

INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

241. Deaths related to drug poisoning, England and Wales – 2016 registration



PUBLIC HEALTH
WARWICKSHIRE

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Source:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales2016registrations> (published 2 August 2017)

Summary

Drug use and drug dependence are known causes of premature mortality, with drug poisoning accounting for 16% of deaths among people in their 20s and 30s in 2016.

Areas covered in this release include accidents and suicides involving drug poisonings, as well as deaths from drug abuse and drug dependence. They do not include other adverse effects of drugs (for example, anaphylactic shock). Drug poisoning deaths involve a broad spectrum of substances, including legal and illegal drugs, prescription type drugs (either prescribed to the individual or obtained by other means) and over-the-counter medications. Some of these deaths may also be from complications of drug abuse, such as deep vein thrombosis or septicaemia from intravenous drug use, rather than an acute drug overdose.

The definition of a drug misuse death is either (a) a death where the underlying cause is drug abuse or drug dependence or (b) a death where the underlying cause is drug poisoning and where any of the substances controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 are involved.

The figures presented show deaths registered each year, rather than deaths occurring each year. Almost all drug related deaths are certified by a coroner. Due to the length of time it takes a coroner to complete an inquest, around half of drug-related deaths registered in 2016 will have actually occurred prior to 2016. Nevertheless, general trends in drug-related deaths are broadly equivalent, regardless of whether the data is analysed by year of occurrence or year of registration.

Key Facts – England and Wales

- There were 3,744 drug poisoning deaths involving both legal and illegal drugs in England and Wales registered in 2016; this is 70 higher than 2015 (an increase of 2%) and the highest number since comparable statistics began in 1993.
- Of the 3,744 drug poisoning deaths, 69% (2,593) were drug misuse deaths.
- Those aged between 40-49 years old had the highest rate of drug misuse deaths in 2016. In 2015, the highest rate of drug misuse deaths was in the 30-39 year old age group.

- In 2016, the number of deaths involving opiates was 2,036 which 54% of all deaths related to drug poisoning. The majority (51%) were heroin and/or morphine (1,029).

Key Facts – England

- There were 3,450 drug poisoning deaths registered in England in 2016, the highest since records began in 1993. This number was similar to 2015 (3,416).
- Of these 2,383 (69%) were drug misuse deaths involving illegal drugs – a similar level to 2015 (67%).
- In 2016, the mortality rate from drug misuse was the highest ever recorded at 44.1 per million population, a 4% increase from 2015.

Key Facts

Region	Deaths relating to drug misuse (2013-15)		Deaths relating to drug misuse (2014-16)	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Rate*</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Rate*</i>
England	6,232	3.9	6,803	4.2
West Midlands	655	4.0	709	4.3
Warwickshire	47	2.9	62	3.9

**Age standardised rates per 100,000 population*