

DRUG & ALCOHOL OVERDOSES IN ORANGE COUNTY



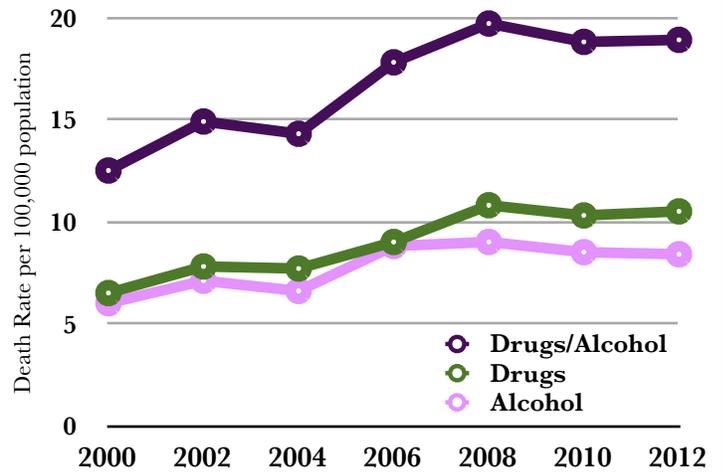
ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH CARE AGENCY
ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF-CORONER



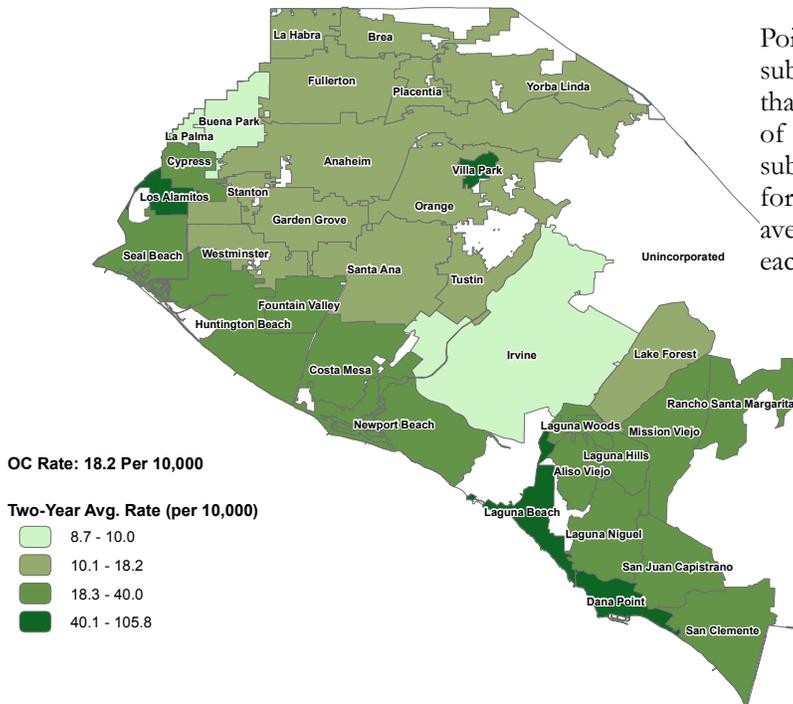
Over 10,000 Orange County residents were admitted to the hospital for drug- or alcohol-related incidents between 2011 and 2012, resulting in almost 25,000 bed-days and over \$135 million in hospitalization charges each year. Moreover, over 500 residents died each year from substance-related overdoses. Roughly 45% of overdoses or poisonings were due to alcohol, while 55% were drug-related. Data from the OC Sheriff-Coroner's investigations also indicated that the majority (54%) died from prescription drug overdose, compared to 21% who died from illicit drugs. With this in mind, this report discusses factors that contribute to hospitalizations and overdose deaths among County residents. Additionally, this report presents findings for gender, age, racial, and geographic differences to inform and promote local prevention efforts.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Between 2000 and 2012, the overall rate of all drug and alcohol overdose deaths increased by 51%, from 12.5 per 100,000 in 2000 to 18.9 in 2012. Similarly, the rate of drug only overdose deaths increased 61% (6.5 vs. 10.5 per 100,000), while alcohol only related deaths increased by 41% during this time period (6.0 vs. 8.4 per 100,000). Mortality rates varied depending on the type of drug being used. Importantly, a large proportion of such deaths were due to accidental overdose of prescription drugs, often opioid pain killers used in combination (i.e., poly-drug use) with other substances and/or alcohol.



Drug and Alcohol-Related Hospitalization Rate by City



Poisonings by drugs, medicinals or other biological substances accounted for 27.9% of such hospitalizations that were classified as accidental overdoses. The majority of these cases involved benzodiazepine or opioid substances. Six out of ten people admitted to the hospital for drug- and alcohol-related poisonings were male. On average, 3,034 males and 2,358 females were admitted each year to a hospital for this type of incident.

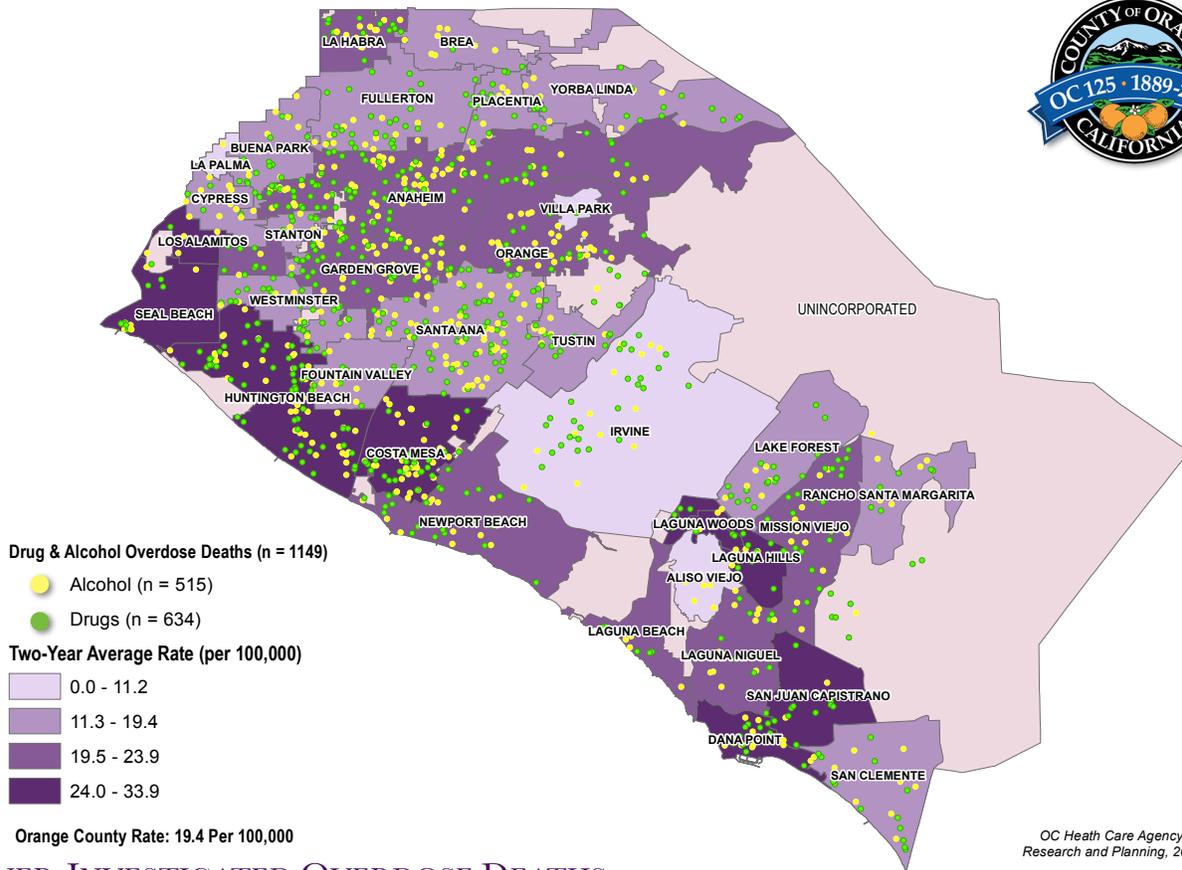
The highest rates of hospitalizations were for residents between the ages of 45-54 at 29.4 (per 10,000), followed by ages 25-34 (27.3) and 55-64 (23.7). The very young (<25 years) and very old (>64 years) had lower rates.

Non-Hispanic Whites also had the highest rate of hospitalization (32.2 per 10,000), compared to other ethnic groups. Importantly, those cities with the highest rates tended to be located in the coastal and southern cities.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL RELATED OVERDOSE DEATHS

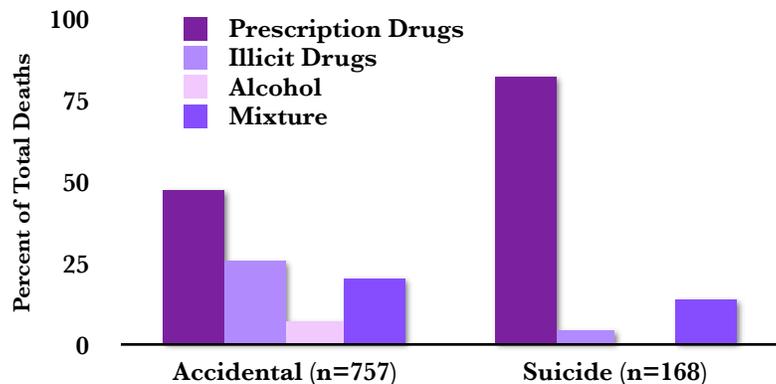
Roughly 60% of all overdose deaths in Orange County were due to drug or alcohol poisonings, while 40% were a result of chronic alcohol and/or drug abuse. Males were twice as likely to overdose due to drugs/alcohol at 24.8 (per 100,000), compared to females (12.7). The two age groups with the highest rate of drug and alcohol overdose deaths were those ages 45-54 years (40.1 per 100,000) and ages 55-64 years (40.4). White residents had the highest rate of drug- and alcohol-related overdose deaths at 30.2 per 100,000, compared to Hispanic (12.0), Asian/Pacific Islander (4.5), and African American (20.4) residents. Cities with relatively higher overdose death rates tended to include coastal and south county locales. More specifically, Dana Point had the highest overdose death rate at 33.9 per 100,000, followed by Seal Beach (32.6), and Los Alamitos (30.1).

Drug and Alcohol Overdose Deaths



CORONER-INVESTIGATED OVERDOSE DEATHS

Between 2011 and 2013, the Coroner investigated 963 drug overdose deaths involving Orange County residents: 54% of cases involved a prescription drug, while 21% involved illicit substances. In 19% of cases, a combination of alcohol, illicit, and/or prescription drugs were used. Additionally, overdose deaths by illicit or prescription drugs increased over the course of this three-year period, while deaths due to mixtures and alcohol substances remained constant.



TYPE & INTENT OF DRUG OVERDOSE

Regardless of intent, the majority of people used a prescription medication prior to an overdose death. As shown in the figure, among those who intentionally overdosed, the overwhelming majority used prescription drugs to end their life (82%), and nearly half (47%) of all accidental overdose deaths were due to prescription medications. Additionally, a quarter (25.5%) of all decedents who accidentally overdosed used illicit drugs, while one in five (20%) used a mixture of substances.