

White Overdose Deaths 50% Higher than Blacks, 167% Higher than Hispanics



By Alex Berezow — April 5, 2018

Despite widespread national attention, there's no sign that the ongoing drug overdose epidemic is getting better. Meanwhile, the CDC just released two reports, the first of which gave an overview of drug-related mortality rates.

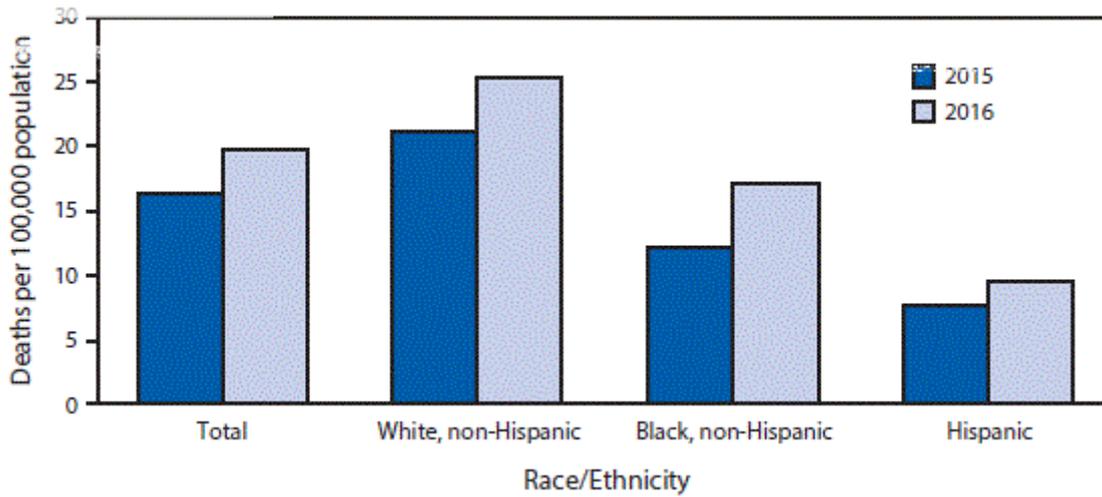


Credit: Storyblocks [1]

There's no sign that the ongoing drug overdose epidemic is getting better. In fact, though it has been receiving widespread national attention for about two years, it seems to be getting worse.

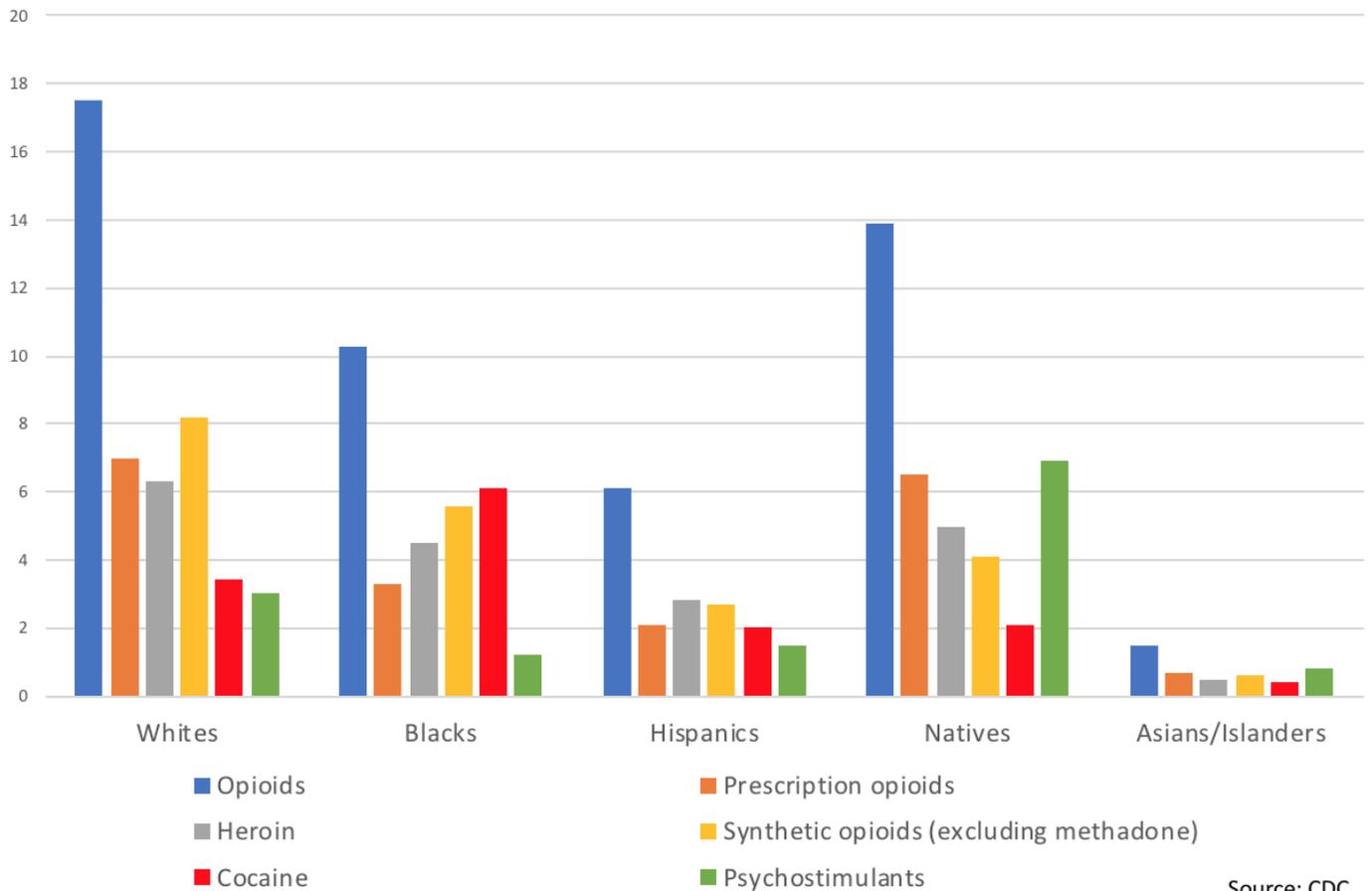
The CDC just released two reports, the first of which gave an overview of drug-related mortality rates. For all Americans, the mortality rate for drug overdoses (be they accidental or intentional) in 2016 was 19.8 per 100,000, up from 16.3 per 100,000 the previous year. To put that into perspective, the [mortality rate from car crashes](#) [2] is 11.7 per 100,000.

When stratified by race/ethnicity, the drug-related mortality rate (per 100,000) in 2016 for whites was 25.3, blacks 17.1, and Hispanics 9.5. That means that whites were roughly 50% and 167% likelier to die from drug overdoses than blacks and Hispanics, respectively.



A closer look at the data, which was released by the CDC in a second report, reveals some insights.

Drug Overdose Deaths (per 100,000) by Drug Type and Race/Ethnicity in the U.S. in 2016



Source: CDC

A few patterns are noteworthy:

First, by far, opioids are the leading cause of drug-related deaths among all races/ethnic groups. When stratified into subcategories, prescription opioids, heroin, and non-methadone synthetic opioids (such as fentanyl) all play a substantial role in the opioid crisis.

Second, cocaine is a drug that still primarily affects the black community, while psychostimulants (such as methamphetamine) are a problem mainly among the Native population.

Third, Asians/Pacific Islanders appear to have almost no drug problem, whatsoever.

Fourth, some people die from mixtures of drugs. A person who has both Vicodin and fentanyl in their body at the time of death would be assigned to both categories (i.e., "prescription opioids" and "synthetic opioids (excluding methadone)").

The bottom line is that the drug overdose epidemic is getting worse, not better, and disproportionately affecting whites.

Source [3]: "QuickStats: Age-Adjusted Death Rates for Drug Overdose, by Race/Ethnicity — National Vital Statistics System, United States, 2015–2016." *MMWR* 67(12): 374. Published: 30-Mar-2018. DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6712a9.

Source [4]: Seth P, Scholl L, Rudd RA, Bacon S. "Overdose Deaths Involving Opioids, Cocaine, and Psychostimulants — United States, 2015–2016." *MMWR* 67(12): 349-358. Published: 30-Mar-2018. DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6712a1.

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Links

[1] https://www.storyblocks.com/stock-image/drug-and-syringe-hp_eoq7hmuzj6gnoegu

[2] <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/accidental-injury.htm>

[3] <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6712a9.htm>

[4] <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6712a1.htm>