

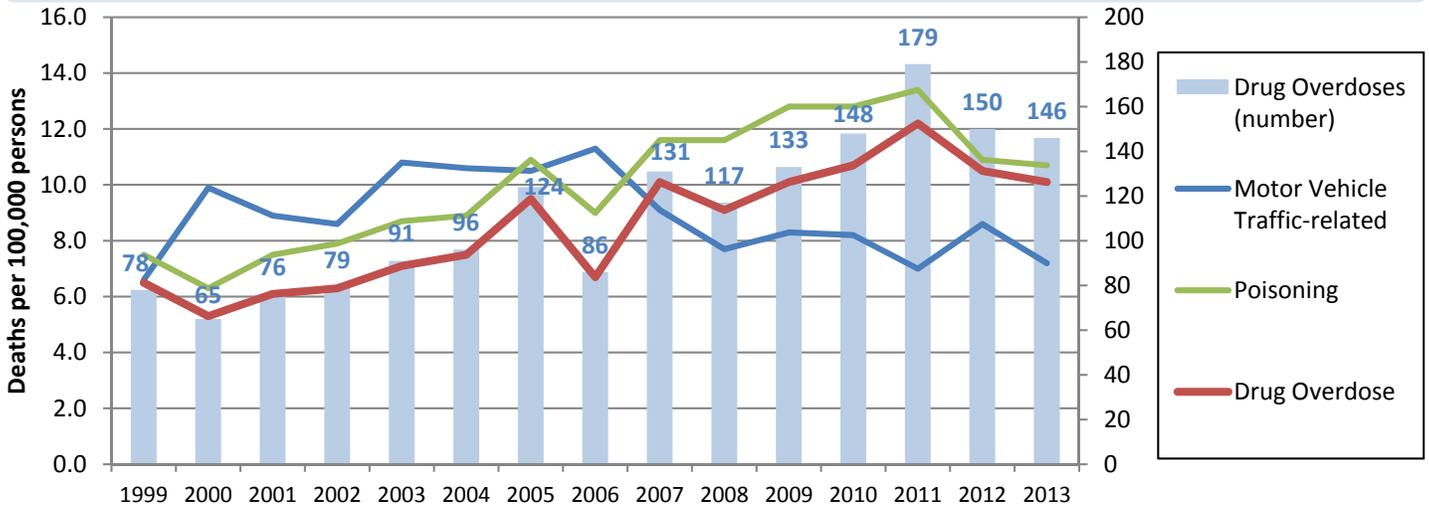


# Drug Overdose Deaths among Hawaii residents, 1999-2013

## A Public Health Crisis Continues

Poisoning is the leading mechanism of injury-related deaths in Hawaii, and drugs cause 9 out of 10 poisoning deaths. The average annual number of drug poisoning deaths, also called overdoses, nearly doubled from the 1999-2003 period (78 deaths) to the 2009-2013 period (151 deaths). Drug overdoses surpassed motor vehicle traffic crashes as the leading cause of fatal injuries in 2007 (Figure 1). In 2013, the poisoning death rate was 10.7 deaths per 100,000 residents, and the drug overdose death rate was 10.1 compared to a motor vehicle traffic-related death rate of 7.2 deaths per 100,000 residents.

**Figure 1. Drug overdose death rates\* compared to motor vehicle-related death rates, Hawaii residents, 1999-2013**  
(Lines show age-adjusted death rates (per 100,000 residents), while actual number of fatalities is indicated by bar and label.)



## Drugs Caused 9 out of 10 Poisoning Deaths

From 2009 through 2013, drugs and medications –prescription drugs, illicit drugs, and over-the-counter medications, - were the underlying cause of death for 88% of all poisoning deaths. Adjusted mortality rates were more than doubled among male residents, compared to females. All of the victims were 14 years of age or older, and two-thirds were 25 to 54 years of age. Adjusted fatality rates were statistically comparable for residents of Hawaii, Honolulu and Maui counties, although these comparisons are limited by the relatively small number of victims.

**Table 1. Drug overdose deaths: Demographic characteristics, Hawaii residents, 2009-2013**

		Average annual number	Percent	Average annual rate per 100,000 residents
Gender	Female	47	31%	6.8
	Male	104	69%	14.6
Age (in years) (None under 14 yrs.)	14-24	8	5%	0.6
	25-44	53	35%	4.5
	45-54	47	31%	3.4
	55 and older	44	29%	2.3
County of residence	Hawaii	22	14%	11.5
	Honolulu	103	68%	10.5
	Kauai	5	3%	-
	Maui	22	14%	13.1

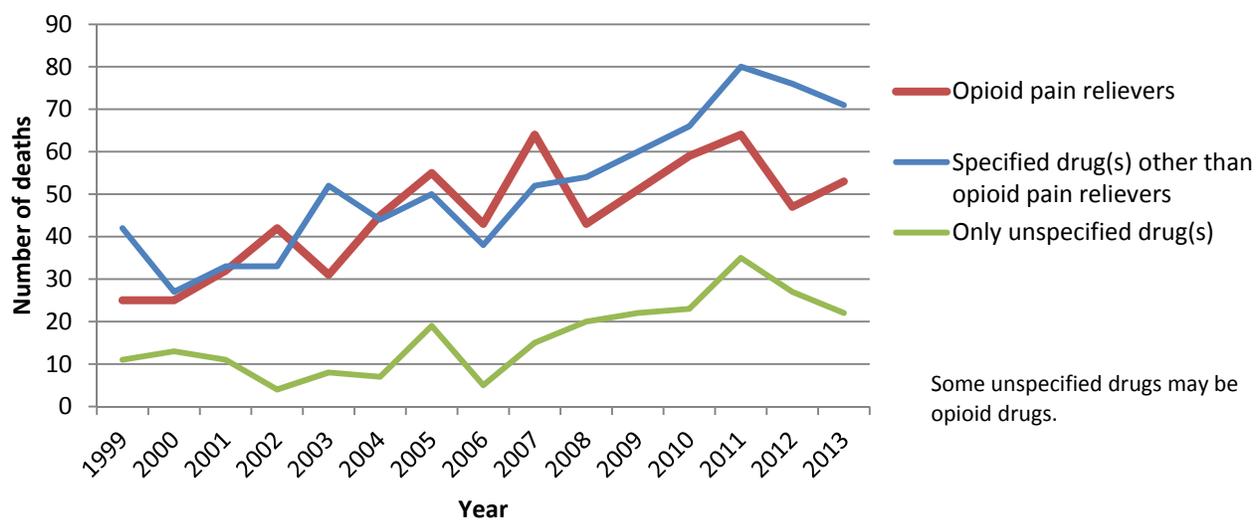


## Opioid Pain Relievers Contributed to 36% of the Drug Overdose Deaths

Opioid pain relievers, such as oxycodone or hydrocodone, contributed to more than one-third (36%, or 274) of the 756 drug overdose deaths in from 2009 through 2013. This may be an underestimate, as the percent of drug overdose deaths that had only unspecified drug(s) listed as contributing to the death ranged from 15% to 20% over the 5-year period.

(All data in this factsheet is taken from death certificates archived by the Hawaii Department of Health.)

**Figure 2. Number of drug overdose deaths involving opioid pain relievers and other drugs, Hawaii residents, 1999-2013**



## Addressing the Issue

- **Key strategies** include conducting enhanced surveillance through data linkage and implementing and evaluating effective methods for educating providers on appropriate prescribing practices and use of the Hawaii's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PMP). Support for provider education about prescription drug abuse and promoting provider use of the PMP is funded by Core VIPP funding.
- **In an effort** to improve understanding of prescription drug use and access, the Hawaii State Department of Health, Injury Prevention and Control Section (IPCS) partnered with the Hawaii Narcotics Enforcement Division (NED), Department of Public Safety to link data from victim death certificates, autopsy records and drug prescriptions.
- **Other surveillance efforts:** For a clearer picture of public perception and use of prescription drugs, four questions were added to the 2015 Hawaii Behavioral Risk Surveillance System (BRFSS). The survey data will be collected continuously for approximately 1 year, ending by December of 2015, and will be available in early 2016.
- Among **key state and community partners** working on prescription drug abuse/misuse prevention are the Department of Public Safety, Department of Health, Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i, Harm Reduction Hawaii, Narcotics Policy Working Group, Project CHOW (Community Health Outreach Workers).