

Drug and Opioid Overdose Deaths in Illinois, 2016-2021

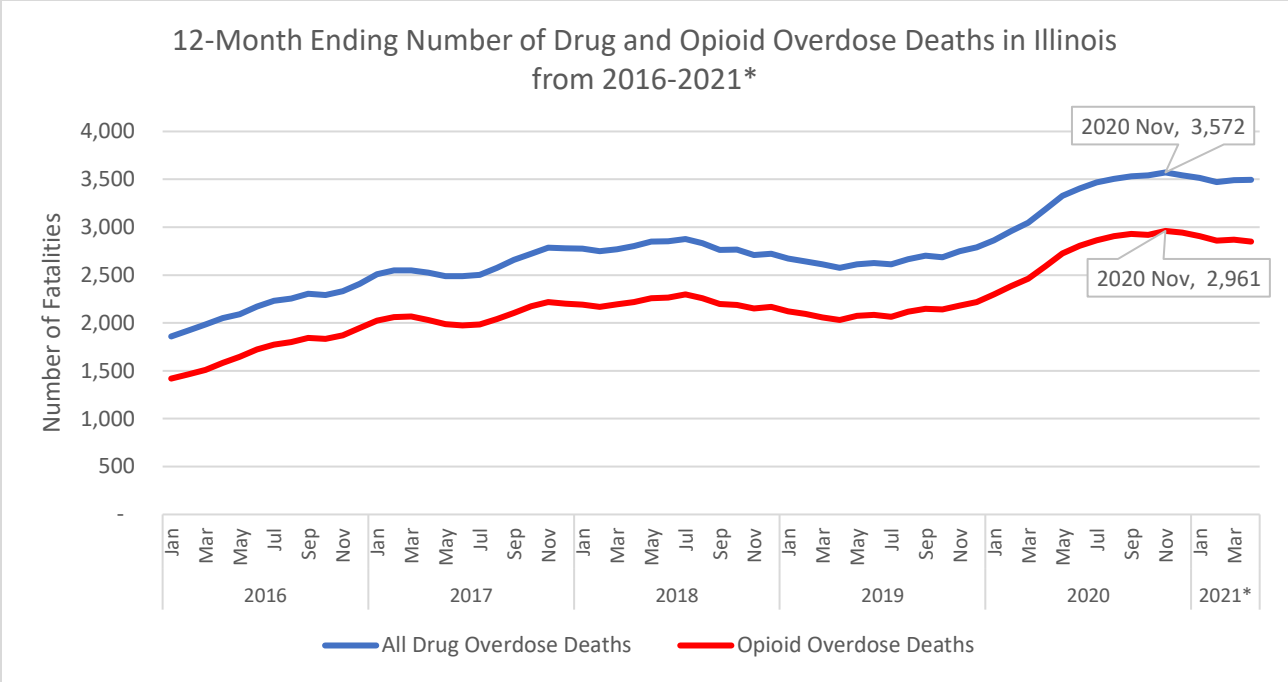
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released the number of drug overdose fatalities for the 12-month period ending April 2021 (https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2021/20211117.htm). During this period, the number of drug overdose deaths in the United States totaled more than 100,000 (100,306). This is the highest number of fatalities in a 12-month period since 2015. The increased number of fatalities has been linked to synthetic opioids, specifically fentanyl. Polysubstance use is also responsible for the increase in fatalities as fentanyl is being found in non-opioid substances, such as methamphetamine.

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) registered a provisional 3,494 drug fatalities and 2,849 opioid fatalities for the same 12-month period ending April 2021 (Fig. 1). However, unlike the national trend, Illinois' highest number of 12-month ending drug and fatalities occurred in November 2020. Since November 2020, the 12-month totals in Illinois have reduced slightly. The number of fatalities in 2021 are provisional and could change as cases are reviewed.

Illicit substances are not regulated and pose significant risk of harm. If taking illicit substances, there are precautions that can be utilized. Consider testing the substance for fentanyl using fentanyl test strips. Carry naloxone and do not use substances alone. Also, be aware that more than one dose of naloxone may be required to reverse an overdose when a synthetic opioid is ingested.

For more information on opioids, visit <https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/opioids.html>. If you or a loved one is struggling with substance use, the Illinois Helpline is available at <https://helplineil.org/app/home>, call 833-234-6343, or text "HELP" to 833234.





Data source: IDPH Vital Statistics

Figure 1. Drug and opioid deaths in Illinois for the 12-month periods from 2016 to April 2021. To be comparable to the data released by the CDC, the number of fatalities presented in here are for “12-month ending periods” (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>). This is defined as the number of deaths occurring in the 12-month period ending in the month indicated. For example, the 12-month ending period in June 2017 would include deaths occurring from July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017.

*2021 fatality totals are not final and may change as cases are reviewed.

