Opioid Deaths in Louisiana

LOUISIANA OPIOID SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

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ANNUAL FACT SHEET

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Public Health

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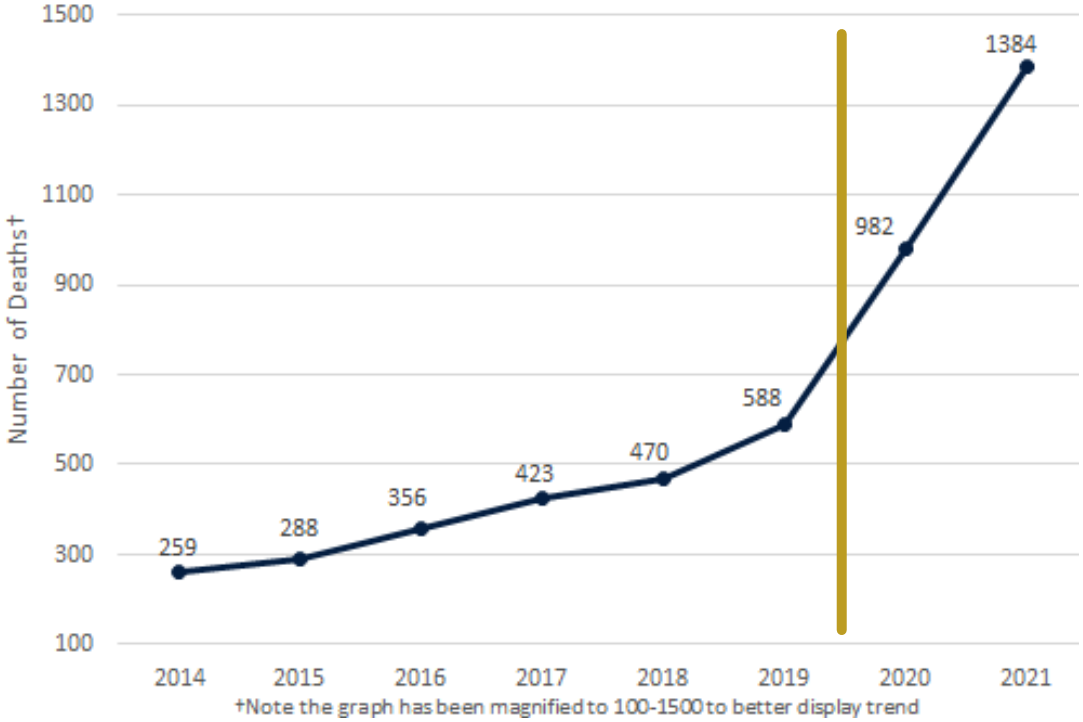
All deaths occurring in Louisiana are reported to the Office of the State Registrar and Vital Records. Parish coroners investigate any deaths where drugs were involved to determine cause of death.

The deaths in this fact sheet represent opioid poisoning deaths and opioid-involved deaths (other deaths with opioids marked as present in the death record) that happened in the state of Louisiana. Louisiana residents and non-residents are included in this number. Opioid-involved deaths include opioid poisonings, and also other deaths that are not marked as drug poisonings but where coroners determined that opioids contributed to the death. **Opioid-involved deaths (by location) increased by 135%, from 588 in 2019 to 1384 in 2021.** From 2014 to 2021, opioid-involved deaths increased **434%**.

In August 2019, the state's vital records database used by coroners to record deaths was enhanced. Among the enhancements were additional opportunities for coroners to indicate whether an opioid was present in the toxicology for drug overdoses. The ***vertical gold line*** on the graph above indicates the start date for this data collection.

Opioid[1]-involved deaths occurring in Louisiana 2014-2021

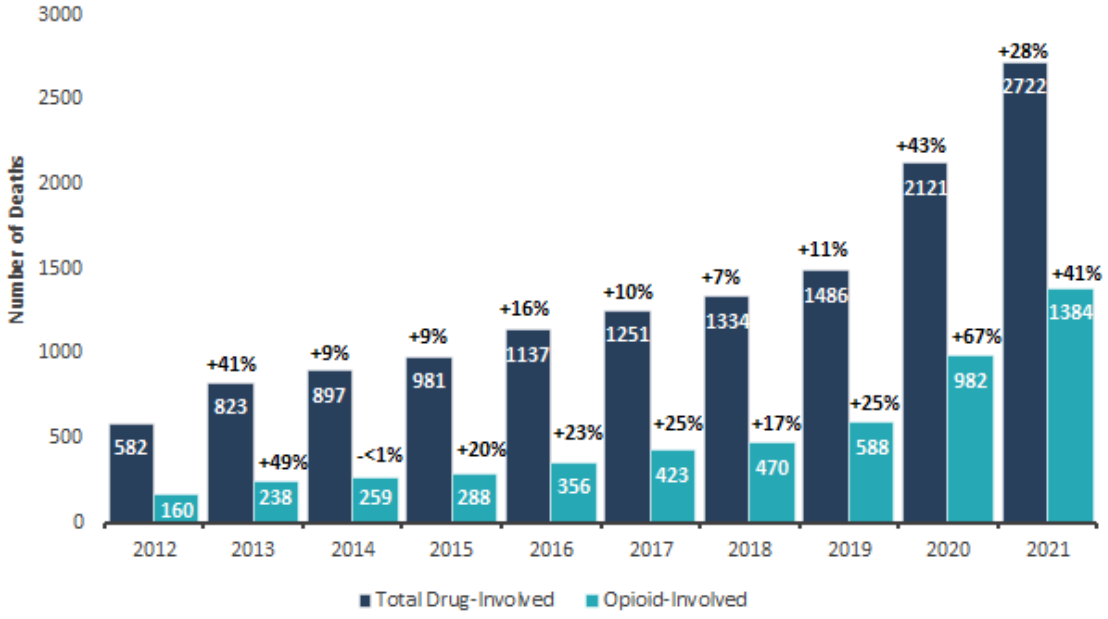


Accurately counting overdose deaths due to a specific drug is a challenge due to (1) the nature of drug overdoses, (2) the use of multiple drugs at one time causing the death and not one drug type in particular, and (3) differences in cause of death determination across jurisdictions. Because parish coroners operate independently from one another, there can be variations in the way deaths are classified across parishes.

[1] ICD-10 codes for opioids: Heroin (T40.1); Opioid Analgesic (T40.2-T40.4)
Data Source: Louisiana Electronic Event Registration System

DRUG-INVOLVED DEATHS OCCURRING IN LOUISIANA 2012-2021

Drug-involved deaths occurring in Louisiana, 2012-2021[1]



Source: Louisiana Electronic Event Registration System, extracted 8/2022 by the Louisiana Opioid Surveillance Initiative

In Louisiana, the total drug-involved deaths has been consistently increasing. In 2013, there was a 41% increase in cases from 2012. There was a 16% increase in deaths in 2016 and all other yearly increases have been below 11%, but an increase of 28% in 2021. Data showed a 41% spike in opioid-involved drug deaths in 2021. In 2014, there was a negative drop of opioid-involved deaths of less than 1%. Opioid-involved deaths increase in 2015 by 20% and have continually increased in later years. The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Vital Statistics Rapid Release predicted a **9.6%** increase in drug overdose deaths in the United States between March 2021 and March 2022. In Louisiana, there was a **17%** percent change or increase in drug overdose deaths between March 2021 and March 2022. The NCHS drug overdose death provisional data trends match OPH's drug overdose surveillance data.

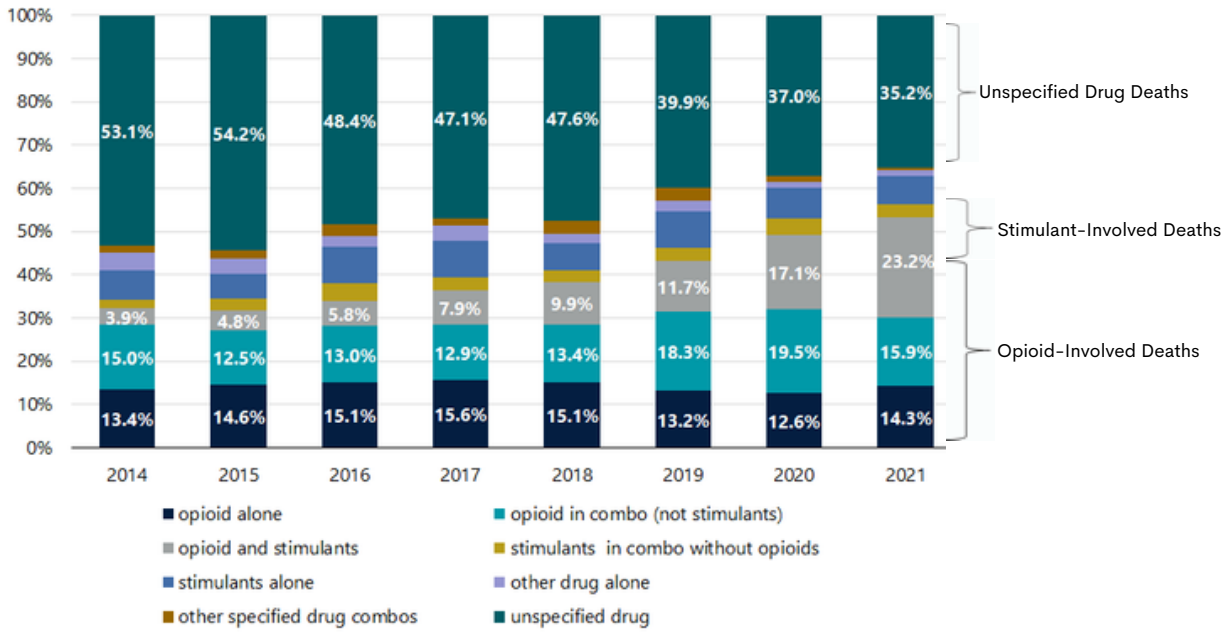
The percentage of drug poisoning death records that do not contain any specified drug codes has dropped over the last seven years from **53.1%** to **35.2%**. This is likely due to increased awareness among coroners of the need to specify multi-drug deaths. Opioid poisoning deaths have made up the largest number of specified drug poisoning deaths for the last 8 years.

More than **53.4%** of drug poisoning deaths in 2021 involved opioids, an increase from 32% in 2014.

[1] ICD-10 codes for opioids: Heroin (T40.1); Opioid Analgesic (T40.2-T40.4)
Data Source: Louisiana Electronic Event Registration System

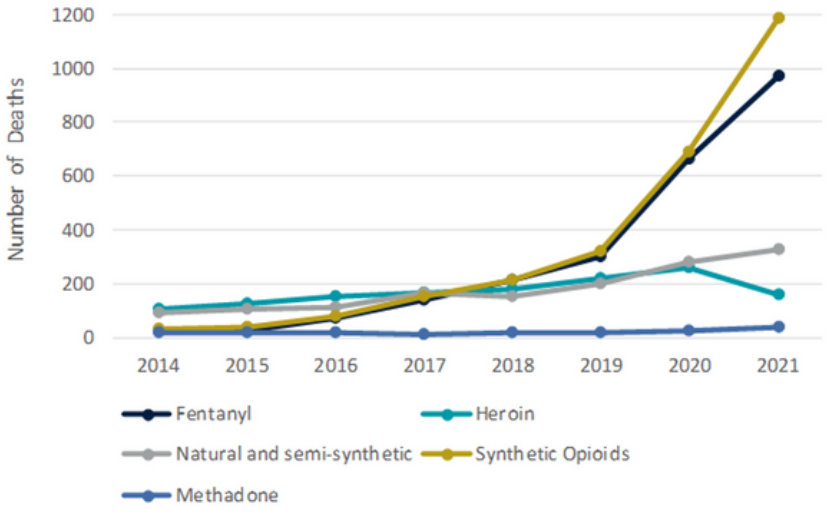
Stimulant poisoning deaths make up the second largest type of specified drug deaths. Stimulant poisoning deaths have increased from 13% of drug poisoning deaths in 2014 to **32%** in 2021.

Drug-involved deaths by drug type - Louisiana, 2014-2021 [1]



The graph below shows the trends of deaths involving several types of opioids including heroin, fentanyl, and methadone. There are few deaths attributed to methadone, and these have decreased since 2014. Deaths involving heroin show a steady increase, but deaths involving synthetic opioids such as fentanyl have rapidly increased. **Deaths involving fentanyl have increased by greater than 2000% since 2014.** Deaths involving synthetic opioid deaths surpassed the number of deaths involving heroin or natural and semi-synthetic opioids in 2020.

Deaths by specific opioid drugs used - Louisiana, 2014-2021



Source: Louisiana Electronic Event Registration System, extracted 8/2022 by the Louisiana Opioid Surveillance Initiative

[1] ICD-10 codes for opioids: Heroin (T40.1); Opioid Analgesic (T40.2-T40.4)
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