

Odds of dying from accidental opioid overdose in the US surpass those of dying in car accident

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(CNN) — For the first time on record the odds of accidentally dying from an opioid overdose in the United States are now greater than those of dying in an automobile accident.

The grim finding comes from the [National Safety Council](#) which analyzed preventable injury and fatality statistics from 2017.

The NSC also found the lifetime odds of death for this form of overdose were greater than the risk of death from falls, pedestrian incidents, drowning and fire.



Examining a variety of federal and state data the NSC found the lifetime odds of dying from an



"Too many people still believe the opioid crisis is abstract and will not impact them. Many still do not see it as a major threat to them or their family," said Maureen Vogel, spokeswoman for the National Safety Council told CNN in an email. "These data show the gravity of the crisis. We have known for some time that opioid overdose is an everyday killer, and these odds illustrate that in a very jarring way."

The NSC highlights, however, that the odds given are statistical averages over the whole US population and do not necessarily reflect the chances of death for a particular person from a particular external cause. In addition they are lifetime odds, based on dividing the one-year odds by the life expectancy of a person born in 2017.

In 2017 preventable injury deaths were 169,936 -- an increase of 5.3% from the year before and a 96% increase compared to the figures in 1992.

"The data really underscore the importance of knowing the biggest risks to our safety," said Vogel.

"The Council calculates the Odds of Dying not to scare Americans but to empower them to make safer decisions and improve their chances of longevity."

The organization has highlighted these numbers in a bid to help prevent future deaths from preventable causes.

"For too long, preventable deaths and injuries have been called 'accidents,' implying unavoidable acts of God or fate that we are powerless to stop. This is simply not true," it wrote. "In the US, preventable injuries are at an all-time high."

Comparing 2017 to 2016, home and public deaths saw large increases of 6% or more being driven largely by an 11% increase in poisoning deaths (including opioid overdoses) and a 5% increase in fall deaths (primarily among the older population).

In 2018, [unintentional injury](#) was found to be the leading cause of death in the US, with more than 61,000 people aged 1 to 44 dying from this cause in 2016 -- nearly twice as many as from cancer and heart disease combined. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these deaths were predominantly a result of motor vehicle accidents and unintentional poisonings.

Last month the CDC reported life expectancy in the United States declined from 2016 to 2017 due to increased drug overdoses and suicides. [One study](#) also found that a growing number of children and

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adolescents in the United States are dying from opioid poisonings.

"What began more than 2 decades ago as a public health problem primarily among young and middle-aged white males is now an epidemic of prescription and illicit opioid abuse that is taking a toll on all segments of US society," the researchers wrote.

[Overdose deaths](#) reached a new high in 2017, topping 70,000, while the suicide rate increased by 3.7%, the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics reports. Illegally manufactured fentanyl was suggested to be the driving force.



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previous statement.

A separate [December report](#) found that in 2016, fentanyl surpassed heroin as the most commonly used drug in overdose deaths in the US.

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