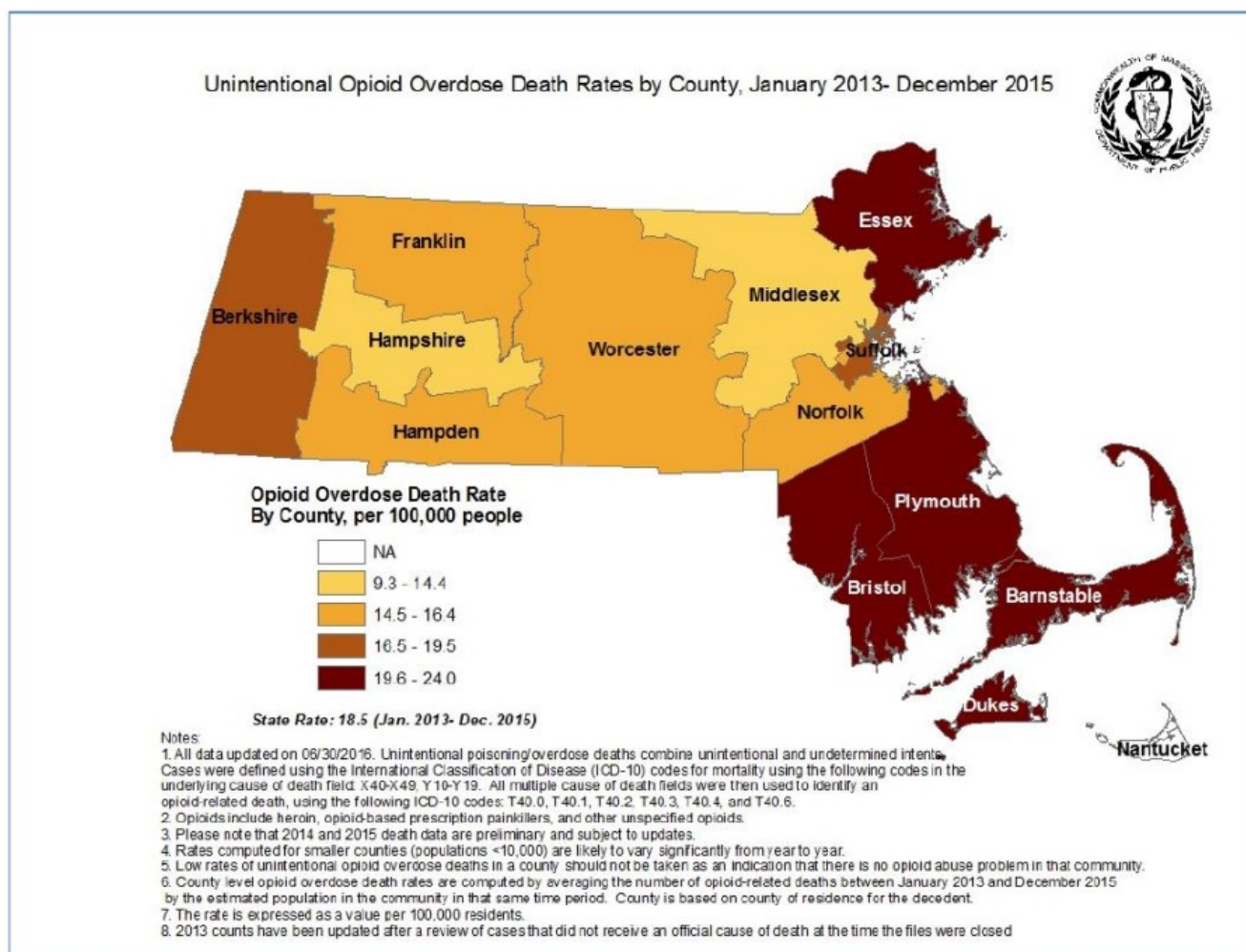
Data from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) shows that the rise in fatal overdoses is not unique to the Southcoast. Since 2013, overdose-related deaths have been on the rise across all counties in the Commonwealth.

It's difficult to point to one reason for the rise in numbers, but one major contributing factor concerning officials is the increased use of fentanyl. The synthetic drug is estimated to be up to 100 times more potent than morphine.

In a report by DPH, "among the 439 individuals whose deaths were opioid-related in 2016 where a toxicology screen was also available, 289 of them (66%) had a positive screen result for fentanyl. In the first quarter of 2016, heroin or likely heroin was present in approximately 30% of opioid-related

deaths that had a toxicology screen.”

More information about recent statistics, as well as available treatment and recovery options, can be found on the Commonwealth’s State Without StigMA webpage.





Number of Unintentional¹ Opioid²- Related Overdose Deaths by County, MA Residents: 2000-2015³

Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Office of Data Management and Outcomes Assessment

Posted: August 2016

County	Year of Death																Total 2000-2015
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014 ³	2015 ³	
Barnstable	12	17	21	15	16	17	19	29	22	21	19	15	23	40	53	66	406
Berkshire	2	3	0	2	3	9	1	8	3	8	4	6	16	21	28	33	147
Bristol	37	57	65	84	70	78	81	61	79	66	74	77	94	111	137	154	1326
Dukes	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	5	6	21
Essex	46	61	52	79	67	80	85	85	58	72	47	55	87	112	206	223	1415
Franklin	5	2	1	5	3	4	6	4	2	2	4	6	8	9	11	17	89
Hampden	32	36	41	45	27	35	44	38	48	46	46	43	52	69	61	99	762
Hampshire	5	5	5	10	8	2	9	12	10	9	10	9	10	28	25	17	174
Middlesex	61	80	89	109	103	116	113	102	106	116	92	120	112	144	274	321	2058
Nantucket	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1 ⁴	1 ⁴	7
Norfolk	26	40	42	41	40	49	48	53	69	64	55	59	69	80	125	154	1015
Plymouth	23	25	29	45	27	37	47	50	47	48	39	64	55	83	113	164	897
Suffolk	46	85	96	102	82	65	105	101	69	91	61	80	85	106	144	194	1513
Worcester	59	73	63	50	48	59	73	70	73	65	80	79	86	113	164	209	1364
TOTAL DEATHS	355	486	505	587	494	554	635	617	587	610	532	613	698	918	1,350⁵	1,658⁵	11,201

¹Unintentional poisoning/overdose deaths combine unintentional and undetermined intents to account for a change in death coding that occurred in 2005. Suicides are excluded from this analysis.

²Opioids include heroin, opioid-based prescription painkillers, and other unspecified opioids.

³Please note that data for 2000-2013 have been updated following a review of cases that did not receive an official cause of death at the time the file was closed. Data for 2014-2015 death data are preliminary and subject to updates. Case reviews of deaths are evaluated and updated on an ongoing basis. A large number of death certificates have yet to be assigned final cause-of-death codes. These counts are based on the estimates rather than confirmed cases. Data updated on 06/30/2016.

⁴Numbers and calculations based on values less than 5 are suppressed for years in which the death file is not yet closed if they are based on pending cases. The 1 death listed in Nantucket County in 2014 and 2015 is a confirmed opioid overdose death.

⁵In both 2014 and 2015, there was 1 death of an MA resident whose city/town of residence was not known.

Please note that there is rounding of counts for 2014-2015.

Technical Notes:

Cases were defined using the International Classification of Disease (ICD-10) codes for mortality. The following codes were selected from the underlying cause of death field to identify poisonings/overdoses: X40-X49, Y10-Y19. All multiple cause of death fields were then used to identify an opioid-related death: T40.0, T40.1, T40.2, T40.3, T40.4, and T40.6.

This report tracks all opioid-related overdoses due to difficulties in reporting heroin-associated overdoses separately. Many deaths related to heroin are not specifically coded as such due to the fast metabolism of heroin into morphine.

To maintain consistency with NCHS reporting, we do not include the ICD-10 code F11.1, which may include opioid-related overdose death.

Source: Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, MDPH