

Opioid Mortality and Selected Trends

2017 South Carolina Overdose Mortality Data



2600 Bull Street
Columbia, SC 29201
Phone: (803) 898-3649
Fax: (803) 898-3661



1801 Main Street
Columbia, SC 29201
Phone: (803) 896-5555
Fax: (803) 896-5557

Executive Summary

Deaths due to drug overdose have been recognized as a significant public health burden in the United States in recent years. In 2016, the age-adjusted rate of drug overdose deaths in the United States was more than three times the rate in 1999.¹ The rate of overdose deaths involving natural and semisynthetic opioids, such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, increased from 1.0 per 100,000 in 1999 to 4.4 in 2016.¹ The rates involving both heroin and synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl and fentanyl analogs, have significantly increased from 0.7 in 1999 to 4.9 per 100,000 in 2016 and 0.3 in 1999 to 6.2 per 100,000 in 2016, respectively.¹ The surge in deaths involving illicit drugs is in response to the increased availability of illicit substances such as non-pharmaceutical fentanyl.

In recent years, opioid-involved overdose deaths have been steadily increasing in South Carolina. From 2014 to 2017, the total number of opioid-involved overdose deaths increased by 47%, from 508 to 748 deaths, and the rate increased by 46%, from 10.6 deaths per 100,000 persons to 15.5 deaths per 100,000 persons.

It is important to recognize that drug overdose deaths may involve multiple drugs; therefore, categories of drugs are not mutually exclusive. Deaths involving more than one opioid category (e.g., a death involving both heroin and fentanyl) are counted in both categories.

¹ Hedegaard H, Warner M, Miniño AM. Drug overdose deaths in the United States, 1999–2016. NCHS Data Brief, no 294. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2017.

Shown in Figure 1, the total number of prescription drug-involved overdose deaths, which include non-opioid drugs, increased by 37%, from 572 deaths in 2014 to 782 in 2017. Heroin-involved overdose deaths saw a sharp increase of 153%, from 57 to 144 deaths. Overall, fentanyl-involved overdose deaths saw the largest increase of 432%, from 68 to 362 deaths from 2014 to 2017. Deaths due to methadone, however, continue to decrease from 79 in 2014 to 45 in 2017, which is consistent with national trends, as methadone is used for the treatment of opioid use disorder.

Looking at the breakdown of counties in South Carolina, three major metropolitan areas (Charleston, Greenville, and Richland counties) all saw considerable increases from 2016 to 2017 in opioid-involved deaths (see Table 2). However, Horry County, which has the largest burden of opioid misuse in the state, saw a substantial decrease in opioid-involved overdose deaths (24%, from 101 in 2016 to 77 in 2017). Efforts around response and prevention, such as a unified task force and coalition, have been implemented in Horry County, 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.²

² South Carolina Opioid Emergency Response Plan, SCOERP

Table 1.
Drug Overdose Deaths by County and Drug Category
South Carolina, 2017
Occurrence Data

County of Death	Total Drug Overdose		Prescription Drugs		Opioids	
	Number	Rate ¹	Number	Rate ¹	Number	Rate ¹
South Carolina	1,001	20.4	782	15.9	748	15.5
Abbeville	8	34.7	7	30.6	6	26.4
Aiken	40	24.9	31	18.8	31	20.3
Allendale	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anderson	32	17.1	22	11.9	22	12.0
Bamberg	-	-	-	-	-	-
Barnwell	4	19.9	4	19.9	3	15.0
Beaufort	25	16.2	23	14.9	18	11.6
Berkeley	27	12.6	25	11.7	23	10.8
Calhoun	-	-	-	-	-	-
Charleston	118	27.6	99	23.0	94	22.1
Cherokee	1	1.9	-	-	1	1.9
Chester	5	15.9	5	15.9	5	15.9
Chesterfield	4	9.4	2	5.5	3	6.8
Clarendon	4	9.9	2	6.5	2	6.5
Colleton	6	14.9	4	10.6	5	13.3
Darlington	9	14.5	9	14.5	8	12.9
Dillon	6	24.2	4	16.1	4	16.1
Dorchester	28	17.3	22	13.6	20	12.9
Edgefield	2	8.2	1	4.7	1	4.7
Fairfield	3	19.5	1	6.9	2	13.8
Florence	31	23.6	25	18.8	26	20.2
Georgetown	18	36.2	14	28.3	14	27.8
Greenville	107	21.1	79	15.7	73	14.7
Greenwood	16	24.4	14	21.4	14	22.5
Hampton	1	5.4	-	-	-	-
Horry	103	35.2	84	28.0	77	27.0
Jasper	6	23.6	4	16.5	3	12.5
Kershaw	7	11.3	2	3.0	4	6.4
Lancaster	24	28.7	20	23.7	23	27.6
Laurens	12	16.0	10	13.6	7	8.9
Lee	1	6.2	1	6.2	1	6.2
Lexington	49	17.1	43	14.8	36	12.7
McCormick	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marion	2	7.3	2	7.3	2	7.3
Marlboro	-	-	-	-	-	-
Newberry	2	5.8	1	2.7	-	-
Oconee	22	29.9	18	22.8	18	22.8
Orangeburg	9	9.7	6	6.5	5	4.6
Pickens	27	21.9	23	18.3	19	16.7
Richland	93	23.1	69	17.6	71	17.9
Saluda	2	6.0	1	3.0	1	3.0
Spartanburg	69	22.5	45	15.2	47	15.3
Sumter	7	6.3	3	2.6	6	5.7
Union	4	12.2	3	8.6	3	8.6
Williamsburg	7	23.6	2	9.3	5	20.2
York	60	22.5	52	19.2	45	16.9

¹Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population. Rates calculated with 20 or fewer deaths are unreliable and should be u

Table 1. (Continue)
Drug Overdose Deaths by County and Drug Category
South Carolina, 2017
Occurrence Data

County of Death	Fentanyl		Heroin		Methadone		Cocaine	
	Number	Rate ¹	Number	Rate ¹	Number	Rate ¹	Number	Rate ¹
South Carolina	362	7.6	144	3.1	45	0.9	235	4.8
Abbeville	-	-	-	-	2	8.8	1	4.1
Aiken	19	12.9	7	5.3	1	0.4	6	3.7
Allendale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anderson	4	2.5	-	-	4	2.3	6	2.7
Bamberg	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Barnwell	3	15.0	-	-	-	-	4	19.9
Beaufort	12	8.2	1	0.9	-	-	6	4.3
Berkeley	7	3.5	3	1.5	2	1.0	4	2.0
Calhoun	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Charleston	59	13.6	33	7.6	3	0.6	36	8.0
Cherokee	-	-	1	1.9	-	-	-	-
Chester	1	3.0	1	3.5	-	-	-	-
Chesterfield	2	5.5	2	4.4	-	-	2	5.6
Clarendon	1	4.8	-	-	1	1.7	2	3.5
Colleton	1	1.6	1	2.7	2	5.9	2	5.9
Darlington	4	6.6	-	-	1	1.8	2	3.5
Dillon	1	4.5	-	-	-	-	3	11.6
Dorchester	7	4.4	2	1.4	1	0.8	5	3.2
Edgefield	-	-	1	4.7	1	4.7	-	-
Fairfield	1	6.9	1	6.9	-	-	1	6.9
Florence	9	7.4	3	2.3	2	1.7	8	6.5
Georgetown	6	11.3	3	6.6	1	2.4	5	9.8
Greenville	39	8.1	21	4.3	4	0.9	16	3.2
Greenwood	9	14.5	1	2.0	1	1.0	3	4.5
Hampton	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5.4
Horry	36	13.0	5	1.9	1	0.3	37	12.8
Jasper	3	12.5	-	-	-	-	2	7.1
Kershaw	2	3.0	2	3.3	-	-	4	5.8
Lancaster	16	18.9	9	11.4	1	1.2	9	10.8
Laurens	3	4.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lee	1	6.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lexington	14	5.0	3	1.1	2	0.9	5	1.6
McCormick	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marion	1	3.5	-	-	-	-	1	3.5
Marlboro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Newberry	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3.1
Oconee	5	6.4	1	1.5	3	4.9	1	1.5
Orangeburg	3	3.2	-	-	-	-	2	2.0
Pickens	5	4.5	2	2.5	3	2.4	3	2.7
Richland	38	9.4	17	4.0	4	0.9	31	7.6
Saluda	1	3.0	-	-	-	-	1	3.0
Spartanburg	23	7.9	11	3.2	2	0.7	12	3.4
Sumter	1	0.9	4	4.0	-	-	2	1.5
Union	1	4.5	-	-	-	-	1	4.5
Williamsburg	-	-	2	7.1	-	-	3	7.1
York	24	9.2	7	2.7	3	1.1	7	2.8

¹Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population. Rates calculated with 20 or fewer deaths are unreliable and should be used cautiously.

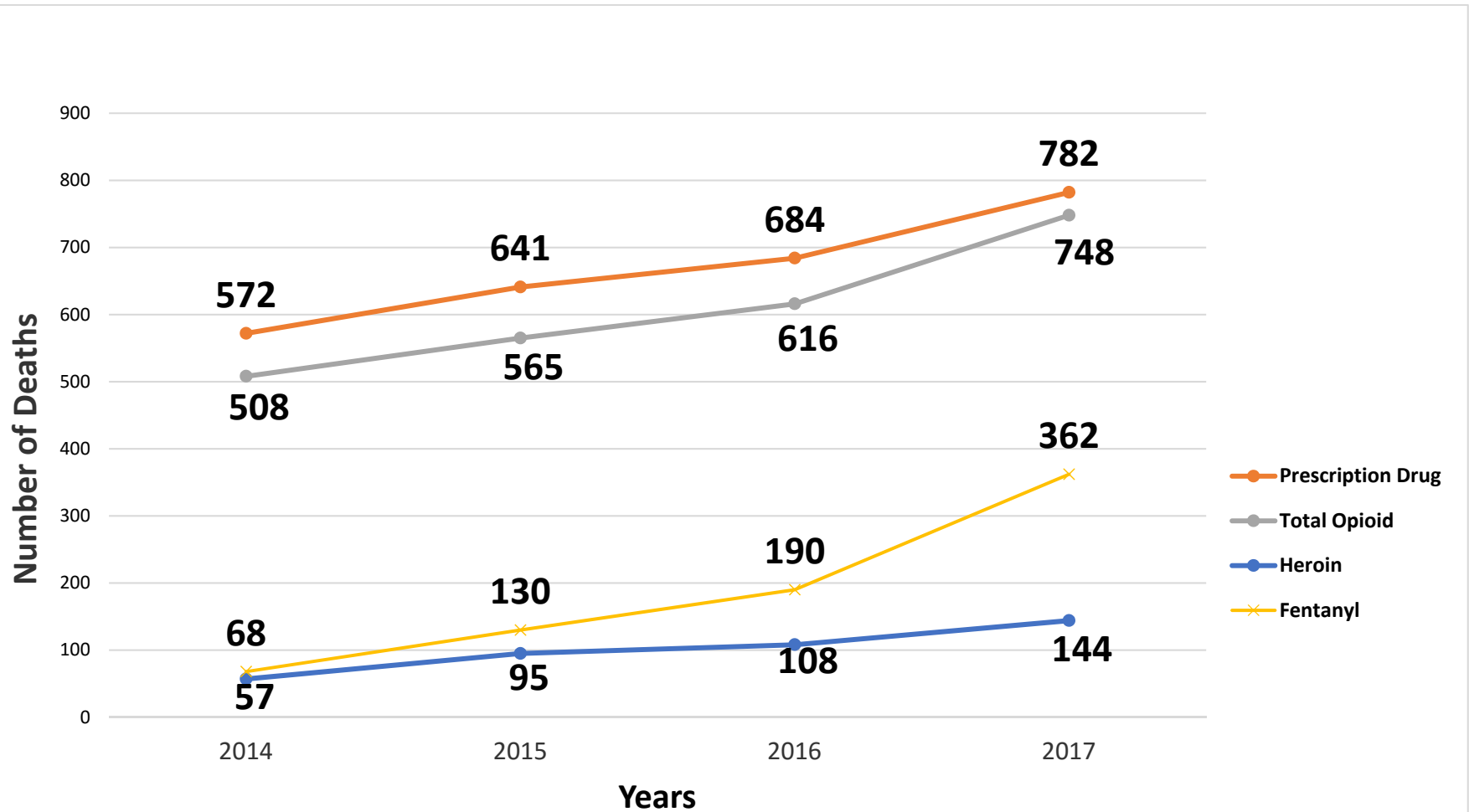
Table 2.
Change in Drug Overdose Deaths by County and Drug Category
South Carolina, 2016-2017
Occurrence Data

County of Death	Total Drug Overdose			Opioids		
	2016	2017	Percent Change	2016	2017	Percent Change
South Carolina	876	1,001	14.3	616	748	21.4 *
Abbeville	4	8		2	6	
Aiken	28	40	42.9	23	31	34.8
Allendale	-	-		-	-	
Anderson	33	32	-3.0	20	22	10.0
Bamberg	-	-		-	-	
Barnwell	1	4		1	3	
Beaufort	10	25	150.0 *	8	18	125.0
Berkeley	34	27	-20.6	26	23	-11.5
Calhoun	-	-		-	-	
Charleston	87	118	35.6	65	94	44.6
Cherokee	2	1		2	1	
Chester	-	5		-	5	
Chesterfield	8	4		6	3	
Clarendon	4	4		3	2	
Colleton	11	6		8	5	
Darlington	3	9		2	8	
Dillon	4	6		3	4	
Dorchester	16	28	75.0	14	20	42.9
Edgefield	-	2		-	1	
Fairfield	-	3		-	2	
Florence	20	31	55.0	15	26	73.3
Georgetown	33	18	-45.5	27	14	-48.1
Greenville	91	107	17.6	53	73	37.7
Greenwood	8	16	100.0	7	14	100.0
Hampton	-	1		-	-	
Horry	146	103	-29.5 *	101	77	-23.8
Jasper	5	6		3	3	
Kershaw	1	7		-	4	
Lancaster	8	24	200.0 *	5	23	360.0 *
Laurens	12	12	0.0	10	7	
Lee	3	1		-	1	
Lexington	44	49	11.4	33	36	9.1
McCormick	-	-		-	2	
Marion	4	2		4	-	
Marlboro	2	-		1	-	
Newberry	3	2		2	-	
Oconee	16	22	37.5	10	18	80.0
Orangeburg	9	9		4	5	
Pickens	31	27	-12.9	25	19	-24.0
Richland	68	93	36.8	42	71	69.0 *
Saluda	2	2		2	1	
Spartanburg	63	69	9.5	36	47	30.6
Sumter	8	7		6	6	
Union	2	4		2	3	
Williamsburg	4	7		3	5	
York	48	60	25.0	42	45	7.1

* Percent change not calculated for counties with fewer than 10 deaths in 2017.

* Statistical significant at 95% confidence interval

Figure 1. Number of Drug-Related Overdose Deaths
South Carolina, 2014-2017



Source: SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, Vital Statistics
*Categories of drugs are not mutually exclusive