Drug Related Deaths in Denver County

**Takeaway:** Overdose deaths in Denver are about polysubstance use. 64% of deaths involved 3 or more drugs in the deceased's system.

**Caution:** These data represent deaths in which drugs were present in specimens examined. Each death may have had other contributing factors.

### Age Category

- 13-18: 0.48%
- 19-25: 7.66%
- 26-45: 44.98%
- 46-60: 28.23%
- 60+: 18.66%

### Race/Ethnicity

- White: 56%
- Hispanic: 27%
- Black: 14%
- Asian: 2%
- Native American: 0%

### Gender

- Male: 71%
- Female: 29%

### Experiencing Homelessness

- Yes: 17.70%
- No: 82.30%

### Number of Drugs Present

- 1: 12%
- 2: 24%
- 3: 21%
- 4: 15%
- 5 or more: 28%

### Manner of Death

- Accident: 87.56%
- Suicide: 10.05%
- Undetermined: 2.39%

### Data Statements From the Medical Examiner's Office:

- Cause of death may have intricate complexities and interpretations.
- These numbers reflect deaths reported to Denver OME as required by CRS 30-10-606 (not every death in the CCD is reported to OME, just those required by statute).
- Numbers may vary from other statewide data due to differences in reporting and coding.
# Total Drug-Related Deaths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Number and Type of Drugs Present

### Any Opioids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rx Opioids W/O Heroin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Heroin W/O Rx Opioids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Meth Present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Meth and Heroin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Alcohol Present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Fentanyl Present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Benzos & Opioids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Method of Death

- Select a Year
  - 2008
  - 2009
  - 2010
  - 2011
  - 2012
  - 2013
  - 2014
  - 2015
  - 2016
  - 2017
  - 2018
  - 2019

- Method of Death
  - Accident
  - Suicide
  - Undetermined

- Experiencing Homelessness
  - Yes
  - No
**Places of Injury and Death (2018, 2019)**

**Takeaway:** The majority of drug-related deaths occur in residences or in hospitals. Less than 10% of deaths in 2018 occurred outdoors.

**Caution:** Places of injury and death are determined at the medical examiner's discretion. Estimates may not be exact.

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**Place of Injury**

- **Residence:** 57.42%
- **Unknown:** 25.36%
- **Outdoors:** 5.26%
- **Transit Station:** 4.31%
- **Hotel/motel:** 3.83%
- **Jail/Prison:** 1.44%
- **Vehicle:** 1.44%
- **Hospital:** 0.48%
- **Shelter:** 0.48%

**Place of Death**

- **Residence:** 61.24%
- **Hospital:** 22.01%
- **Outdoors:** 8.61%
- **Hotel/motel:** 3.83%
- **Vehicle:** 1.44%
- **Shelter:** 0.96%
- **Jail/Prison:** 0.48%
- **Rehabilitation Center:** 0.48%
- **Residential Re-entry Center:** 0.48%
- **Transit Station:** 0.48%
Takeaway: Opioid-related deaths do not appear to be increasing. Meth-related deaths may have increased in 2017.

Caution: By-week and by-month sample sizes are small. Variation could easily be random noise. Use caution interpreting trends or speculating about the future.

Total Drug Related Deaths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drug Related Deaths By Week

Drug Related Deaths By Month

Experiencing Homelessness

Any Opioids Present

Opioids (Not Heroin)

Meth Present

Fentanyl Present

Data Start 1/1/2017
Data End 3/11/2019

Select Method of Death

Select Race/Ethnicity

Select Month

2017 Average

2017 Average
Historical Trends in Drug Related Deaths

Total Drug Related Deaths (Not Population Adjusted)

- Year: 2008, # of Deaths: 231
- Year: 2010, # of Deaths: 209
- Year: 2012, # of Deaths: 158
- Year: 2014, # of Deaths: 160
- Year: 2016, # of Deaths: 159
- Year: 2018, # of Deaths: 198

Note: Given 2019 is our current year and cannot yet show trends, 2019 data have been removed from this page.

Drug Related Deaths Rate (Per 100,000 Residents)

- Year: 2008, # of Deaths (per 100,000): 39
- Year: 2010, # of Deaths (per 100,000): 29
- Year: 2012, # of Deaths (per 100,000): 23
- Year: 2014, # of Deaths (per 100,000): 26
- Year: 2016, # of Deaths (per 100,000): 32
- Year: 2018, # of Deaths (per 100,000): 27

Select Drugs Present

- Any Opioids: No, Yes
- Meth: No, Yes
- Fentanyl: No, Yes
- Heroin W/O Opioids: No, Yes

Select Race/Ethnicity

- Asian
- Hispanic
- Other
- Black
- Native American...
- White
- Homicide

Select Method Of Death

- Accident
- Suicide
- Undetermined

Select Date Range

- 1/2/2008
- 12/29/2018
Racial/Ethnic Breakdown of Drug Related Deaths

**Takeaway:** The White and Black population in Denver are disproportionally more likely to experience a drug-related death. The Hispanic/Latino, Native, and Asian populations are disproportionally less likely to experience a drug-related death.

**Caution:** Race and ethnic identity are judgements made in the OME; they may be incorrect and do not account for people with multiple race/ethnic identities.
Arapahoe House Closure

**Background:** The Denver Metro's Primary Substance Use Treatment Facility, Arapahoe House, closed on January 2, 2018. Over the next few months, increased Overdose/Poisoning calls (in 2018 and 2019) to 911 could be a red flag indicating increased deaths from fewer available resources.

**Caution:** "Overdose/Poisoning" captures drug related deaths as well as events like alcohol poisoning and accidentally ingesting household products. Sustained increases in calls in 2018 and 2019 suggests a need for further research on the effects of the closure.
Drug-Related Deaths in the City & County of Denver
Data Source: Denver Department of Public Health & Environment, Office of the Medical Examiner
2018 End of Year Summary

HISTORICAL TRENDS (2008-2018) - Overdose deaths have decreased in Denver on average over the last decade. Small recent increases fall within the normal variation of the data series. The combination of methamphetamine and heroin involved deaths are increasing.

YEAR TO DATE - The total number of drug related deaths in Denver increased from 201 in 2017 to 209 in 2018. While this indicates an increase in the absolute number of deaths, the change in the rate of drug related deaths per 100,000 people indicates that this increase is likely, in part, related to an increase in the overall population in Denver.
POLYSUBSTANCE USE - The majority of drug overdose deaths in Denver involve multiple substances found in the deceased’s system, i.e. toxicology. In 2018:
- 12% of deaths involved 1 drug in the deceased’s system.
- 64% of deaths involved 3 or more drugs in the deceased’s system.
- 28% of deaths involved 5 or more drugs in the deceased’s system.

DRUGS PRESENT (see footnote 2) - In 2018, more than half of Denver deaths involved some opioid in the deceased’s system (including heroin).
- 24% had prescription opioids (not including heroin), down from 28% in 2017.
- 20% had heroin present but not prescription opioids, down from 21% in 2017.
- Methamphetamine was present in 40% of deaths.

HOUSING STATUS - The Denver Office of the Medical Examiner investigators determine that the majority of people (82%) who died from a probable drug-overdose were not experiencing homelessness (see footnote 3).

2. These data represent deaths in which the specified drugs were present in specimens examined. Each death may have had other contributing factors.
3. Determining homeless status is not an exact science. This determination is based on OME investigators’ classification after extensive research into an individual’s life.
LOCATIONS (see footnote 4) - Most drug related deaths occur in private residences or hospitals. In 2018:
- 61% of deaths occurred in private residences; 22% occurred in a hospital.
- Only 9% of deaths occurred outdoors.

Additional Data Notes and Limitations

1. Cause of death may have intricate complexities and interpretations.
2. The numbers presented in this summary reflect deaths reported to the Denver Office of the Medical Examiner (OME) as required by CRS 30-10-606 (not every death in the City and County of Denver is reported to OME, just those required by statute).
3. Numbers may vary from other statewide data due to differences in reporting and coding.
4. Drug-related deaths can include a manner of natural, accident, suicide, homicide, and undetermined. The manner of death is the determination of how the injury or disease lead to the death, whereas cause of death is the specific injury or disease that lead to the death.

4. The place of death is where the decedent actually expired (i.e. died on the street). The place of injury is where the injury occurred prior to death (i.e. car accident location).