

UNH Research Finds Economic and Family Distress Leads to More Drug Overdoses

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DURHAM, N.H. – Counties with the highest levels of economic distress experienced an average of nearly 7.9 more drug-related deaths per 100,000 persons than counties with the lowest level, a difference of nearly 40,000 more deaths over 10 years, according to [new research](#) out of the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. Counties with the highest levels of divorce/separation and single-parent families had an average of 8.1 more drug-related deaths per 100,000 persons than counties with the lowest levels.

The research also found that the national drug-related mortality rate per 100,000 persons ranged from a low of 9.9 in Nebraska to a high of 60.3 in West Virginia. Rates in some counties in Indiana, Kentucky, New Mexico and West Virginia ran well above 100.

“The evidence suggests that addressing economic and social conditions will be key to reversing the rising tide of drug deaths,”

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said Shannon Monnat, a fellow at the Carsey School and the Lerner Chair for Public Health Promotion at Syracuse University. “The drug epidemic is a pressing concern among policy makers but failure to consider the substantial geographic variation in drug-related mortality rates may lead to failure to target the hardest-hit areas.”

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.

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