

opioids for 2014 mortality data. This analysis provides a more detailed understanding of the increase in different categories of opioid deaths.

Using this approach, we learned that more than 14,000 deaths involving this (more specific) category of prescription opioids occurred in 2019, which is equivalent to about 38 deaths per day.¹ This number is likely an undercount of deaths related to prescription opioids because it does not include deaths associated with pharmaceutical fentanyl, tramadol, and other synthetic opioids that are used as pain medications.

Drug overdose deaths can be hard to categorize. In 8% of drug overdose deaths in 2018, no specific drug was listed on the death certificate.¹² In many deaths, multiple drugs are present, and it is difficult to identify which drug or drugs caused the death (for example, heroin or a prescription opioid, when both are present).³

Regardless of the method used to calculate the total numbers, prescription opioids continue to be involved in a significant proportion of drug overdose deaths, and the numbers are likely an underestimate of the true burden, given the large proportion of overdose deaths where the type of drug is not listed on the death certificate. The findings show three distinct but interconnected waves that are driving America's opioid overdose epidemic: an increase in deaths from prescription opioid overdoses since the 1990s, an increase in heroin deaths starting in 2010, and a more recent surge in deaths from IMF, including fentanyl analogs.^{1,4}

<https://www.cdc.gov/opioids/data/analysis-resources.html>