

# Prescription Drug Poisoning/Overdose in Oregon

PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION  
Injury and Violence Prevention Program

## Basic Facts

- In 2013, 156 Oregonians died due to prescription opioid poisoning/overdose.
- In 2013, one prescription drug overdose death\* occurred for every:
  - 1,900 methadone prescriptions dispensed
  - 20,300 opioid prescriptions dispensed (excluding methadone)
  - 125,000 benzodiazepine prescriptions dispensed
- The overall rate of poisoning deaths due to prescription opioids increased 364% between 2000 and 2006 (1.4 per 100,000 to 6.5 per 100,000), and has declined 38% between 2006 and 2013 (to 4.0 per 100,000).
- The rate of death associated with methadone poisoning decreased 58% between 2006 and 2013, from 3.8 to 1.6 per 100,000.
- In 2013, 1,510 Oregonians were hospitalized due to unintentional or undetermined drug poisonings; 54% were due to sedative hypnotic, anti-epileptic, psychotropic drugs and prescription opioids.
- In 2012–2013, an estimated 212,000 Oregonians self-reported using prescription pain relievers non-medically.

### What is the issue?

Poisoning is one of the leading causes of injury death in Oregon. In 2013, 423 deaths were due to unintentional or undetermined poisoning; 38% were associated specifically with prescription opioids— drugs used for pain treatment. Prescription opioids include drugs like hydrocodone, oxycodone, and methadone.

Although decreasing since 2006, the prescription drug poisoning/overdose death rate in Oregon was 2.8 times higher in 2013 than in 2000. However, rates continue to decline, especially deaths due to methadone (Figure 2).

Despite the impact of drug poisonings on public health, there is an important and legitimate need for prescription medications used for primary care, emergency care, surgery, pain management, cancer treatment, mental health disorders, and substance abuse disorders.

### Deaths

Between 2011–2013, the risk of prescription opioid poisoning was highest among adults 35–54 years of age. The highest death rate by sex and age group was among females 45–54 years of age (11.5 per 100,000, 2011–2013). Males 35–44 years of age had the second highest rate by age (9 per 100,000).

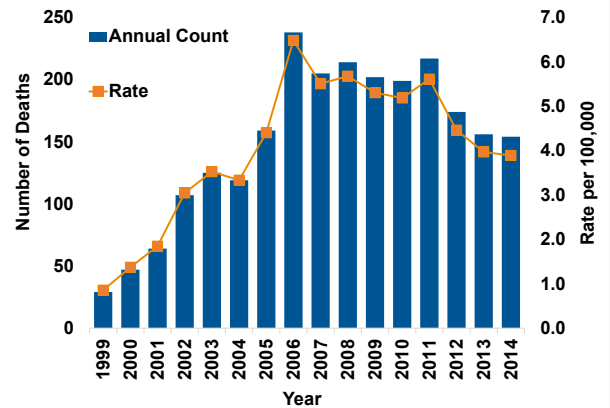
### Hospitalizations

Unintentional prescription opioid hospitalizations increased 285% from 2.6 per 100,000 in 2000 to 10.0 per 100,000 in 2013. Women had a higher rate of hospitalization than men in 2013— 10.4 per 100,000 compared to 6.4 per 100,000 for men.

**Data sources:** Oregon Center for Health Statistics Vital Records; Oregon Prescription Drug Monitoring Program; Oregon Hospital Discharge database; NSDUH national Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2012–2013.  
\*Prescription drug deaths include only unintentional and undetermined intent poisonings. Deaths are specific to the category of prescription drug involved and may be counted more than once for each drug involved.

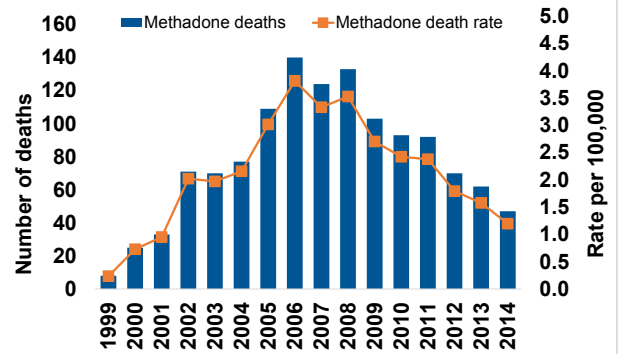
**For additional data,** refer to the full report, *Drug Overdose Deaths, Hospitalizations, Abuse and Dependence among Oregonians*: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/InjuryFatalityData/Documents/oregon-drug-overdose-report.pdf>. **Data Contact:** Matthew.laidler@state.or.us

**Figure 1. Unintentional and Undetermined Prescription Opioid Poisoning Deaths and Death Rates, Oregon, 1999–2014**



Note: Counts and rates for 2014 are preliminary.

**Figure 2. Unintentional and Undetermined Prescription Methadone Poisoning Deaths and Death Rates, Oregon, 1999–2014**



Note: Counts and rates for 2014 are preliminary.