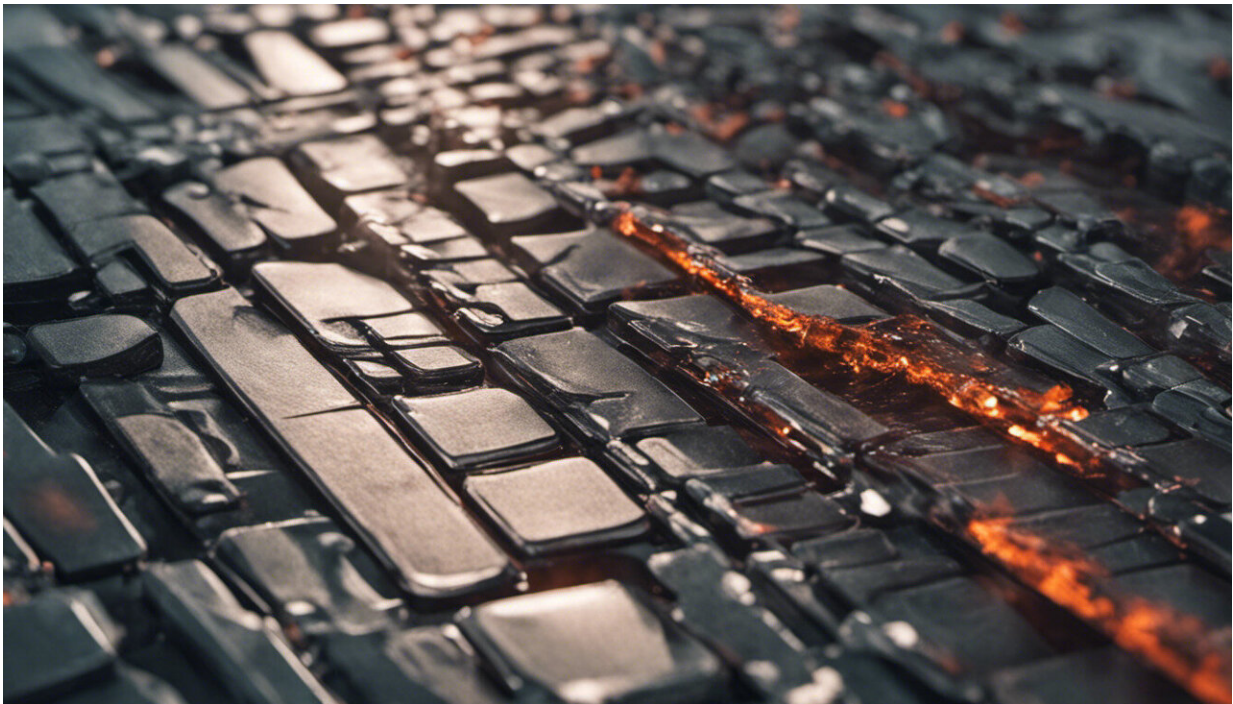


Five drug-induced deaths per day in Australia in 2021, says report

May 4 2023



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

There were 1,788 drug-induced deaths among Australians in 2021, according to preliminary estimates in a new report by the Drug Trends program at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Center (NDARC), UNSW Sydney.

This is equivalent to five drug-induced deaths per day and accounted for 1% of all registered deaths in Australia.

Drug Trends Program Lead and Deputy Director of NDARC, Associate Professor Amy Peacock, said the report presents findings on all drug-induced deaths in Australia from 2002 to 2021.

"Since 2002, the rate of drug-induced deaths steadily increased on average by 3.5% per year, reaching a peak in 2017 with 8.2 deaths per 100,000 Australians," A/Prof. Peacock said.

"We have not seen evidence of a further increase in the rate of drug-induced deaths since this peak."

While there is some evidence of a decline in [drug overdose deaths](#) involving opioids since 2017, they continue to be the main drug identified.

Natural and semi-synthetic pharmaceutical opioids like morphine and oxycodone are the primary opioids involved in [overdose deaths](#), followed by heroin.

The continued loss of life from opioid overdose reinforces the importance of investment in drug treatment and harm reduction services to help reduce this risk.

"Many of these deaths occurred in the home," A/Prof. Peacock said.

"There is opportunity for others present to avert death and reverse the effects of an [opioid overdose](#) if they administer a medicine called naloxone.

"The Australian government has funded the availability of naloxone for

free, without a prescription, for anyone who may be at risk of witnessing or experiencing an overdose."

Melanie Walker, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council, said, "We know that while around 200,000 people receive alcohol and other drug treatment each year in Australia, up to another 500,000 people are missing out due to a current lack of funding and capacity in the sector.

"In order to save lives, governments need to ensure that people who need [drug treatment](#) are able to access it.

"It's also important that a range of evidence-based treatment and harm reduction services are available to people—both in the community and in custodial settings—if we are to prevent deaths and improve [health outcomes](#) for individuals, families and communities."

Overdose and other drug-induced deaths in Australia, 2021: Other key findings

Data presented in this report are drawn from the Cause of Death Unit Record File (COD URF) collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The ABS undertakes a revision process for coroner-certified deaths over a three-year period. Accordingly, data for 2020 and 2021 are preliminary and will be subject to revision.

- More than three in five drug-induced deaths occurred among males.
- Overdose and other drug-induced deaths were most common among 45- to 54-year-olds (26% of deaths) and 35- to 44-year-olds (24% of deaths).
- 73% of deaths occurred in major cities.

- 12% of those who died from drug-induced death had a personal history of self-harm.
- 76% of drug-induced deaths occurred at home.

More information: Trends in Overdose and Other Drug-Induced Deaths in Australia, 2002-2021. [ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/resource ... -australia-2002-2021](https://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/resource...-australia-2002-2021)

Provided by University of New South Wales

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