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Coverage
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Male drug poisoning deaths highest in five years

Health Statistics Quarterly autumn 2008

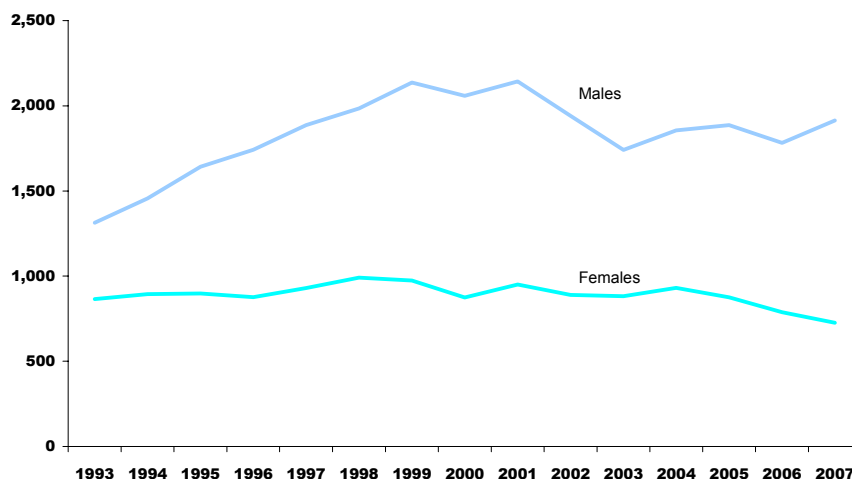
Male deaths from drug poisonings are at their highest level for five years, according to new data released today from the Office for National Statistics.

There were 1,914 male deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales in 2007, which is the highest recorded number since 2002. This compares with 1,782 deaths in 2006 and represents a rise of 7 per cent.

The number of female deaths was at its lowest recorded annual number since the ONS drug poisoning database began in 1993. The number of female drug poisoning deaths fell by 8 per cent, from 788 deaths in 2006 to 726 in 2007.

Deaths related to drug poisoning, England and Wales, 1993-2007

Number of deaths



Issued by
Office for National Statistics
Government Buildings
Cardiff Road
Newport
NP10 8XG

Contact
Media Office 0845 604 1858
Claudia Wells 01633 45 5867

Email:
mortality@ons.gov.uk

www.statistics.gov.uk

The total number of drug poisoning deaths in 2007 was 2,640, which included a rise of 16 per cent in deaths involving heroin and morphine compared with 2006. There were 829 heroin and morphine related deaths in 2007 and 713 in 2006.

The number of deaths involving methadone rose to 325, an increase of 35 per cent compared with 2006 and the highest level since 1999.

There were 196 deaths involving cocaine in 2007, continuing a long-term upward trend. This is the highest recorded number of deaths involving cocaine since the ONS database began in 1993.

Deaths involving amphetamines rose slightly in 2007 to 97 deaths, with nearly half of these accounted for by deaths mentioning ecstasy.

Conversely, deaths involving antidepressants, paracetamol and aspirin were all at their lowest levels since records began in 1993.

Drug misuse

In males, 67 per cent of drug poisoning deaths were attributable to drug misuse whereas in females the proportion stood at 44 per cent.

Between 1993 and 2002, the age group with the highest rate of deaths related to drug misuse was men aged 20-29. The recent decline in rates in this age group, and an increase among men aged 30-39, means that the latter age group has had the highest rate among males since 2003. The rate among men aged 40-49 increased by nearly half (45 per cent) between 2003 and 2007.

In 2007, death rates from drug misuse for females were lower than for males in every age group and, as with men, the highest rate for deaths related to drug misuse was among those aged 30-39.

This report is published today in *Health Statistics Quarterly 39* autumn 2008 (p82), available free on the Office for National Statistics website:

www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=6725.

Other new information on drug-related deaths in *Health Statistics Quarterly 39* includes:

An article on geographical variations in deaths related to drug misuse in England and Wales, 1993–2006. Findings include:

- Three Drug Action Team areas – Blackpool, Brighton and Hove, and Camden – have consistently had the highest drug misuse mortality rates across the period.

- By 2004/06 London was among the regions with the lowest drug misuse mortality rates. Rates in London declined steadily from a peak in the late 1990s to 2002–04, with a small upturn in more recent years.

This year's autumn HSQ publication also includes reports on MRSA and *Clostridium difficile*, unexplained deaths in infancy, and urban and rural mortality. For further news releases see the Office for National Statistics website:

www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/prep/6725.asp

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. Mortality rates for 2007 have been calculated using the population projections for 2007 as estimates were not available. These rates are therefore provisional until updated in the next annual report.
2. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) database of deaths from drug related poisoning contains information on deaths from 1993.
3. The database covers accidents and suicides involving drug poisoning, as well as poisonings due to drug abuse and drug dependence, but not other adverse effects of drugs.
4. For each death, the database includes every mention of a substance recorded on the death certificate or mentioned by the coroner.
5. In the tables given in the accompanying report some deaths may be counted in more than one category. For example, if heroin and cannabis are recorded on the death certificate the death will be recorded once under heroin and once under cannabis.
6. **National Statistics** are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2008.