

The Opioid Epidemic:

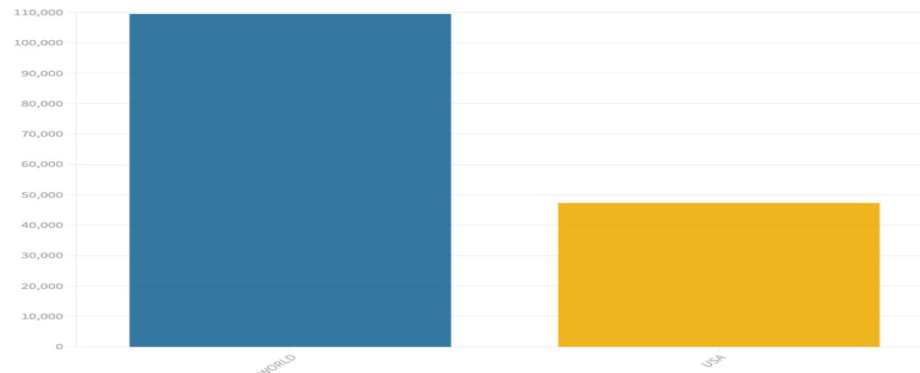
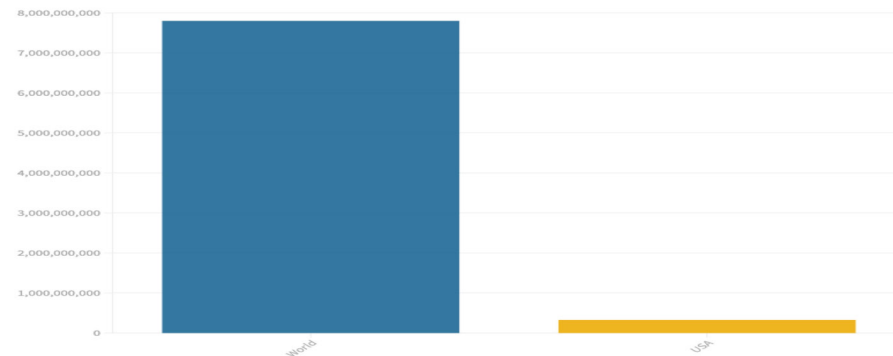
A Uniquely American Crisis Explained Through Graphs



Each day in the United States 128 people will die of an opioid overdose. These opioid related deaths constitute 70% of all drug related overdoses in the United States.

Tens of thousands of Americans have been minimized to mere statistics. Legal prescriptions have become gateway drugs for illicit heroin and fentanyl. Now, the United States leads the world in opioid related deaths.

The USA is home to only 4.2% of the entire world's population. However, it is also responsible for about 43.2% of the world's opioid related deaths.

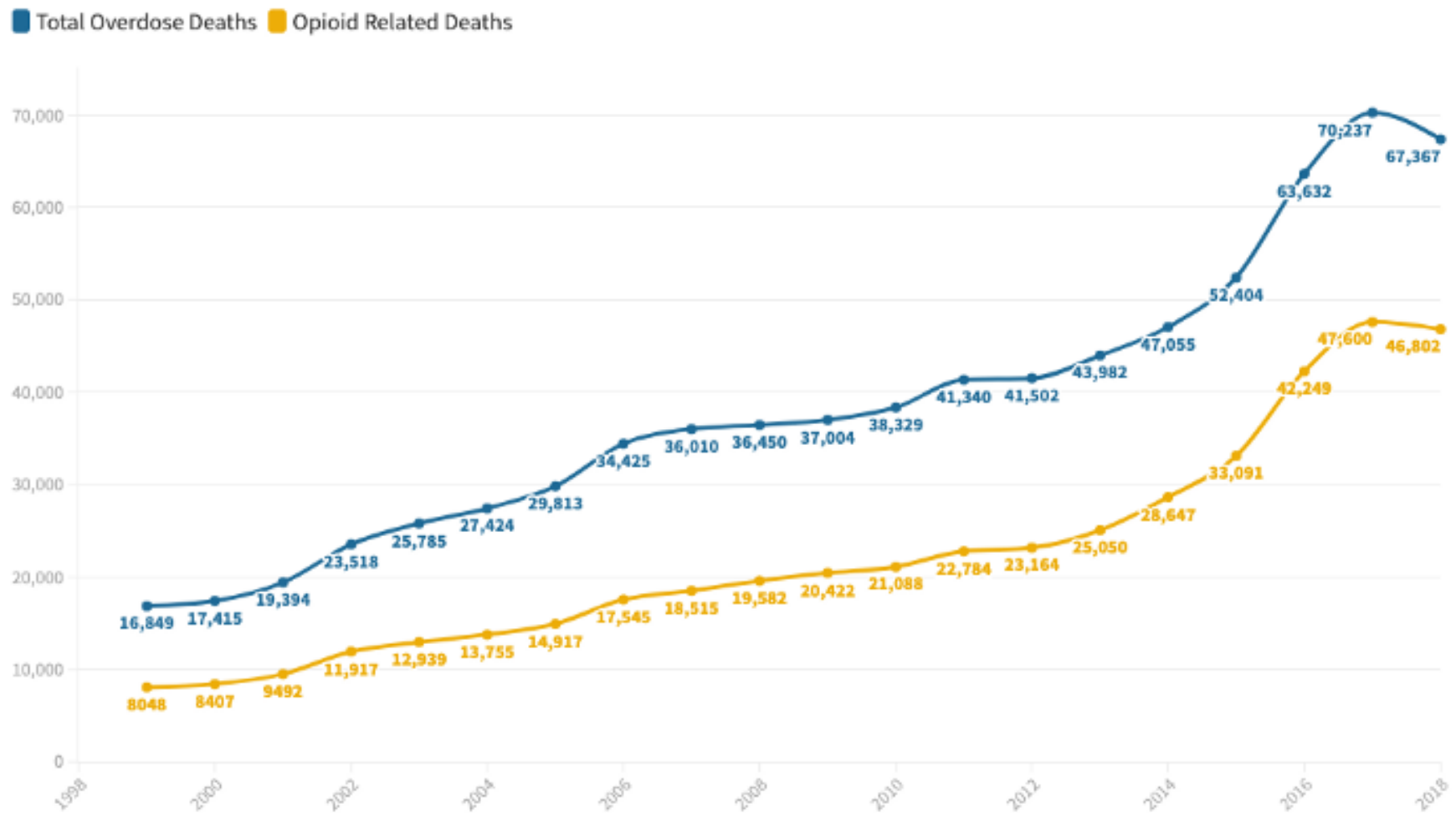


ABOVE: This graph shows the estimated world population (blue bar) as compared to the estimated United States population (yellow bar). Population numbers are retrieved from 2020 surveys. **BELOW:** This graph shows the the number of opioid related overdose deaths in the world population (blue bar) as compared to the number of opioid related overdoses in the United States population (yellow bar). These overdose numbers are recorded from the years 1990–2017.

Data from 1999–2018 shows a steady increase in overdose deaths in America. There was a 300% increase in all overdose deaths from 1999–2018 and a 481.5% increase in opioid related deaths.

Health researchers have segmented the opioid epidemic into three distinct stages of the crisis.

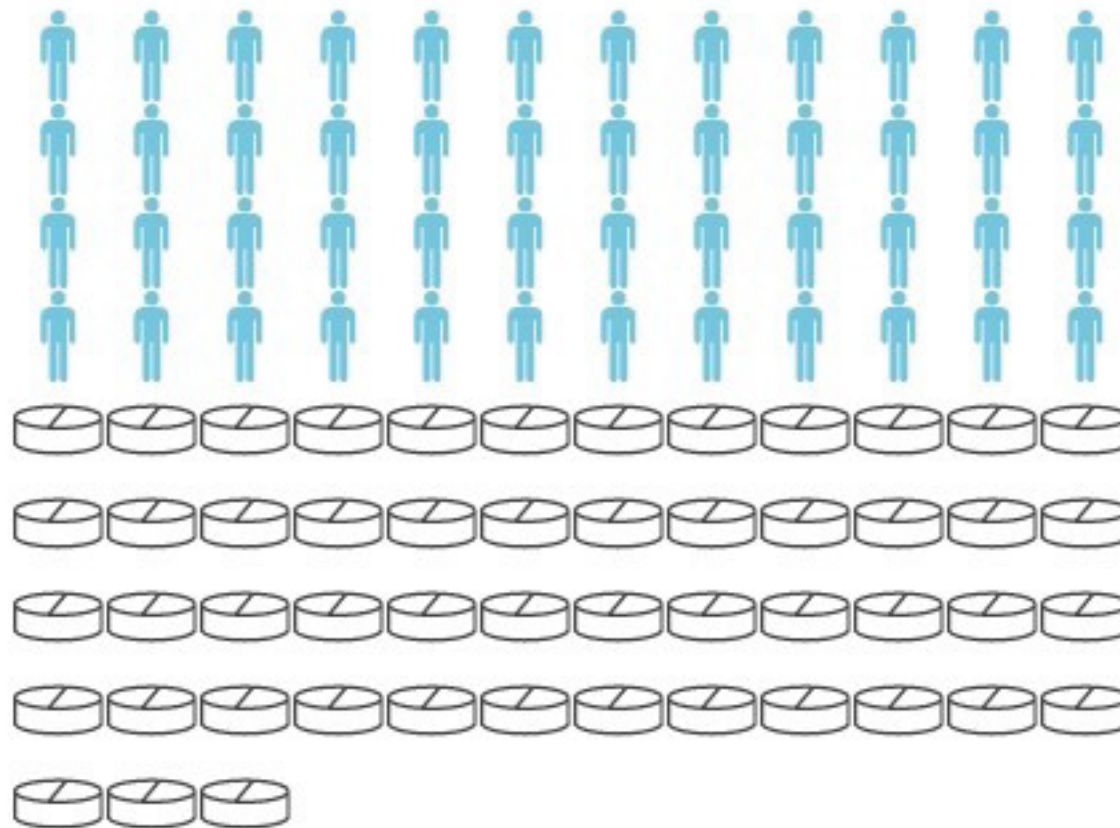
The first stage begins in 1999 with an increase in legal opioid scripts being prescribed to patients. These substances are considered to primarily be natural, semi-synthetic opioids, and methadone.



The blue line shows all of the overdose deaths in America from 1999–2018. The yellow line shows all of the opioid related overdose deaths from the same time period.

Today, it is estimated that 21% to 29% of patients who are prescribed opioids by a medical professional will abuse or misuse them during their lifetime.

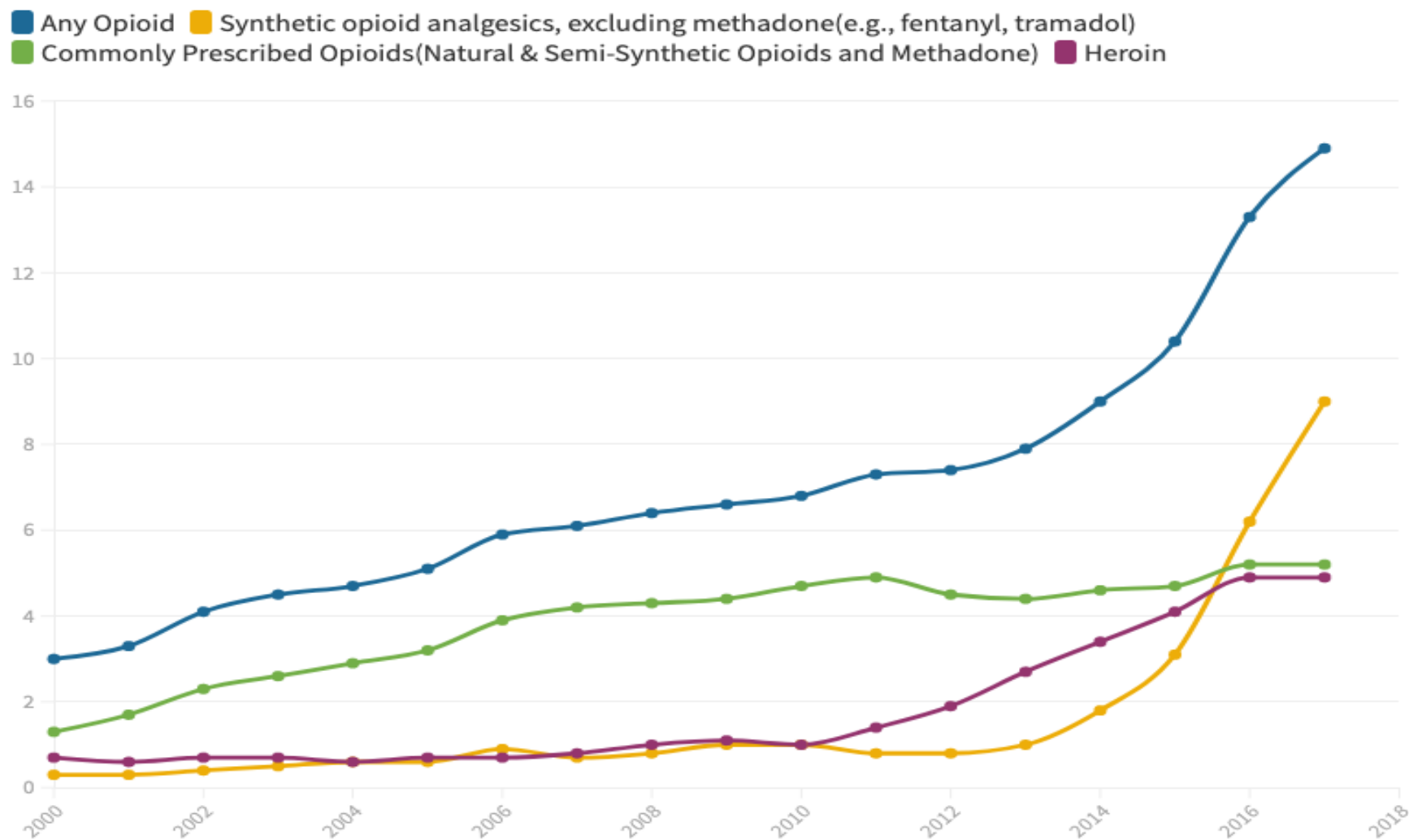
This is an astounding statistic when considering the sheer amount of opioid scripts in circulation. It is thought that, for every 100 Americans, there are 51.4 opioid prescriptions in circulation.



The pills on this pictogram represent the percentage of opioid scripts currently in circulation per 100 people. The stick figures represent the percentage of the population without prescriptions. There are more scripts than there are half of the population.

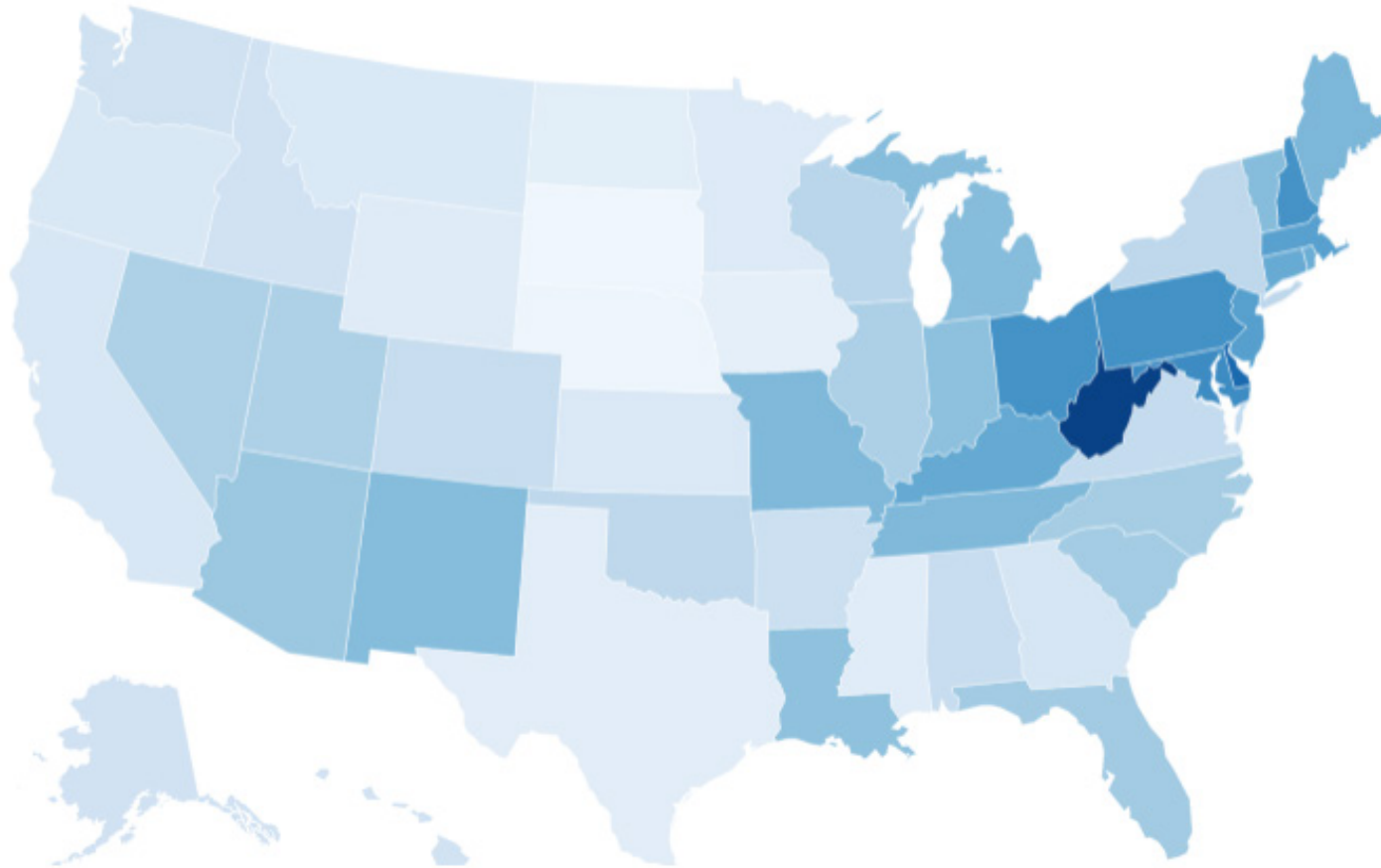
The second stage is said to occur around 2010 when there is a rapid increase in heroin related overdoses.

The final stage takes place around 2013 whereby there is an increase in deaths involving synthetic opioids. The primary culprit is illicit fentanyl.



This chart shows deaths per 100,000 members of the population. The blue line represents the total opioid related deaths . The green line shows the number of deaths related to commonly prescribed opioids. The purple line shows heroin related deaths. The yellow line shows synthetic opioid related deaths. As seen above, heroin and synthetic opioid abuse have sky rocketed in recent years.

West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio and New Hampshire rank in the top five states with the highest per-capita overdose mortality rate. At the bottom of the list is Texas, North Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau's cartographic boundary shapefiles, 2016 edition

This map shows the states with the highest concentration of overdose deaths. The deaths have been adjusted per capita with a rate of 5 being the lowest (South Dakota) and 55 being the highest (West Virginia).

Trends suggest that the opioid epidemic will continue to claim the lives of far too many Americans grappling at the hands of addiction. There is a sense of urgency in fighting this silent epidemic and it is paramount that the country act now.

If you or somebody you love
needs help...

SAMHSA National Helpline

1-800-662-4357

SOURCES

<https://ourworldindata.org/drug-use#deaths-from-substance-use-disorders>

<https://www.cdc.gov/pwid/addiction.html>

<https://www.nih.gov/>

<https://www.who.int/>

