

Drug deaths rise to record high in England and Wales

August 3 2021

England and Wales last year registered the highest number of fatal drug overdoses since records began in 1993, with cocaine and opiates blamed for the rising trend, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said Tuesday.

Some 4,561 fatal overdoses were registered in England and Wales in 2020, at a rate of 76.7 per million people—a 3.8 percent jump since 2019.

Almost half of all drug poisonings involved an opiate, while there was a 9.7 percent jump in deaths due to cocaine use.

"Drug-related deaths have been on an [upward trend](#) for the past decade," said the ONS.

"The overall trend is driven primarily by deaths involving opiates, but also by an increase in deaths involving other substances like cocaine."

The official statistics body said it was "too early" to assess any effects of coronavirus lockdowns on the data due to long delays between a death occurring and it being registered.

The rates of drug misuse deaths showed a "marked" divide between the north and south of England, with the northeast recording the sharpest rise.

London registered the lowest rates.

Scotland, which has the highest drug [death](#) rate in Europe, last week announced that more than 1,300 people died of drug misuse in 2020—the seventh year in a row that the number has risen.

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