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Coverage  
United Kingdom

Theme  
Health



## Drug poisoning deaths at eight-year high

Deaths relating to drug poisoning - including both legal and illegal drugs - have risen to their highest level since 2001, new figures from the Office for National Statistics reveal.

The ONS journal *Health Statistics Quarterly*, published today, reports that there were a total of 2,928 drug poisoning deaths in 2008, up 11 per cent on 2007 and the highest figure since 2001.

Today's figures show that 2,075 drug-related deaths were among men and 853 among women.

The figures for deaths where selected substances were mentioned on the death certificate show that almost a third were linked to heroin or morphine. These numbered 897 in 2008, up 8 per cent on the 2007 figure and the highest recorded since 2001.

There were 235 deaths involving cocaine in 2008, an increase of 20 per cent compared with 2007 and a continuation of the upward trend.

In 2008, the number of deaths involving antidepressants rose to 381 from 335 in 2007, although over the period from 2004 to 2008 as a whole there was a 19 per cent decrease in these deaths.

Also in today's *Health Statistics Quarterly*:

- *Cancer incidence and mortality in the United Kingdom and constituent countries 2004—06*. This report presents the numbers of newly-diagnosed cases of cancer and deaths from cancer in the UK during 2004-06. The findings show that around 147,000 males and 146,000 females on average were newly diagnosed with cancer each year during 2004-06. Around 80,000 males and 74,000 females died on average each year.
- *Unexplained deaths in infancy 2007*. Unexplained infant deaths are at their lowest level ever in England and Wales,

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according to new data for 2007. Provisional figures show that there were 264 unexplained infant deaths in England and Wales in 2007, down from 285 in 2006.

- *Deaths registered in England and Wales 2008*. This report presents provisional numbers of deaths registered in England and Wales in 2008 by age, sex and selected underlying causes of death.

## BACKGROUND NOTES

1. For further detail on each of the reports, please see the relevant Statistical Bulletin.  
Deaths relating to drug poisoning:  
[www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/dgdths0809.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/dgdths0809.pdf)  
Cancer incidence and mortality in the United Kingdom:  
[www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/canuk0809.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/canuk0809.pdf)  
Unexplained deaths in infancy: [www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/uinfmort0809.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/uinfmort0809.pdf)  
Death registrations in England and Wales:  
[www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/dthreg0809.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/dthreg0809.pdf)
2. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the Media Relations Office.
3. **National Statistics** are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2009.