NIH National Institute on Drug Abuse
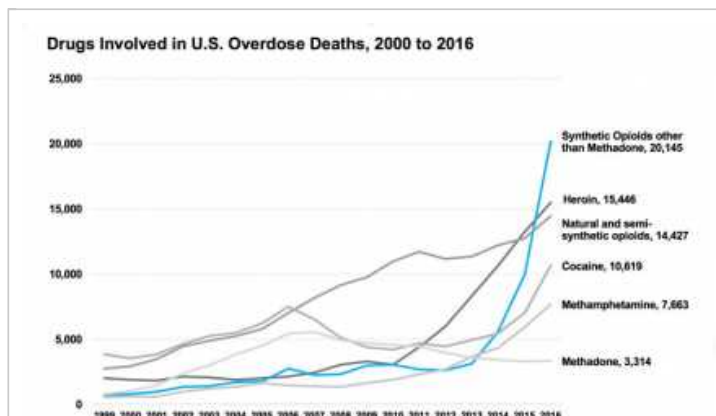*Advancing Addiction Science*

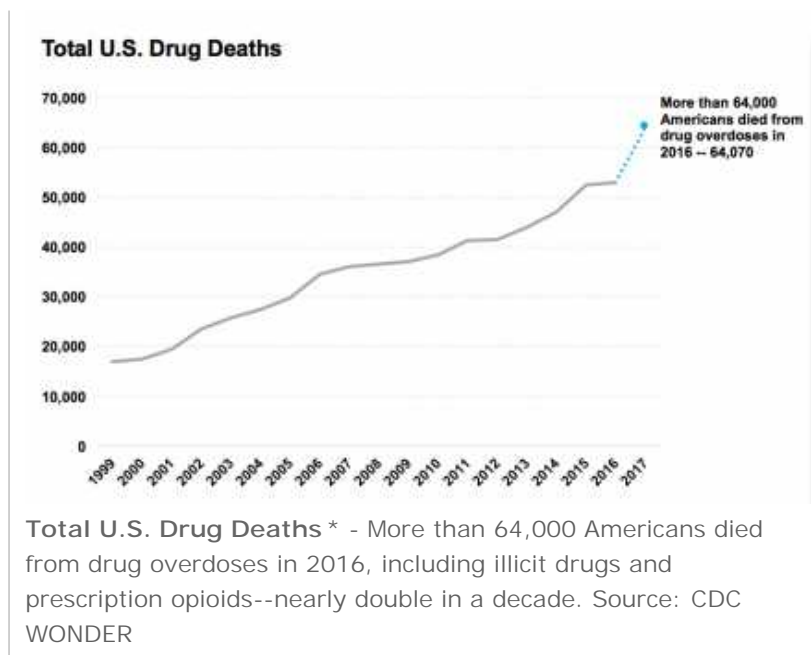Home » Related Topics » Trends & Statistics » **Overdose Death Rates**
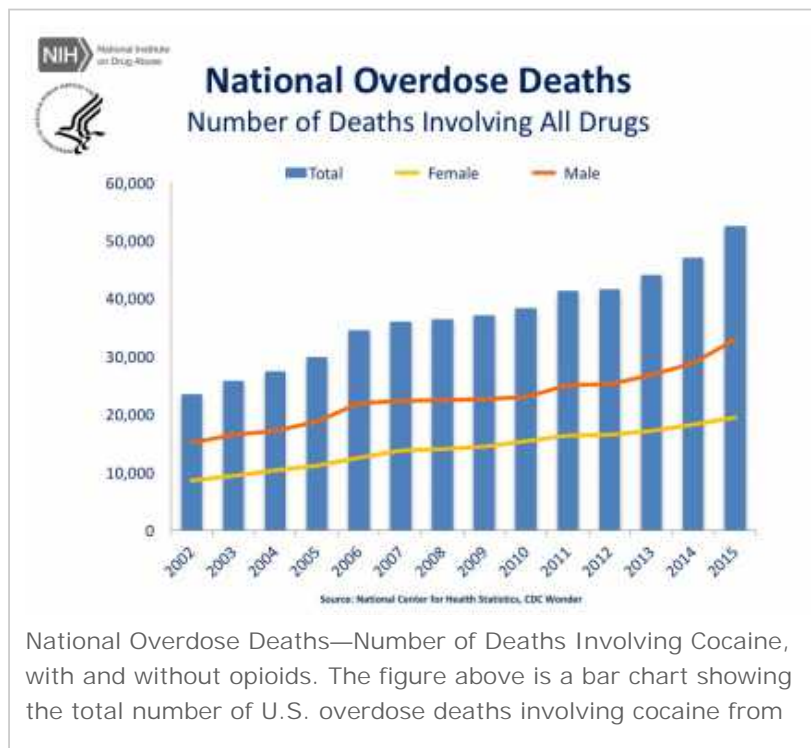
Overdose Death Rates

Revised September 2017

The U.S. government does not track death rates for every drug. However, the National Center for Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does collect information on many of the more commonly used drugs. The CDC also has a searchable database, called CDC Wonder.

Drugs Involved in U.S. Overdose Deaths, 2000 to 2016

Synthetic Opioids other than Methadone, 20,145
Heroin, 15,446
Natural and semi-synthetic opioids, 14,427
Cocaine, 10,619
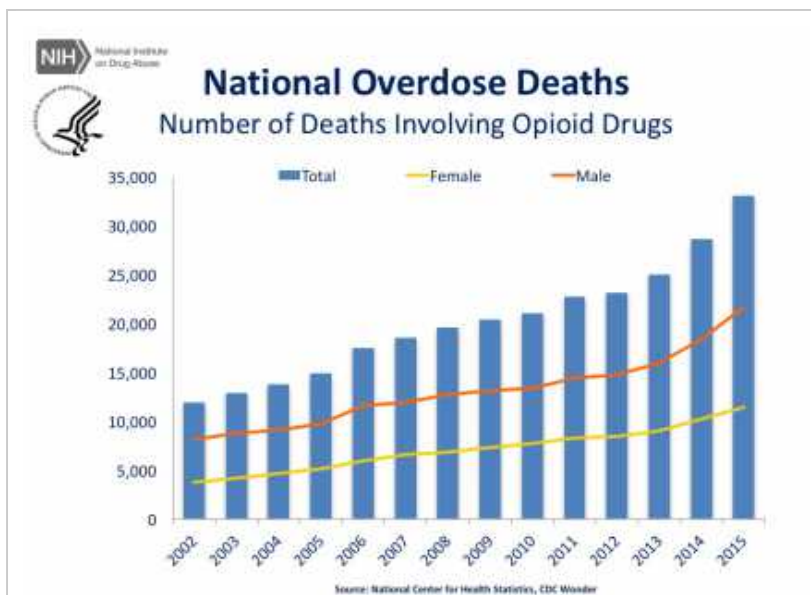Methamphetamine, 7,663
Methadone, 3,314

Drugs Involved in U.S. Overdose Deaths * - Among the more than 64,000 drug overdose deaths estimated in 2016, the sharpest increase occurred among deaths related to fentanyl and fentanyl analogs (synthetic opioids) with over 20,000 overdose deaths. Source: CDC WONDER
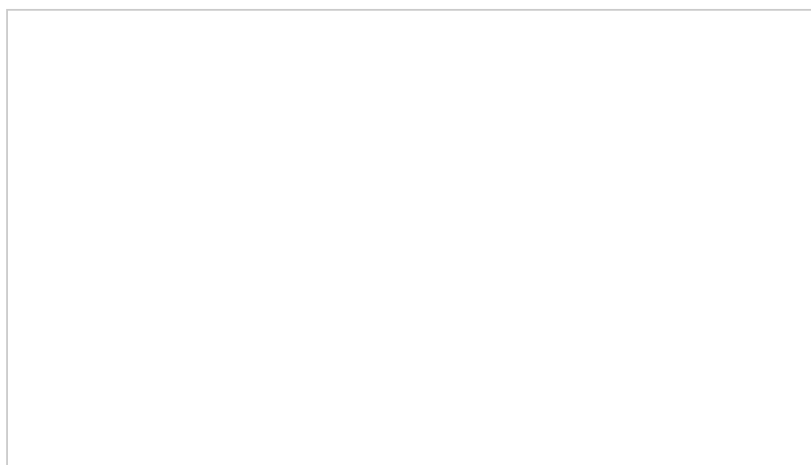
Total U.S. Drug Deaths

Total U.S. Drug Deaths * - More than 64,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2016, including illicit drugs and prescription opioids--nearly double in a decade. Source: CDC WONDER

* Provisional counts for 2016 are based on data available for analysis as of 8/2017. Counts through 2015 are based on final annual data.

National Overdose Deaths—Number of Deaths Involving Cocaine, with and without opioids. The figure above is a bar chart showing the total number of U.S. overdose deaths involving cocaine from
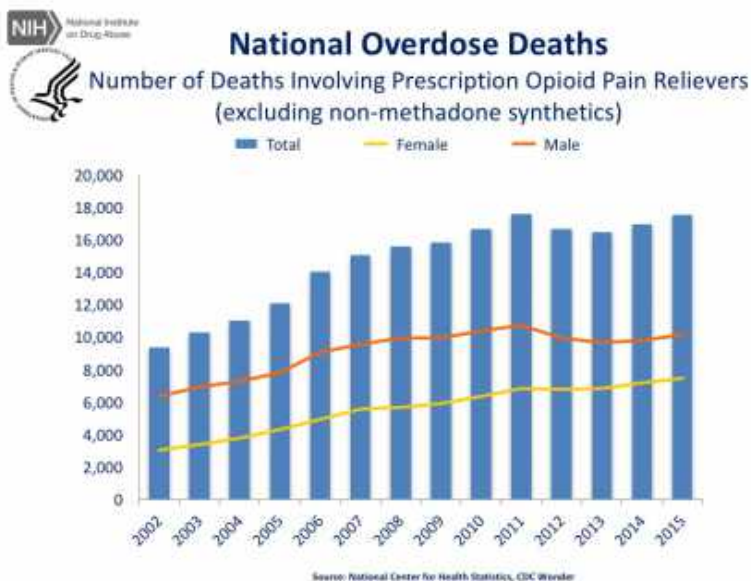
2002 to 2015, with the red line representing the number of cocaine deaths that also involved opioids, and the purple line representing cocaine deaths that did not involve opioids. These categories were equal in 2010. Since then, deaths involving both cocaine and opioids have more than doubled, while cocaine deaths not involving opioids have increased by only nine percent.
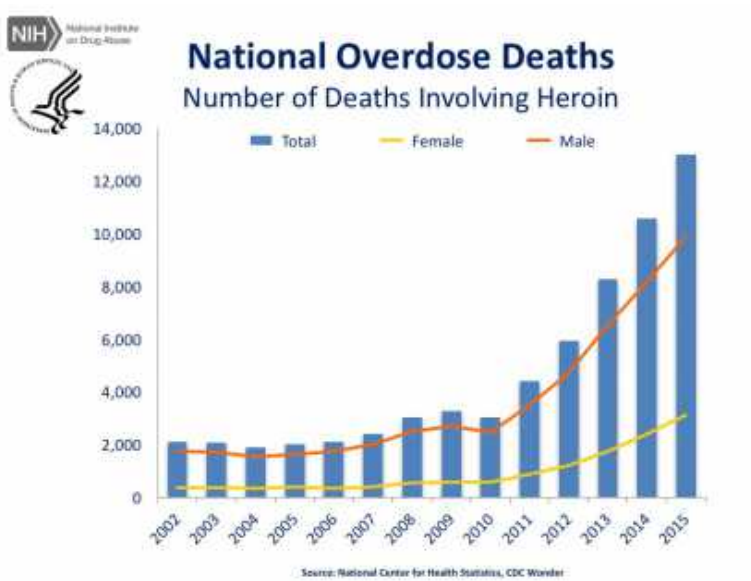

National Overdose Deaths—Number of Deaths Involving Opioid Drugs. The figure above is a bar chart showing the total number of U.S. overdose deaths involving opioid drugs from 2002 to 2015. Included in this number are opioid analgesics, along with heroin and illicit synthetic opioids. The chart is overlayed by a line graph showing the number of deaths of females and males. From 2002 to 2015 there was a 2.8-fold increase in the total number of deaths.
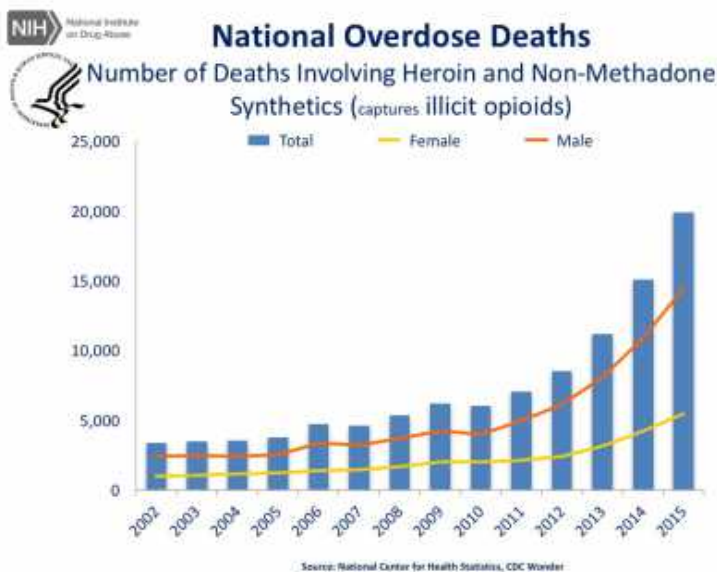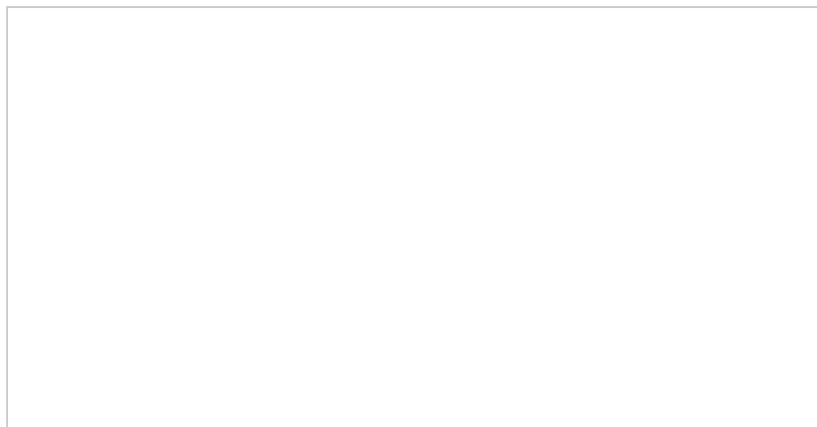
National Overdose Deaths—Number of Deaths Involving
Prescription Opioid Pain Relievers (excluding non-methadone
synthetics). The figure above is a bar chart showing the total
number of U.S. overdose deaths involving opioid pain relievers
(excluding non-methadone synthetics) from 2002 to 2015. Non-
methadone synthetics is a category dominated by illicit fentanyl,
and has been excluded to more accurately reflect deaths from
prescription opioids. The chart is overlayed by a line graph
showing the number of deaths of females and males. From 2002
to 2011 there was a 1.9-fold increase in the total number of
deaths, but it has remained relatively stable since then.

National Overdose Deaths—Number of Deaths Involving Heroin. The figure above is a bar chart showing the total number of U.S. overdose deaths involving heroin from 2002 to 2015. The chart is overlayed by a line graph showing the number of deaths of females and males. From 2002 to 2015 there was a 6.2-fold increase in the total number of deaths.

National Overdose Deaths—Number of Deaths Involving Heroin and Non-Methadone Synthetics. The figure above is a bar chart showing the total number of U.S. overdose deaths involving heroin and non-methadone synthetics from 2002 to 2015. The latter category is dominated by illicit fentanyl overdose; when combined with heroin, these numbers capture illicit opioid deaths. The chart is overlayed by a line graph showing the number of deaths of females and males. From 2002 to 2015 there was a 5.9-fold increase in the total number of deaths.

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