

# Opioid crisis cost \$504B in 2015, higher than once thought

November 20 2017, by Darlene Superville

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In this Oct. 26, 2017, file photo, President Donald Trump speaks during an event to declare the opioid crisis a national public health emergency in the East Room of the White House in Washington. Trump declared opioid abuse a national public health emergency at the White House in October. Trump announced an advertising campaign to combat what he said is the worst drug crisis in the nation's history, but he did not direct any new federal funding toward the effort. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci, File)

President Donald Trump said Monday that the opioid epidemic is "ravaging so many American families and communities." It also appears to be more expensive than previously thought, according to a government analysis released Monday.

The White House Council of Economic Advisers pegs the true cost of the crisis in 2015 at \$504 billion.

The figure is more than six times the most recent estimate. The council said a 2016 private study estimated that prescription opioid overdose, misuse and dependence in the U.S. cost \$78.5 billion in 2013. Most of that was attributed to health care and criminal justice spending, along with lost productivity.

The council said that its estimate is significantly larger because the epidemic has worsened, with overdose deaths doubling in the past decade, and that some previous studies didn't reflect the number of fatalities blamed on opioids, a powerful but addictive category of painkillers.

The council also said previous studies focused exclusively on prescription opioids, while the new analysis included illicit opioids, including heroin.

"Previous estimates of the economic cost of the opioid crisis greatly underestimate it by undervaluing the most important component of the loss—fatalities resulting from overdoses," the report said.

Trump said Monday as he met at the White House with his Cabinet that the "opioid epidemic that is ravaging so many American families and communities" would be among the topics for discussion.

Last month, Trump declared opioid misuse a national public health

emergency. The president announced an advertising campaign to combat what he said is the worst drug crisis in the nation's history, but he did not direct any new federal funding toward the effort.

Trump's declaration stopped short of the emergency declaration that had been sought by a federal commission he created to study the problem. An interim report by the commission argued for an emergency declaration, saying it would free additional money and resources.

But the panel, in its final report earlier this month, called only for more drug courts, more doctor training and penalties for insurers that dodge covering addiction treatment. The commission did not call for new money to address the epidemic.

More than 64,000 Americans died from drug overdoses last year, most involving a prescription painkiller or an illicit opioid like heroin.

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Citation: Opioid crisis cost \$504B in 2015, higher than once thought (2017, November 20)  
retrieved 26 April 2024 from  
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-11-white-house-true-opioid-epidemic.html>

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