

# Statewide Trends in Drug Overdose: Preliminary 2023 Data Update

*Note:* This report includes preliminary 2023 death certificate and hospital discharge data. Final counts of drug overdose deaths may change.

## Summary

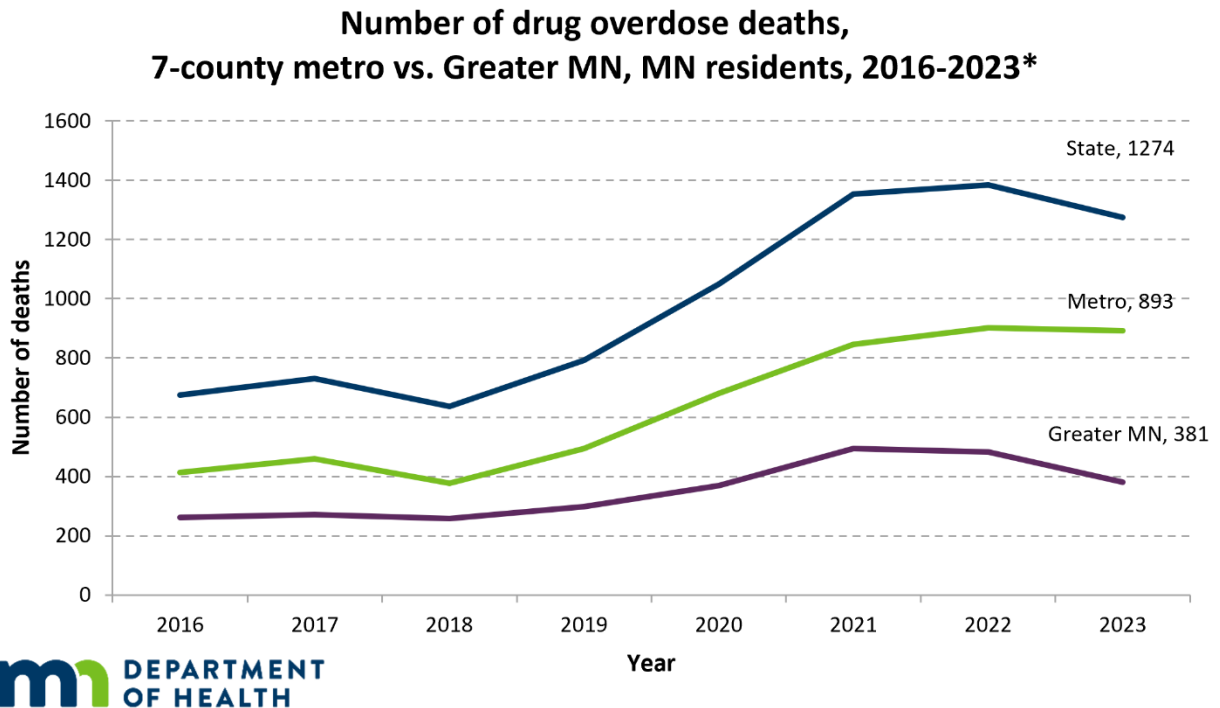
Drug overdose continues to affect the lives of many Minnesotans. In 2023, Minnesota saw its first year of lower numbers of overall overdose deaths since 2018. Synthetic opioids continue to dominate fatal overdoses, with slight decreases in any opioid- and synthetic opioid-involved overdoses. Importantly, for every one overdose death in 2023, there were nearly 13 nonfatal overdoses treated in Minnesota hospitals. The total number of nonfatal overdoses remained elevated but relatively stable compared to 2022.

Statewide trends in fatal and nonfatal overdose may not reflect trends in specific communities, including those disproportionately impacted by drug overdose.

## Drug overdose deaths

Drug overdose deaths among Minnesota residents declined in 2023, similar to trends observed in many other states. According to preliminary 2023 data (Figure 1), the number of drug overdose deaths decreased by 8% (1,384 to 1,274 deaths). The largest decrease of 21% was seen in the Greater Minnesota counties (482 to 381 deaths). The Metro counties also saw a small decrease of 1% (902 to 893 deaths). When data is finalized for 2023, the final number of deaths will increase slightly from those above, but they are not expected to exceed 2022 final numbers.

**Figure 1. Overdose deaths declined in 2023, with the greatest decrease noted in rural Minnesota counties.**



SOURCE: Minnesota death certificates, Minnesota Department of Health, 2016-2023

NOTE: \*2023 data are preliminary and likely to change when finalized.

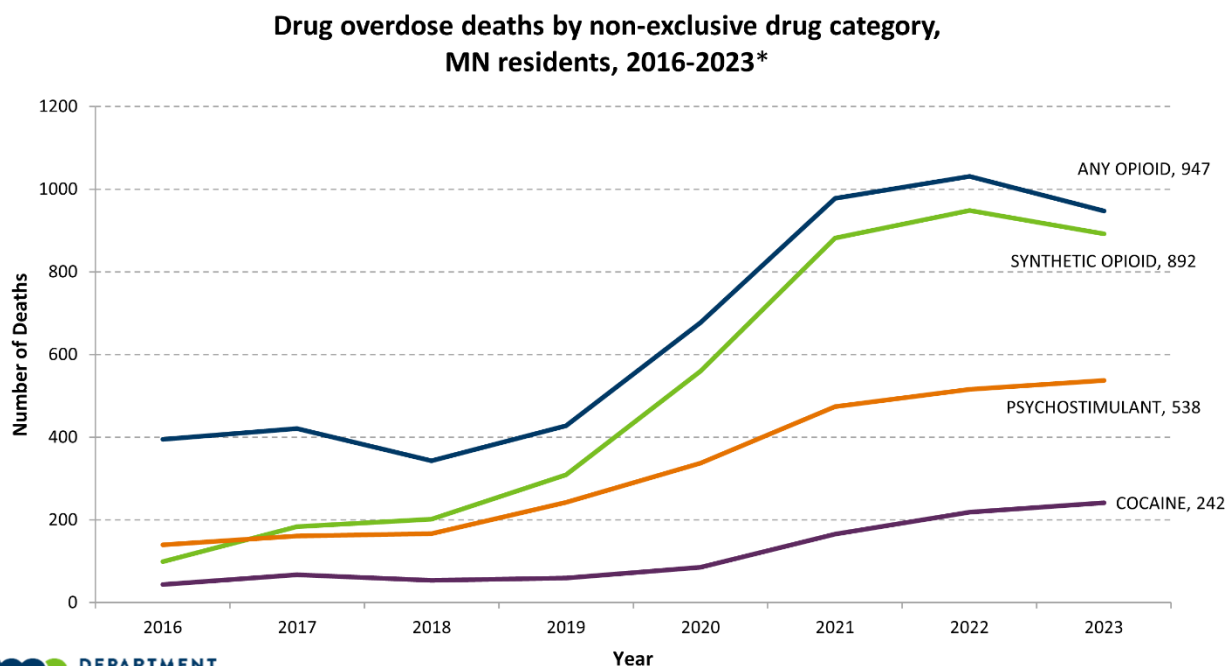
## Opioid-involved categories from death certificates

For the first time since 2018, there was a decrease in the overall number of opioid-involved deaths in Minnesota, down 8% (1,031 to 947 deaths). Notably this decrease was mirrored in the synthetic opioid category, down 6%, (949 to 892 deaths) where most cases are assumed to involve illicitly manufactured fentanyl (Figure 2). All other opioid related categories including possible prescription opioids, heroin, and methadone continued to see a decrease in deaths (not shown).

## Non-opioid-involved categories from death certificates

The psychostimulant category, which includes methamphetamine, continued a ten-year trend upwards increasing 4% (516 to 538 deaths). The cocaine category also saw an increase for a fifth year in 2023, increasing 11% (219 to 242 deaths). The benzodiazepine category (not shown) saw a decrease for the first time in 5 years, decreasing by 23% (120 to 93 deaths).

**Figure 2. There was a notable decrease across opioid categories in 2023, while stimulant categories continued to increase.**



SOURCE: Minnesota death certificates, Injury and Violence Prevention Section, Minnesota Department of Health, 2016-2023.

NOTE: 2023 data are preliminary and likely to change when finalized. NOTE: Drug categories are non-exclusive.

## Nonfatal drug overdose

In 2023, for every one overdose death, there were nearly 13 nonfatal overdoses (16,277 overdoses) treated in Minnesota hospitals. A majority of nonfatal hospital visits for drug overdose were of unintentional (i.e., accidental) or undetermined intent (67%) and will be the focus of the following data summary.<sup>1</sup>

The number of hospital-treated nonfatal overdoses remained relatively stable, increasing 2% (10,762 to 10,972 overdoses) statewide from 2022 to 2023. Trends in nonfatal overdose varied by region. In the Metro area, nonfatal overdose increased 5% (7,060 to 7,442 overdoses). In Greater Minnesota, nonfatal overdoses decreased 5% (3,702 to 3,529 overdoses).

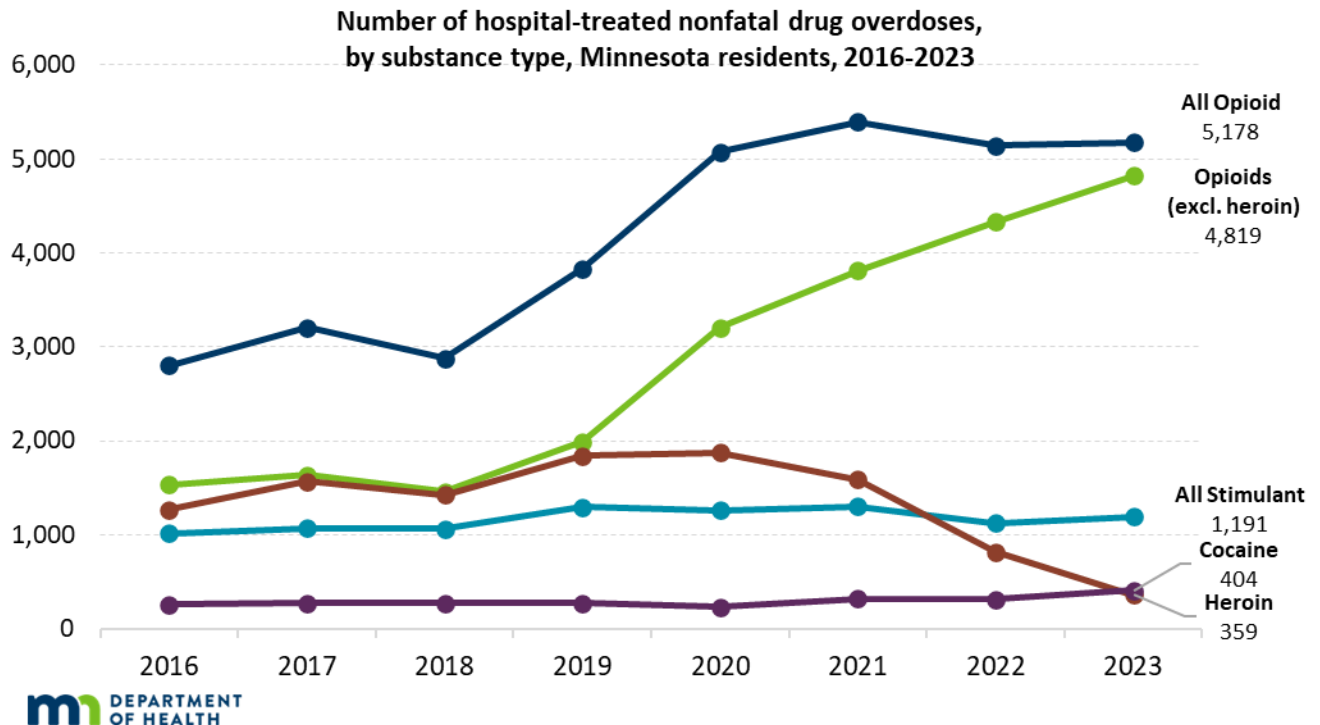
## Opioid-involved categories from hospital discharge data

Nonfatal overdoses involving at least one opioid remained relatively stable, increasing 1% (5,141 to 5,178 overdoses) statewide from 2022 to 2023 (Figure 3). Despite this relative stability

<sup>1</sup> In the 'Statewide Trends in Drug Overdose: Preliminary 2022 Data Update,' data included nonfatal drug overdoses of all intents (i.e., unintentional, undetermined, and intentional/self-harm) when summarizing trends to align with fatal overdose reporting. However, this report focuses on nonfatal overdoses of unintentional and undetermined intent only. This shift aligns with the national data standard for nonfatal overdose reporting.

overall, the type of opioid involved continued to shift. Nonfatal overdoses involving opioids other than heroin (like fentanyl) increased by 11% (4,328 to 4,819 overdoses), while nonfatal overdoses involving heroin continued to sharply decrease (56% decrease; 813 to 359 overdoses).

**Figure 3. From 2022 to 2023, the number of hospital-treated nonfatal overdoses involving an opioid other than heroin, like fentanyl, continued to increase while the number of nonfatal overdoses involving heroin substantially decreased.**



SOURCE: Minnesota Hospital Discharge Data, Injury and Violence Prevention Section, Minnesota Department of Health, 2016-2023.  
 NOTES: Nonfatal overdoses of unintentional/undetermined intent included for Minnesota residents treated in Minnesota hospitals.  
 Drug categories are non-exclusive.

## Non-opioid-involved categories from hospital discharge data

### Stimulants

Nonfatal overdoses involving at least one stimulant increased 6% (1,122 to 1,191 overdoses) from 2022 to 2023 (Figure 3). During that time, nonfatal overdoses involving cocaine increased 30% (311 to 404 overdoses) and were involved in more nonfatal overdoses than heroin for the first time since tracking began in 2016. Historically, methamphetamine was included in the broader category of nonfatal stimulant overdoses. However, starting in 2023, annual counts of nonfatal overdoses involving methamphetamine began to be tracked separately, and during that time, there were 500 overdoses involving methamphetamine.

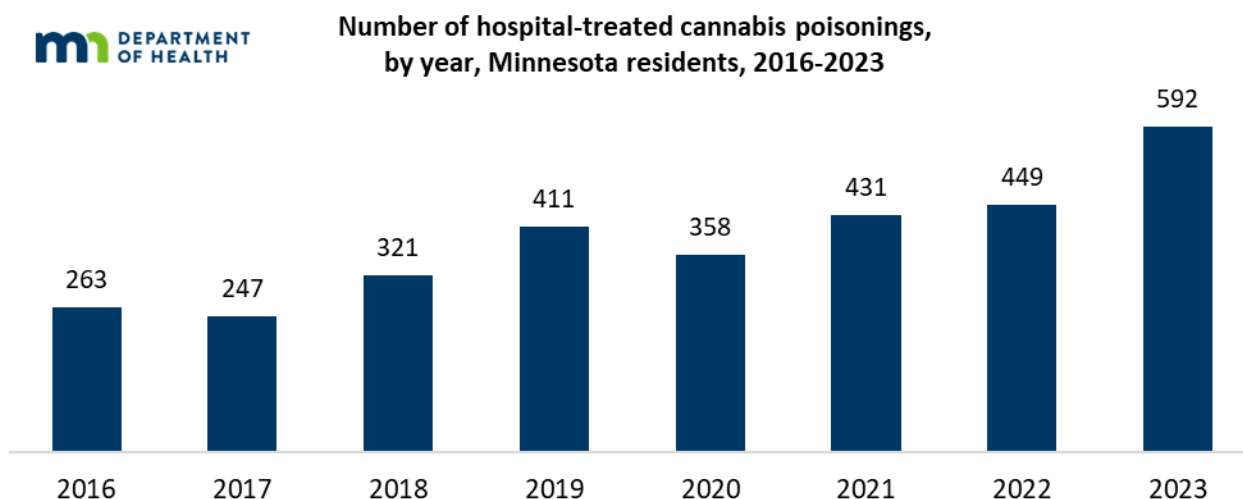
## Cannabis and THC Poisoning

Starting in 2023, cannabis products that contain tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) could be sold in Minnesota to adults aged 21 and older. THC is the main compound in cannabis that can cause intoxicating effects. THC poisonings can occur when someone takes too much THC or uses a type of cannabis product that causes unintended effects. Mixing cannabis products with alcohol or other drugs also increases the chance of having a negative experience.

Trends in hospital visits for cannabis poisoning have varied over the years. From 2022 to 2023, the number of cannabis poisonings increased 32% (449 to 592 poisonings) (Figure 4). Cannabis poisonings rarely (do not typically) result in fatalities.

For more information, please visit [Preventing Unintentional Poisonings from Cannabis Products \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/cannabis/thcpoisonings.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/cannabis/thcpoisonings.html).

**Figure 4. Trends in hospital visits for cannabis poisoning have varied over the years. From 2022 to 2023, the number of cannabis poisonings increased.**



SOURCE: Minnesota Hospital Discharge Data, Injury and Violence Prevention Section, Minnesota Department of Health, 2016-2023.  
 NOTES: Cannabis poisonings of all intents are included for Minnesota residents treated in Minnesota hospitals.

## Suggested Citation

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## MINNESOTA DRUG OVERDOSE LANDSCAPE IN 2023

To obtain this information in a different format, contact [Health.DrugODEpi@state.mn.us](mailto:Health.DrugODEpi@state.mn.us).