



# Massachusetts Department of Public Health

## Responding to the Opioid Epidemic

March 13, 2024

**Robbie Goldstein, MD, PhD**  
**Commissioner, Department of Public Health**

# DPH Mission

To promote and protect health and wellness and prevent injury and illness for all people, prioritizing racial equity in health by improving equitable access to quality public health and health care services and partnering with communities most impacted by health inequities and structural racism.



# DPH Strategic Priorities

Health equity, centering racial equity

Emergency preparedness & response

Strong public health workforce

**Vision:** "An equitable and just public health system that supports optimal well-being for all people in Massachusetts, centering those with systemically and culturally oppressed identities and circumstances"

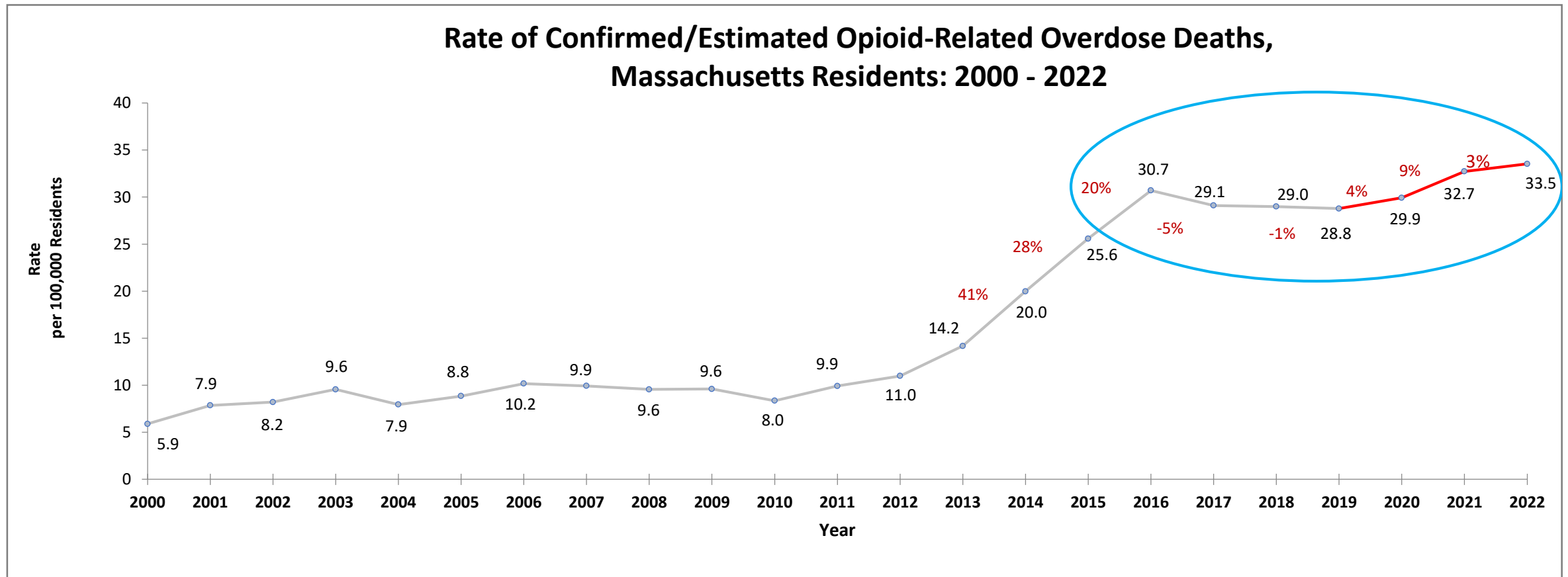
**Mission:** "To promote and protect health and wellness and prevent injury and illness for all people, prioritizing racial equity in health by improving equitable access to quality public health and healthcare services and partnering with communities most impacted by health inequities and structural racism"

Modernized public health infrastructure

Enhanced public service

# Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths, 2000-2022

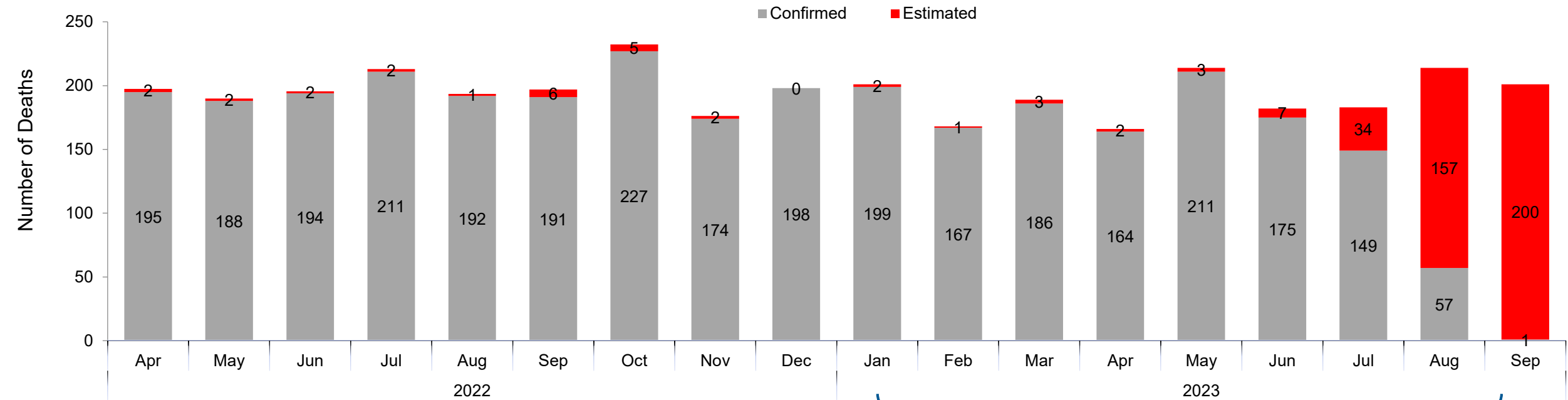
- The rate of opioid-related overdose deaths increased 3% in 2022 compared with 2021.
  - This rate is 9% higher than the 2016 peak.



# Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths 2022-2023

- Preliminary data show 1,309 confirmed and 409 estimated opioid-related overdose deaths in the first nine months of 2023

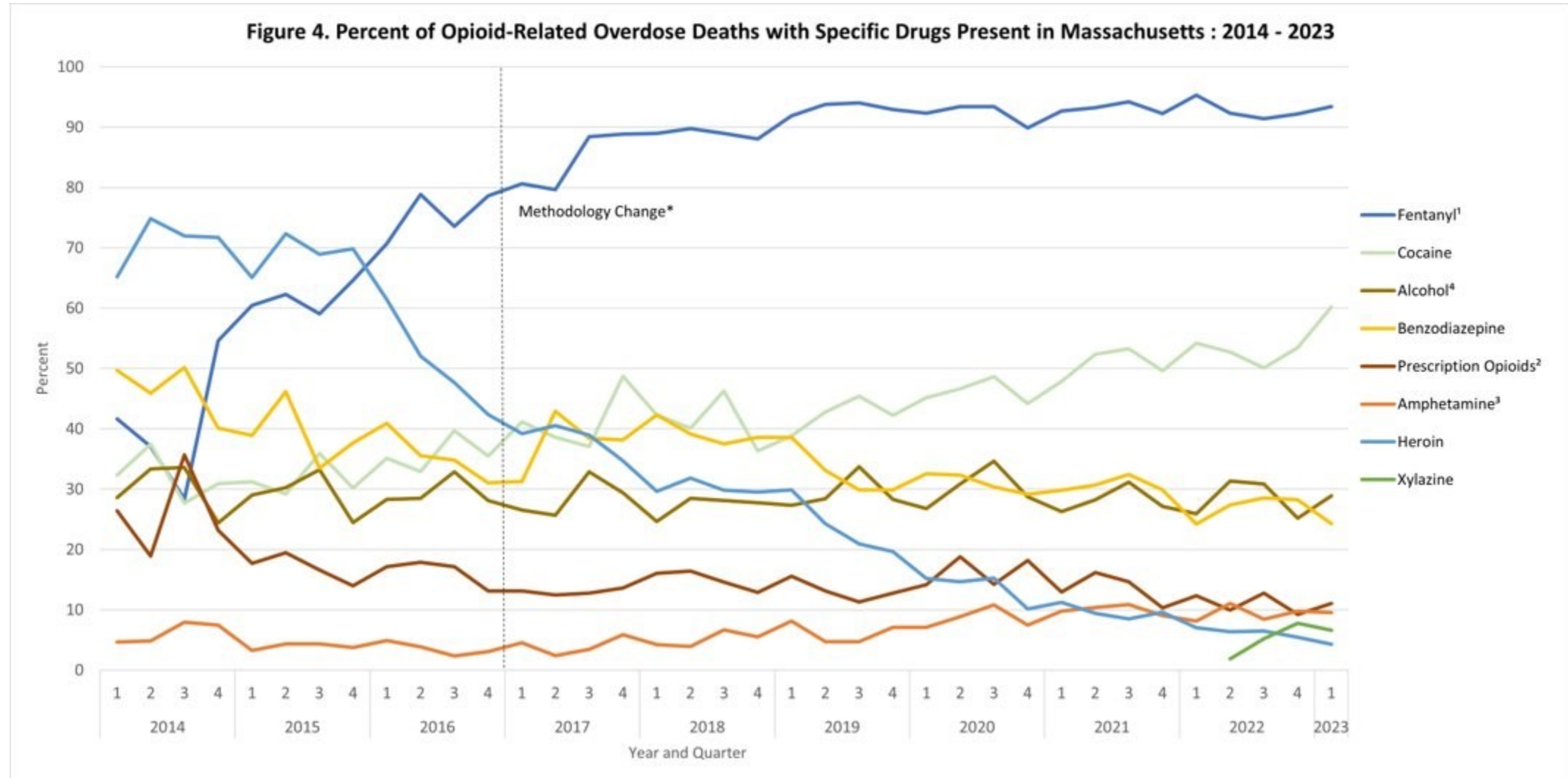
Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths, by Month  
April 2022- September 2023



12 months ending 9/23: 2,323 estimated total deaths  
12 months ending 9/22: 2,331 estimated total deaths

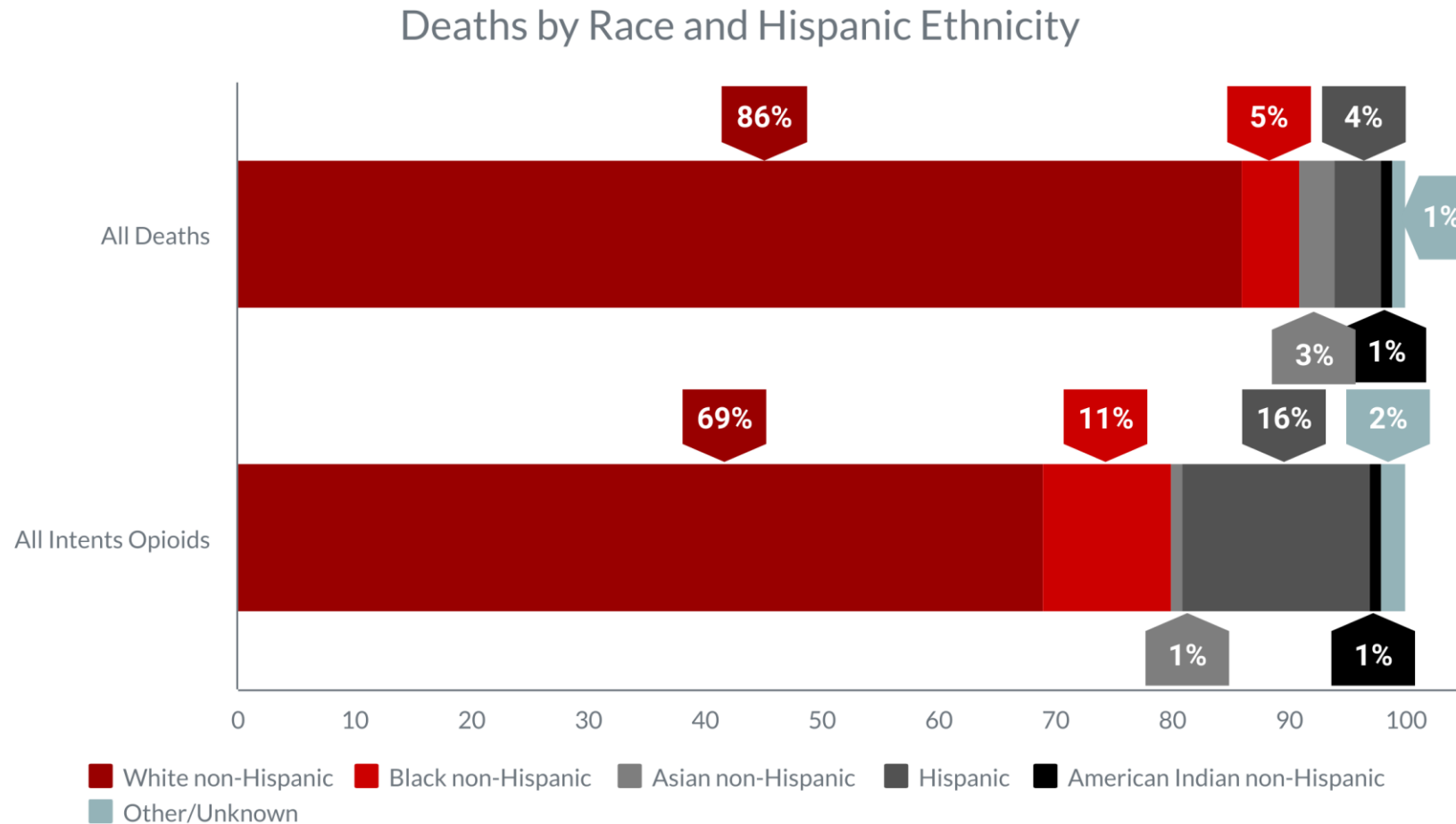
Estimated 1,718 total deaths

# Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths: Drugs Present



# Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths by Race/Ethnicity

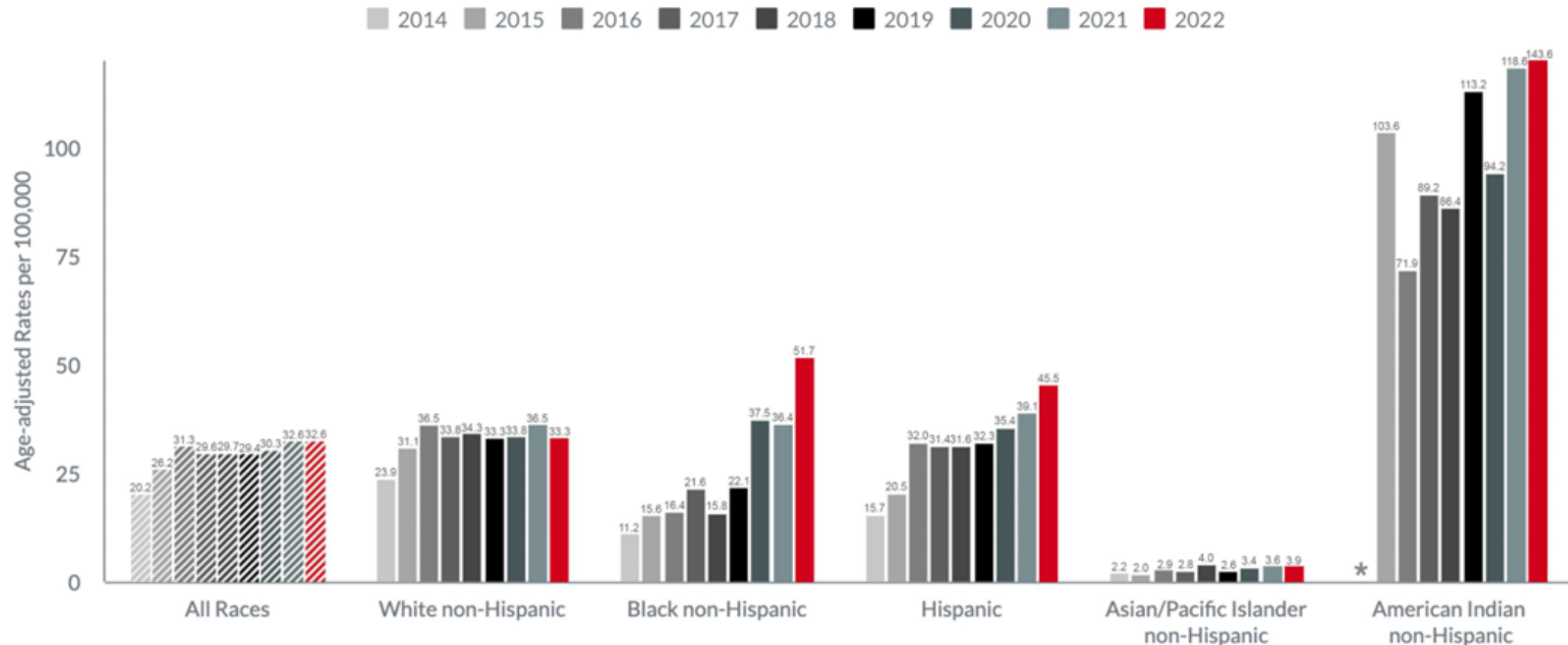
- White, non-Hispanic residents account for 86% of all deaths and only 69% of opioid-related overdose deaths.



# Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths by Race/Ethnicity

- Black, American Indian, and Hispanic populations experienced the largest percentage increase in opioid-related overdose death rates.

Confirmed Opioid-Related Overdose Death Rates, All Intents, by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity

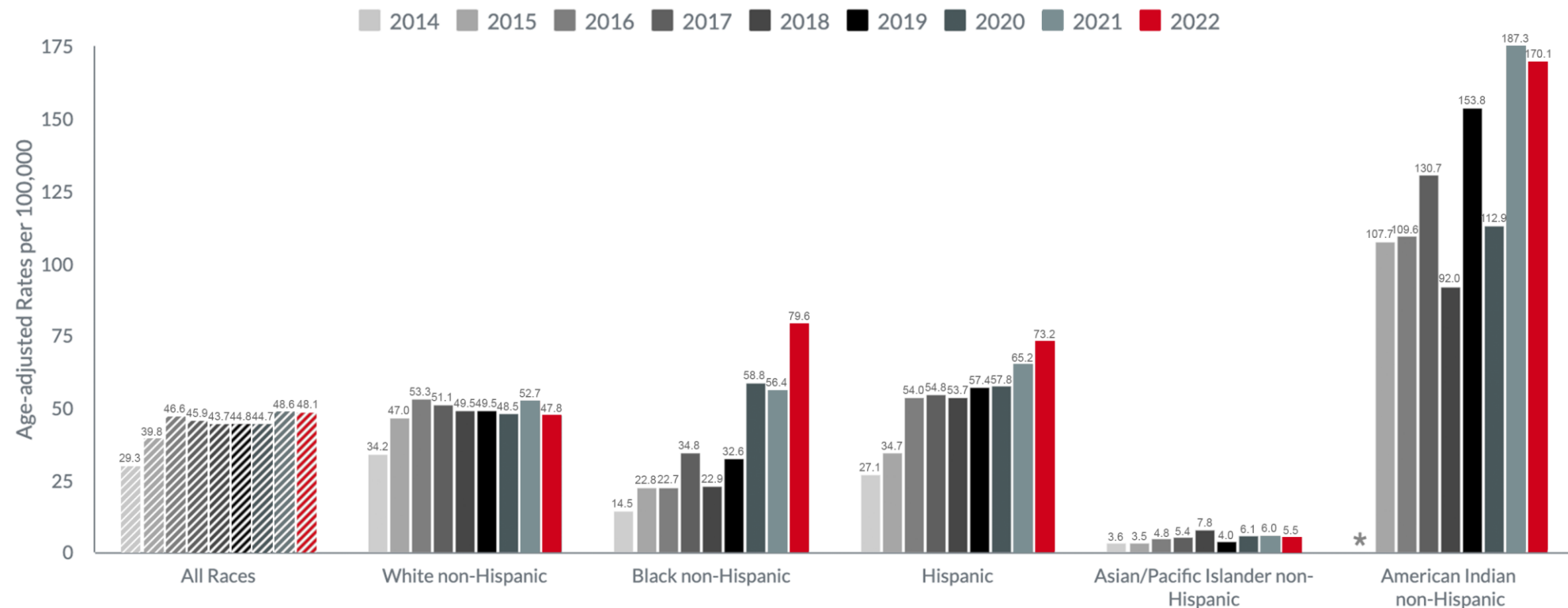




# Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths by Race/Ethnicity: Male

- From 2021 to 2022 Black non-Hispanic and Hispanic males had increased rates of death.

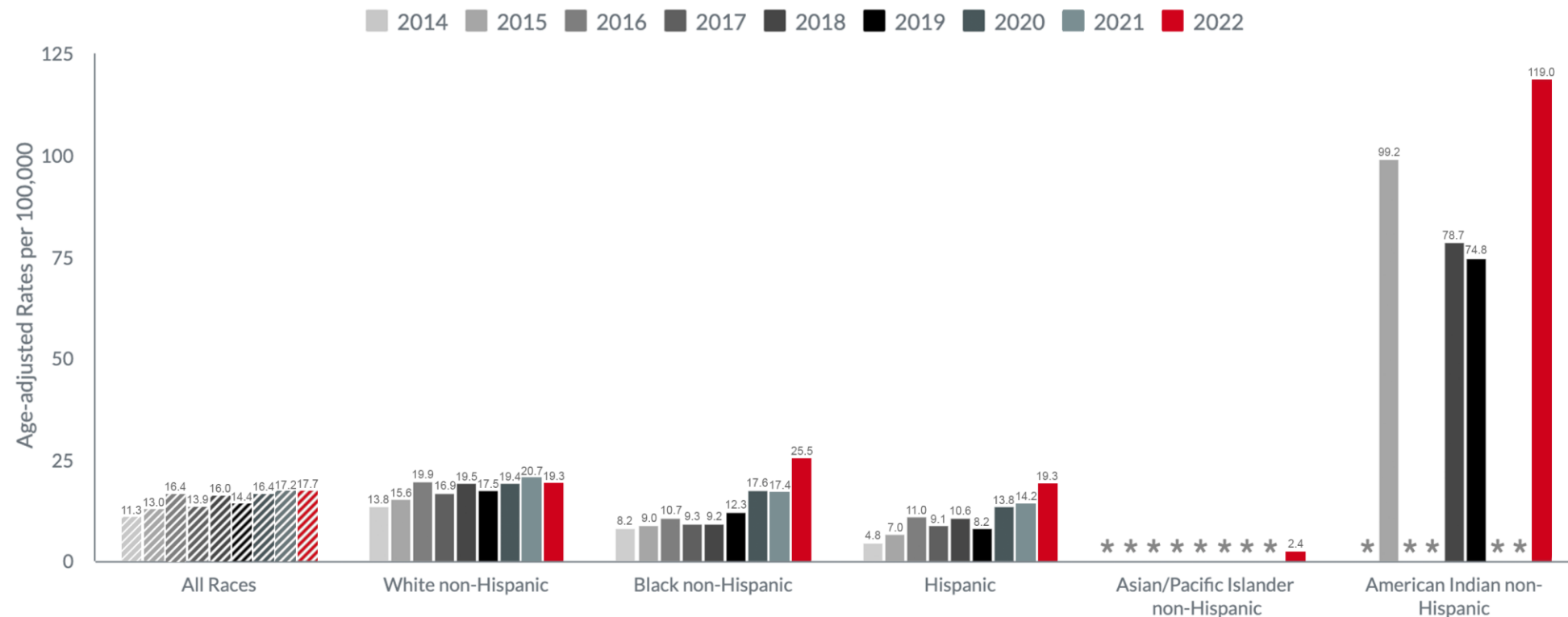
Confirmed Opioid-Related Overdose Death Rates, All Intent, by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity  
Male



# Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths by Race/Ethnicity: Female

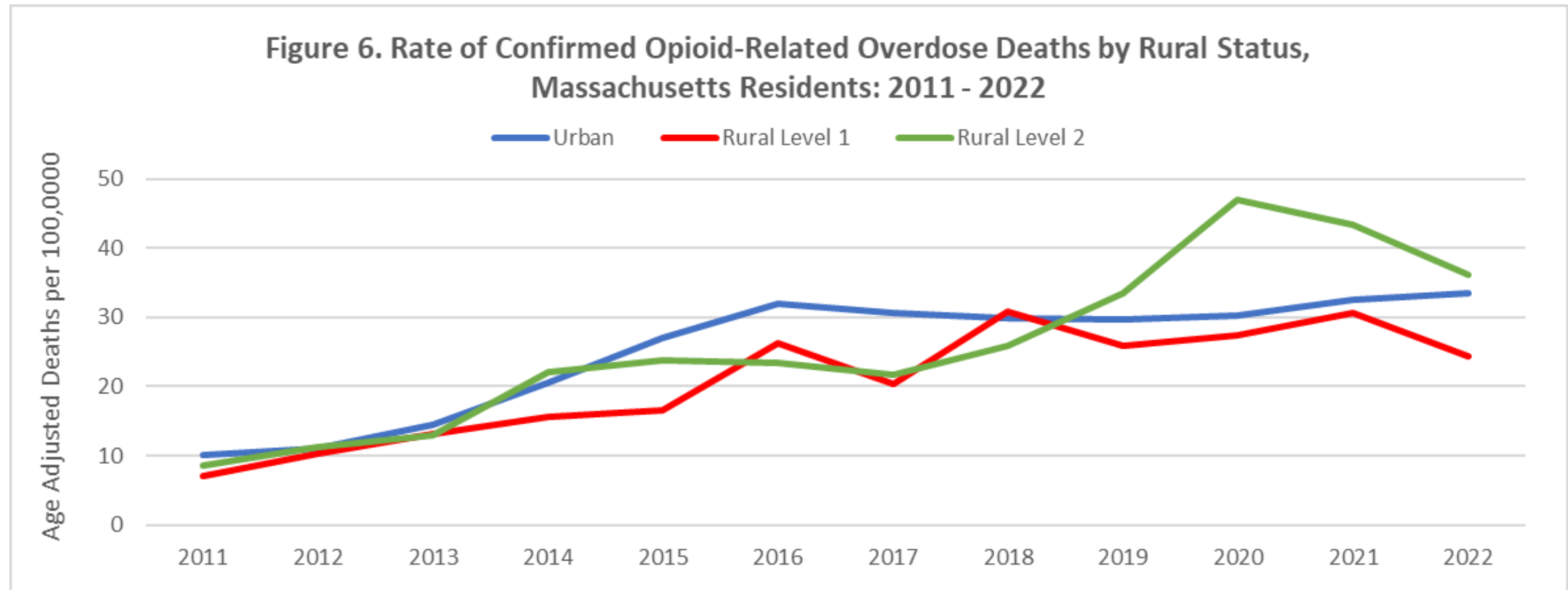
- From 2021 to 2022 Black non-Hispanic and Hispanic females had increased rates of death.

Confirmed Opioid-Related Overdose Death Rates, All Intents, by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity  
Female



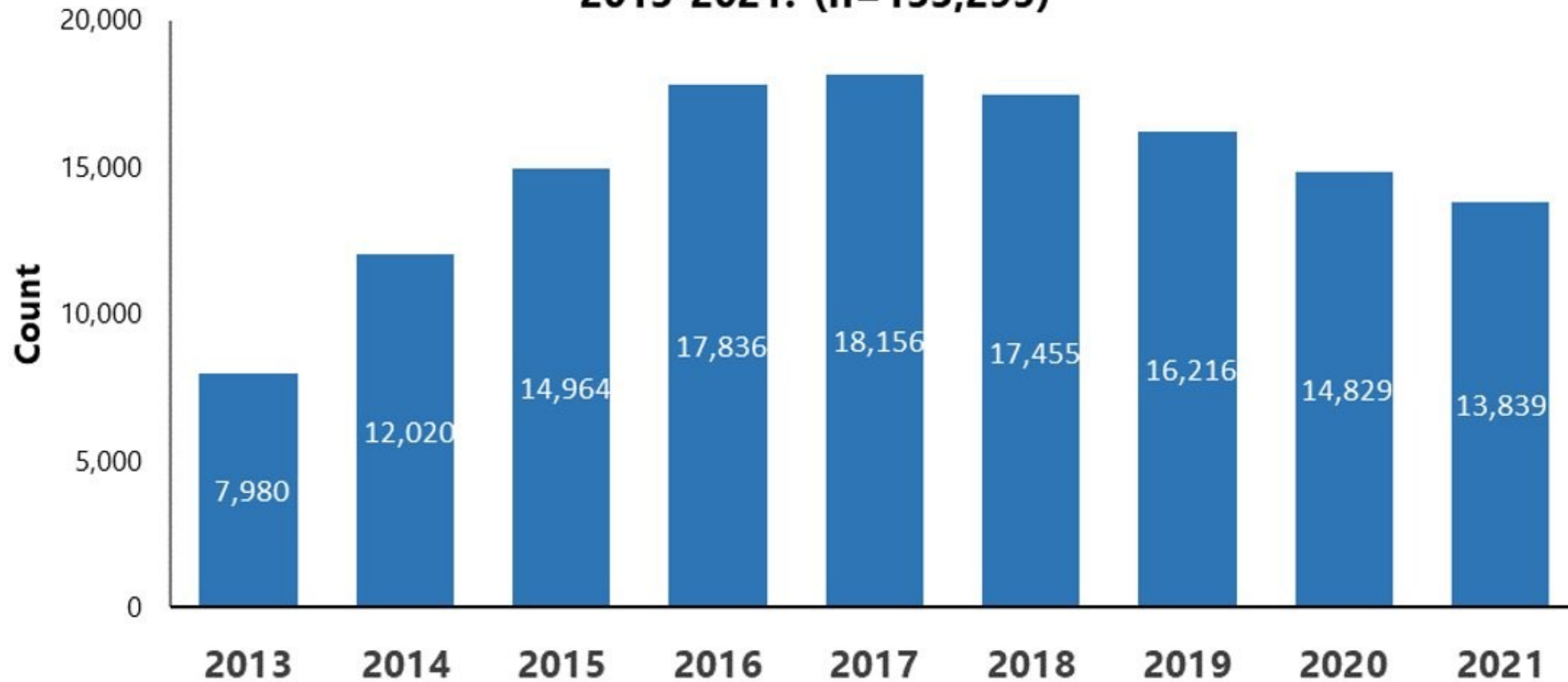
# Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths by Rural Status

- In 2022, the most rural communities had the highest rates of opioid-related overdose deaths.



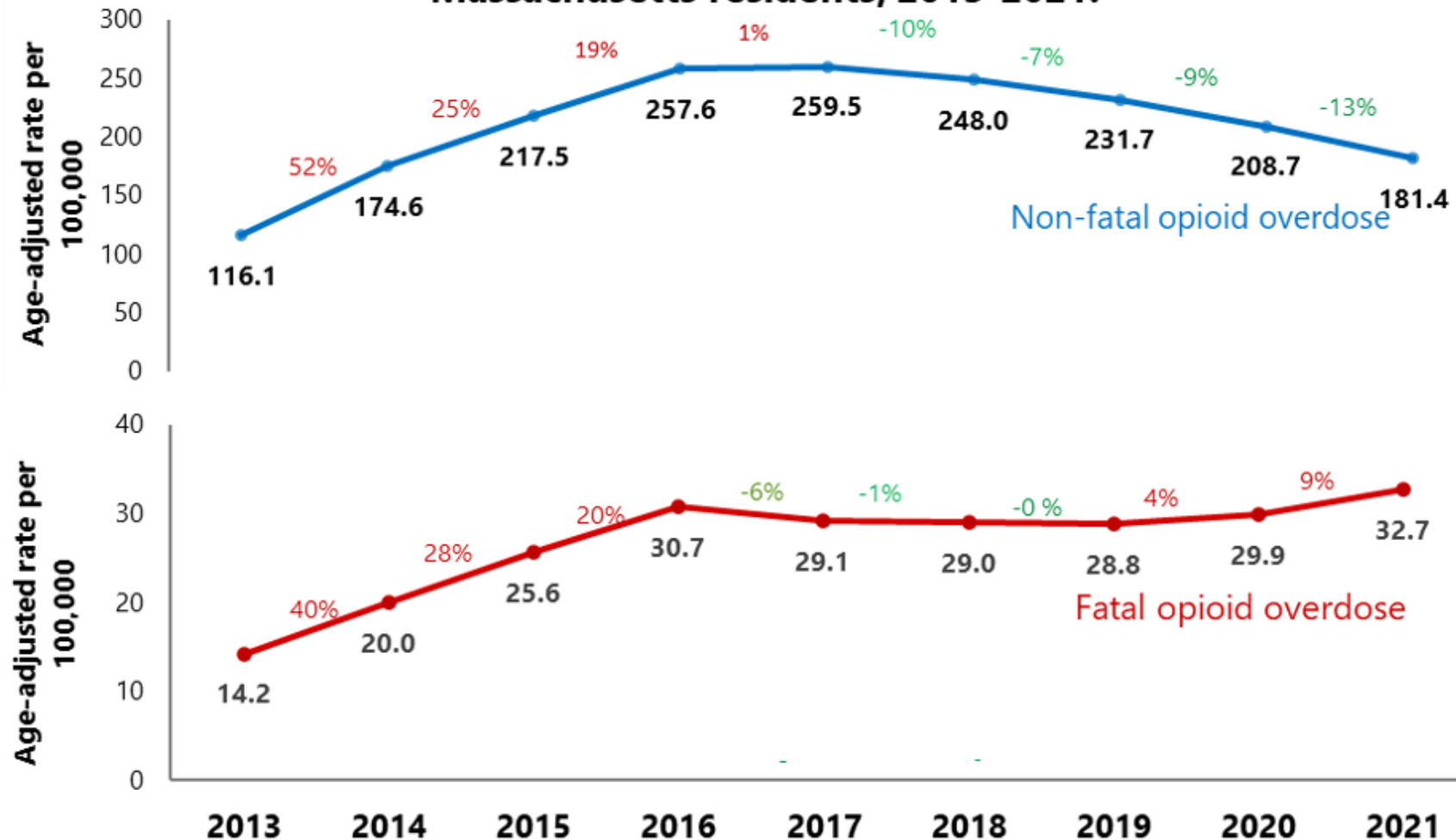
# Nonfatal Opioid-Related Overdose Trends

**Figure 1. Non-fatal opioid-related overdoses, Massachusetts residents  
2013-2021. (n=133,295)**



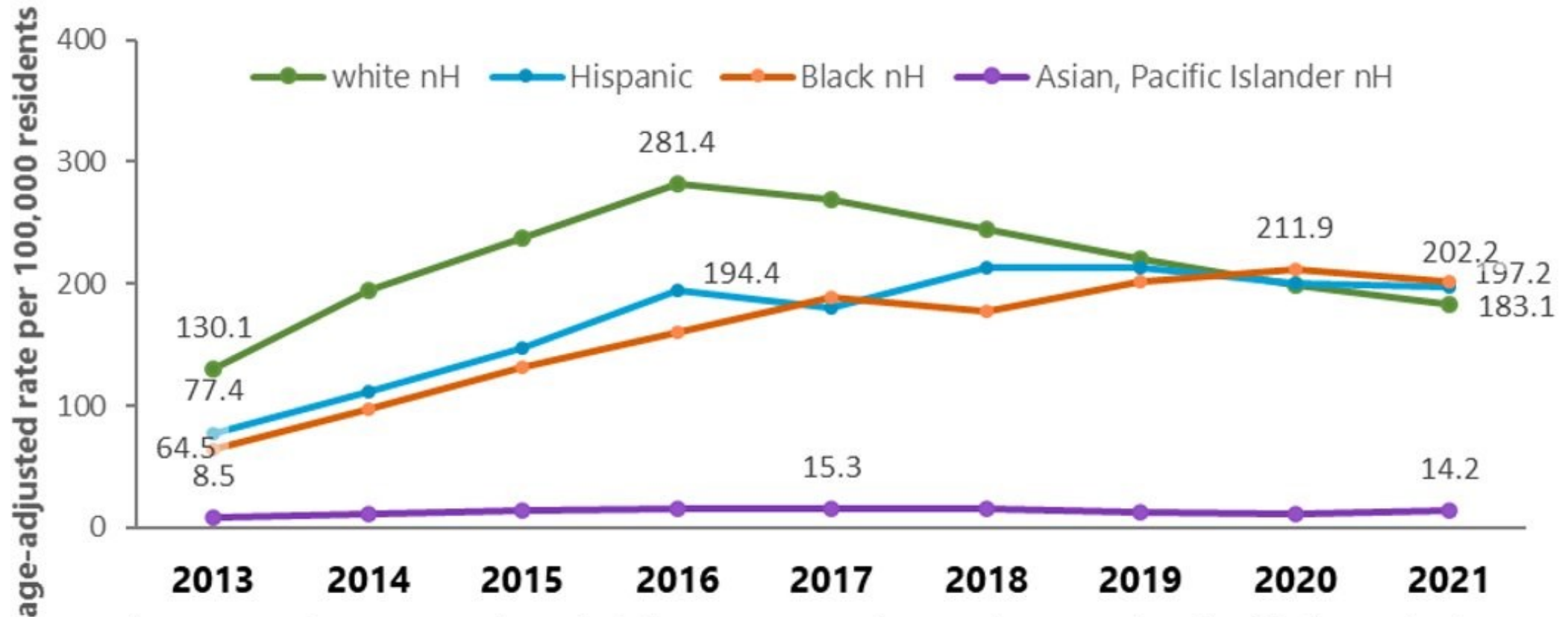
# Nonfatal/Fatal Opioid-Related Overdose Trends

**Figure 2. Age-adjusted rate of fatal and non-fatal opioid overdose per 100,000 Massachusetts residents, 2013-2021.**



# Nonfatal Opioid-Related Overdose by Race/Ethnicity

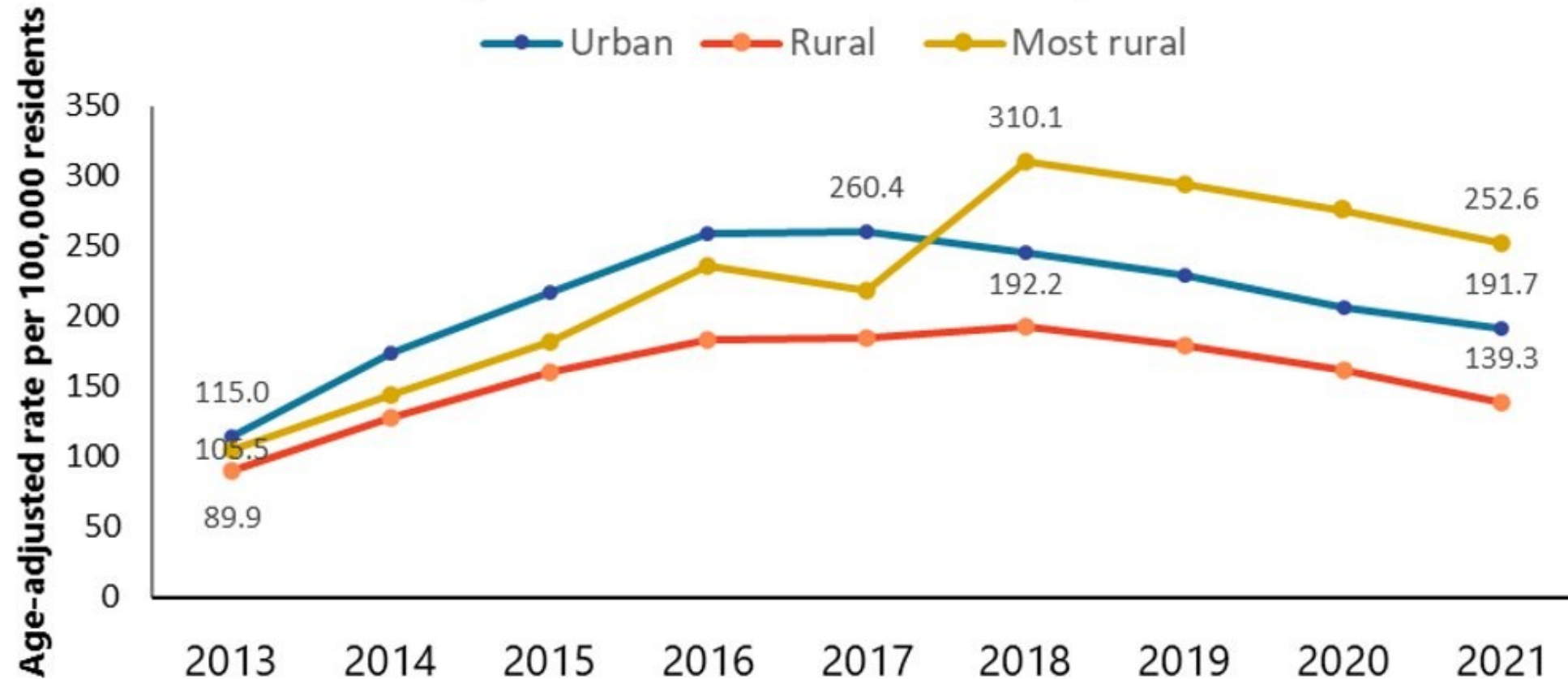
**Figure 7A. Age-adjusted rate of non-fatal opioid overdose by race\* and Hispanic ethnicity. Massachusetts residents, 2013-2021**



\* Notes: Rates for American Indian and Alaska Natives are not shown as they are combined with 'Other race' in the PHD; nH=non-Hispanic. 18,340 records with missing race and Hispanic ethnicity excluded.

# Nonfatal Opioid-Related Overdose by Rural Status

**Figure 9. Age-adjusted rate of non-fatal opioid overdoses by rurality\*. Massachusetts residents, 2013-2021.**

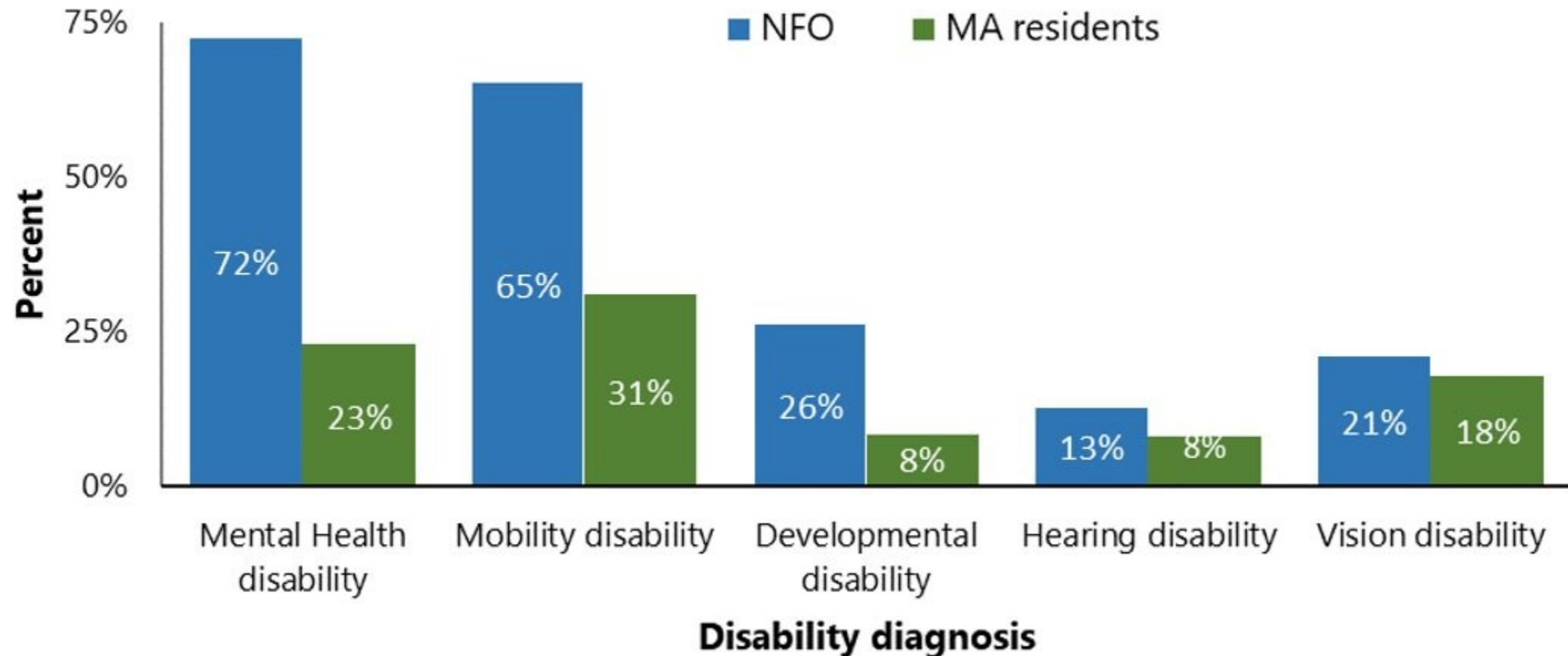


\* Note: 5,532 records with missing Zip Codes are excluded.



# Nonfatal Opioid-Related Overdose by Disability Status

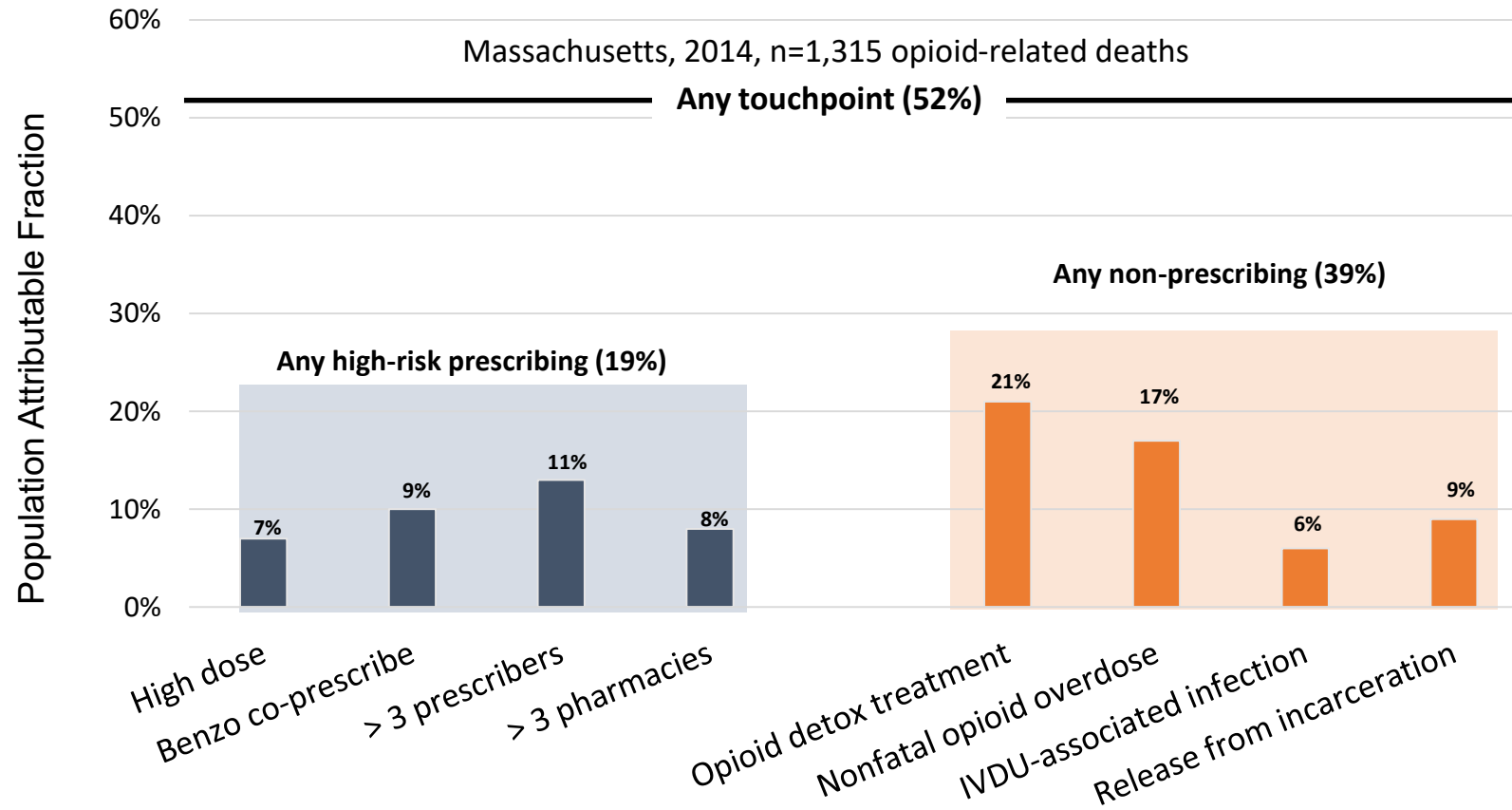
**Figure 12. Non-fatal overdose by disability status. Massachusetts residents, 2013-2021. (n=72,018)**



\*Note MA resident population based on 2011-2021 prevalence.



# Health System Touchpoints

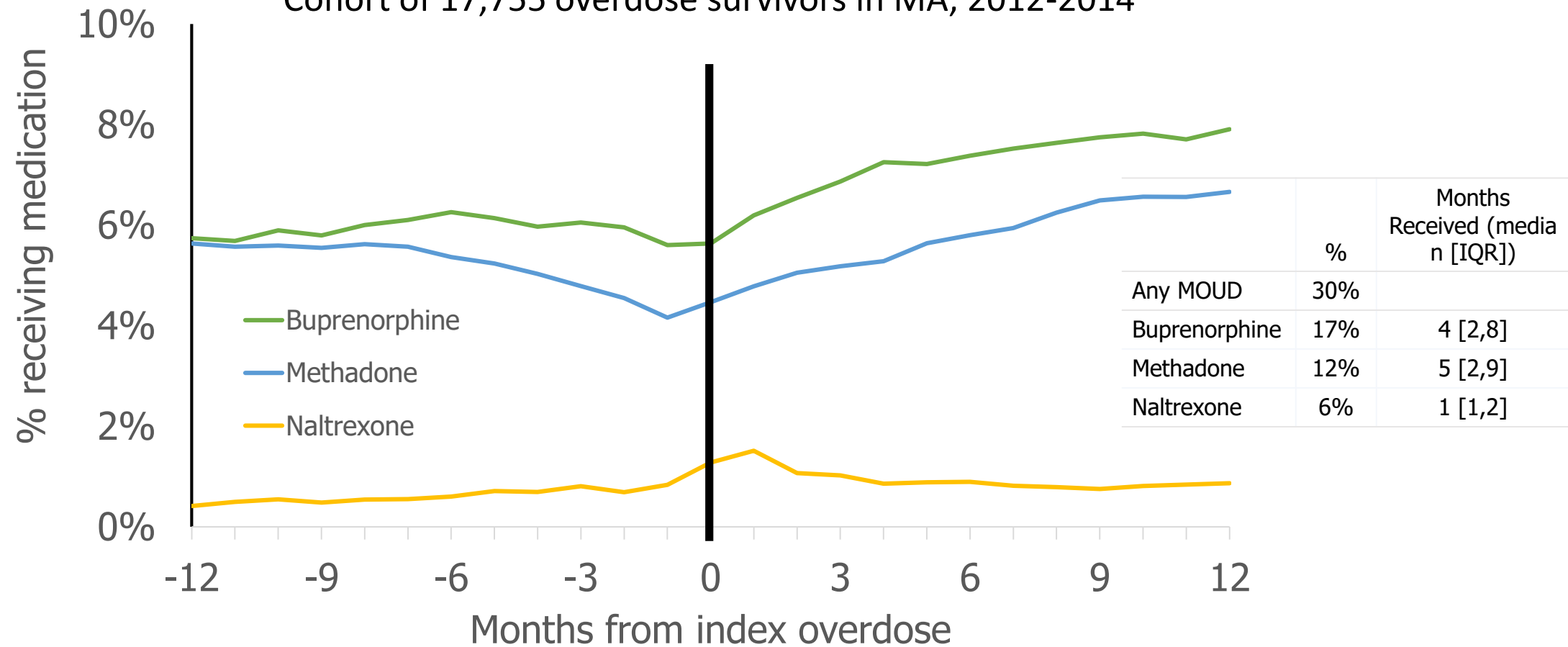


Source: Larochelle MR, Bernstein R, Bernson D, Land T, Stopka TJ, Rose AJ, Bharel M, Liebschutz JM, Walley AY.  
Touchpoints—opportunities to predict and prevent opioid overdose: a cohort study. Drug and Alcohol Dependence. 2019 Sep 3

# Nonfatal Opioid Overdose and Medication Prescriptions

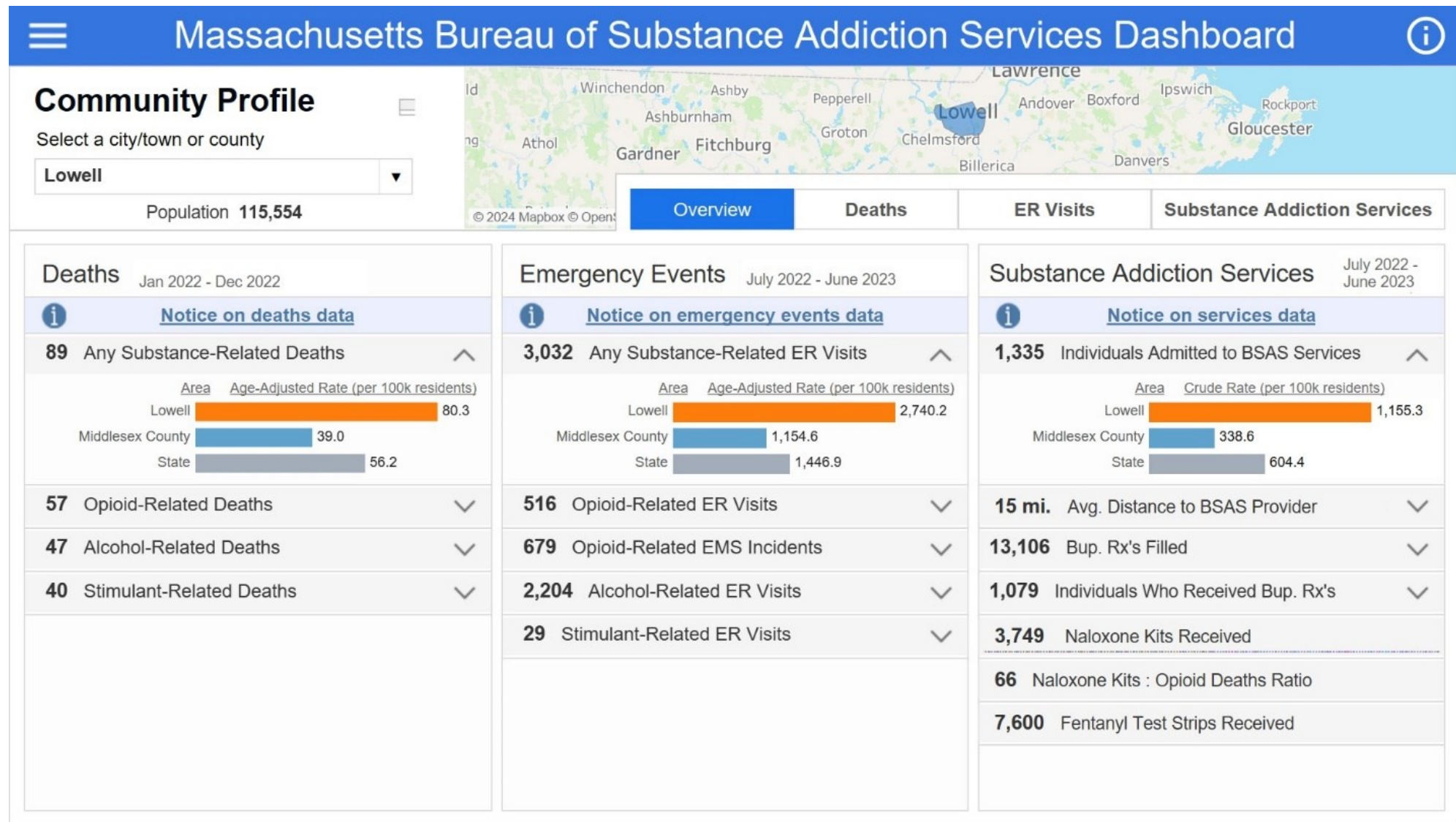
## After OD, few receive medications for OUD

Cohort of 17,755 overdose survivors in MA, 2012-2014

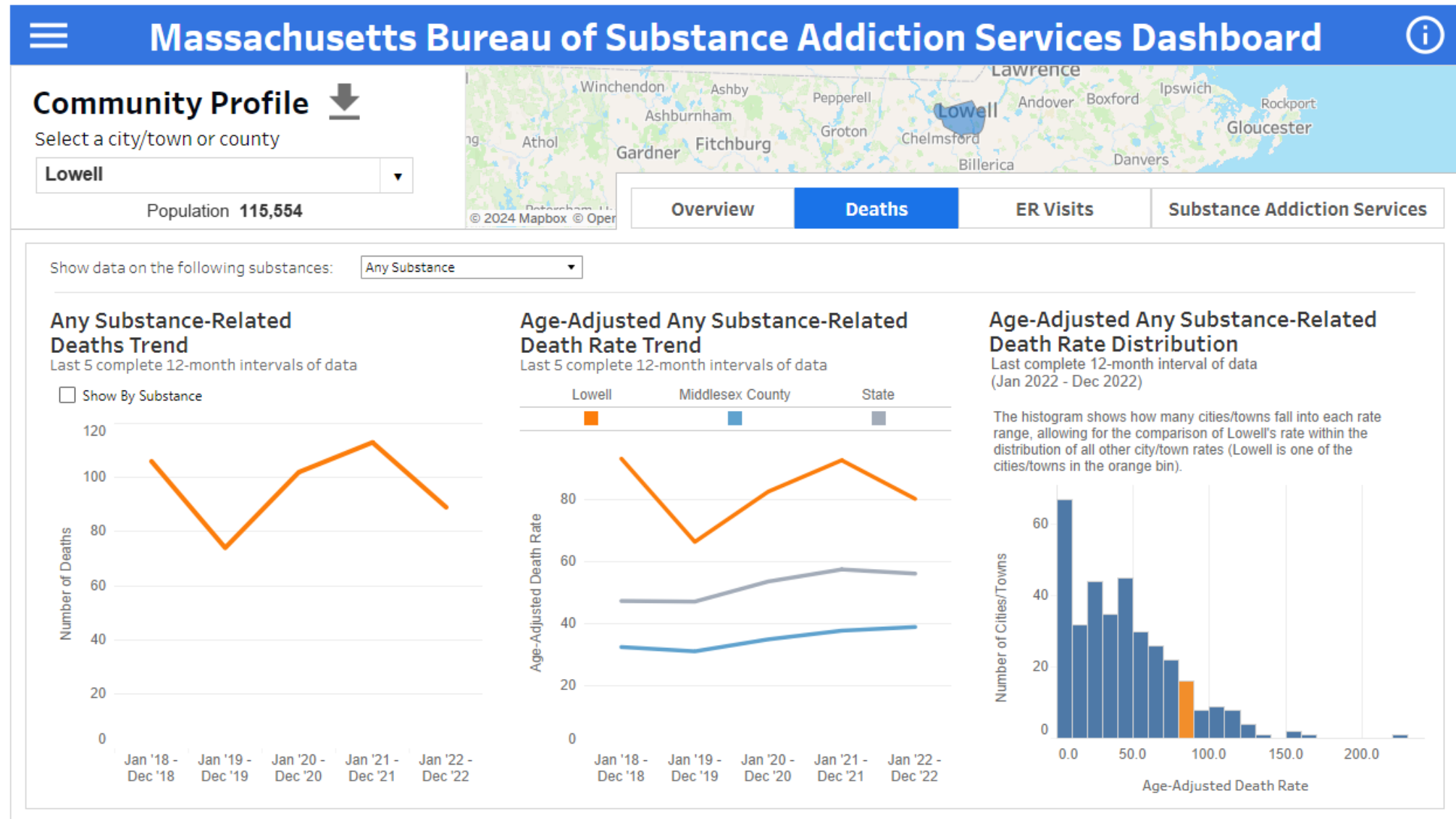


Larochelle MR, Bernson D, Land T, Stopka TJ, Wang N, Xuan Z, Bagley SM, Liebschutz JM, Walley AY. Medication for Opioid Use Disorder After Nonfatal Opioid Overdose and Association With Mortality: A Cohort Study. Annals of Internal Medicine. 2018 2018 Aug 7;169(3):137-145.

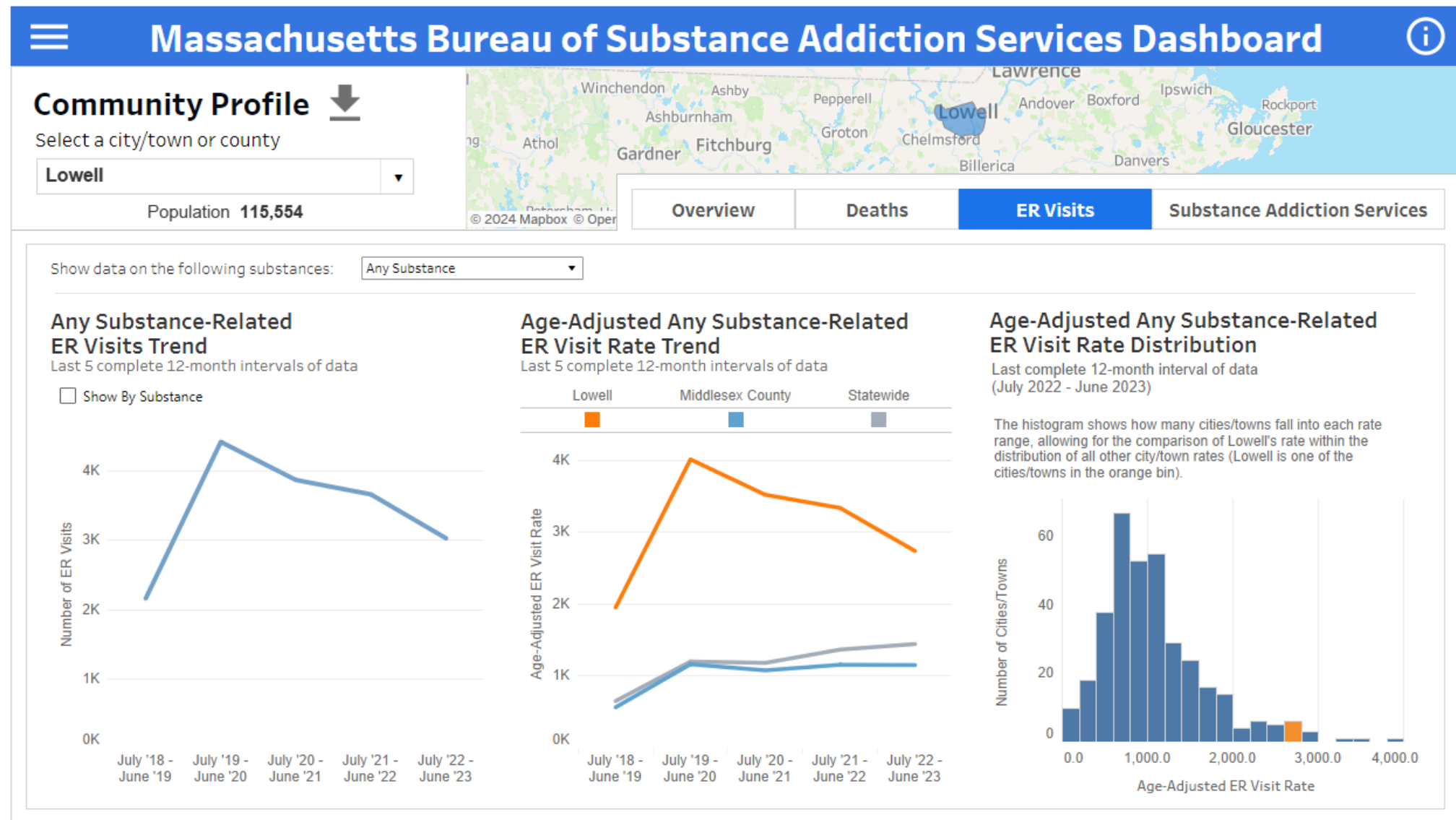
# Lowell Data: Deaths, Emergency Events, Services



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# EMS Interventions



- No wrong door
- Two statewide treatment protocols, authorizing EMS to:
  - Address withdrawal symptoms in overdose patients
  - Implement an EMS naloxone leave-behind program
- Mobile addiction programs

# Hospital Interventions



# Treatment and Recovery Services

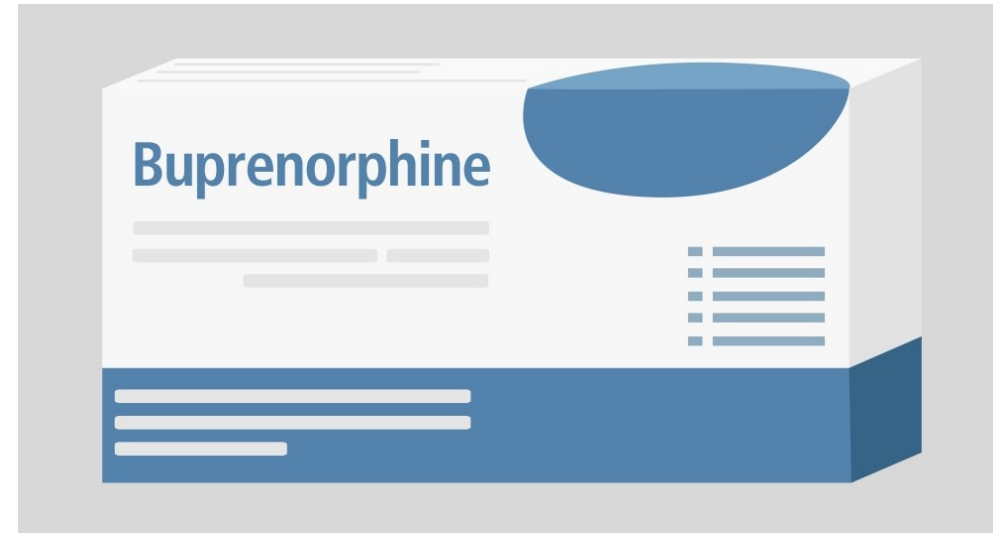
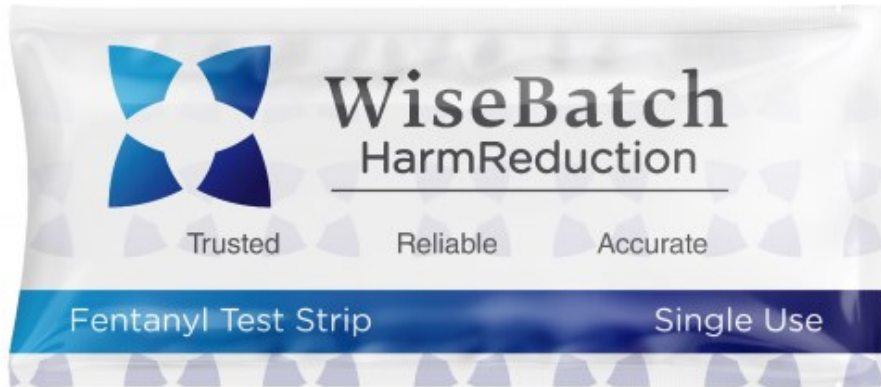


## DPH-supported services:

- Lowell Comprehensive Treatment Center
- HART House
- Megan's House
- Lowell CHC
- Lowell House
- Recovery Café Lowell



# Harm Reduction



# Overdose Prevention Centers

**Boston Herald** · 5d

## Massachusetts DPH touts supervised injection sites after Worcester supports opening overdose prevention center

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health said supervised injection sites would help “prevent fatal overdoses” after a local board backed opening a facility.

**BOSTON** · 5d · on MSN

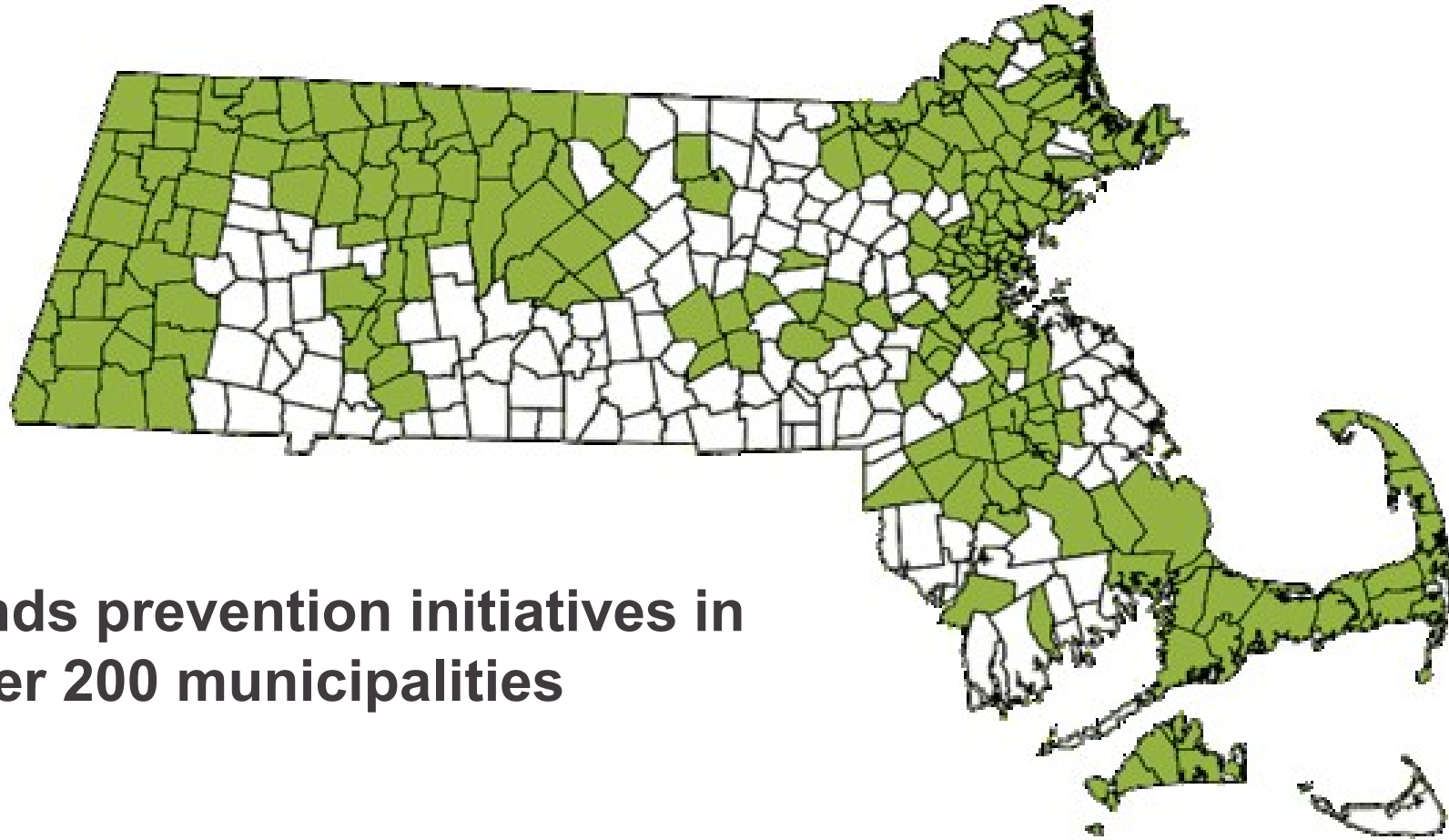
## Worcester takes step toward opening overdose prevention center pilot, would be first in Massachusetts

The Worcester Board of Health approved the creation of an overdose prevention center pilot program, but the city's next steps ...



Overdose prevention center signage in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

# Prevention



**BSAS funds prevention initiatives in  
over 200 municipalities**

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# Questions?

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# Connect with DPH



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Massachusetts Department of Public Health



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