

# UNH Research Finds Deaths Involving Drugs, Alcohol and Suicide Are on the Rise

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DURHAM, N.H. – Nationwide, the mortality rate from deaths caused by drugs, alcohol and suicide rose 52 percent from 2000 to 2014, according to new research from the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. Most of the increase was driven by a surge in prescription opioid and heroin overdoses.

The research also found that drug, alcohol and suicide mortality rates were highest among middle-aged non-Hispanic white males and growing fastest among non-Hispanic white females.

Among young white men (age 25-34) deaths from drugs, alcohol and suicide exceeded those of the next 10 leading causes of death combined including accidents, heart disease, cancer, homicide and diabetes. While white males made up 29.5 percent of the young adult populations in 2010-2014, they accounted for 57 percent of all drug, alcohol and suicide deaths.

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In 12 states, including Massachusetts and New Hampshire, more than half of all deaths among young white adults between 2010 and 2014 were due to drugs, alcohol or suicide. In the early 2000s the share of deaths exceeded 40 percent in just one state, Utah.

“The decade-long surge in opiate mortality has rightfully drawn significant media and government but the U.S. is not going to “Narcan” its way out of this,” said Shannon Monnat, an assistant professor of rural sociology and demography at Pennsylvania State University and a Carsey fellow. “The problem is larger than opiates. Focusing only opiate misuse, rather than considering the wider array of harmful health behaviors may lead to ineffective policy strategies.”

The full report can be found here:

<https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/drugs-alcohol-suicide>

The Carsey School of Public Policy conducts research, leadership development, and engaged scholarship relevant to public policy. They address pressing challenges, striving for innovative, responsive, and equitable solutions at all levels of government and in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.

The University of New Hampshire is a flagship research university that inspires innovation and transforms lives in our state, nation and world. More than 16,000 students from all 50 states and 71 countries engage with an award-winning faculty in top ranked programs in business, engineering, law, health and human services, liberal arts and the sciences across more than 200 programs of study. UNH’s research portfolio includes partnerships with NASA, NOAA, NSF and NIH, receiving more than \$100 million in competitive external funding every year to further explore and define the frontiers of land, sea and space.

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