

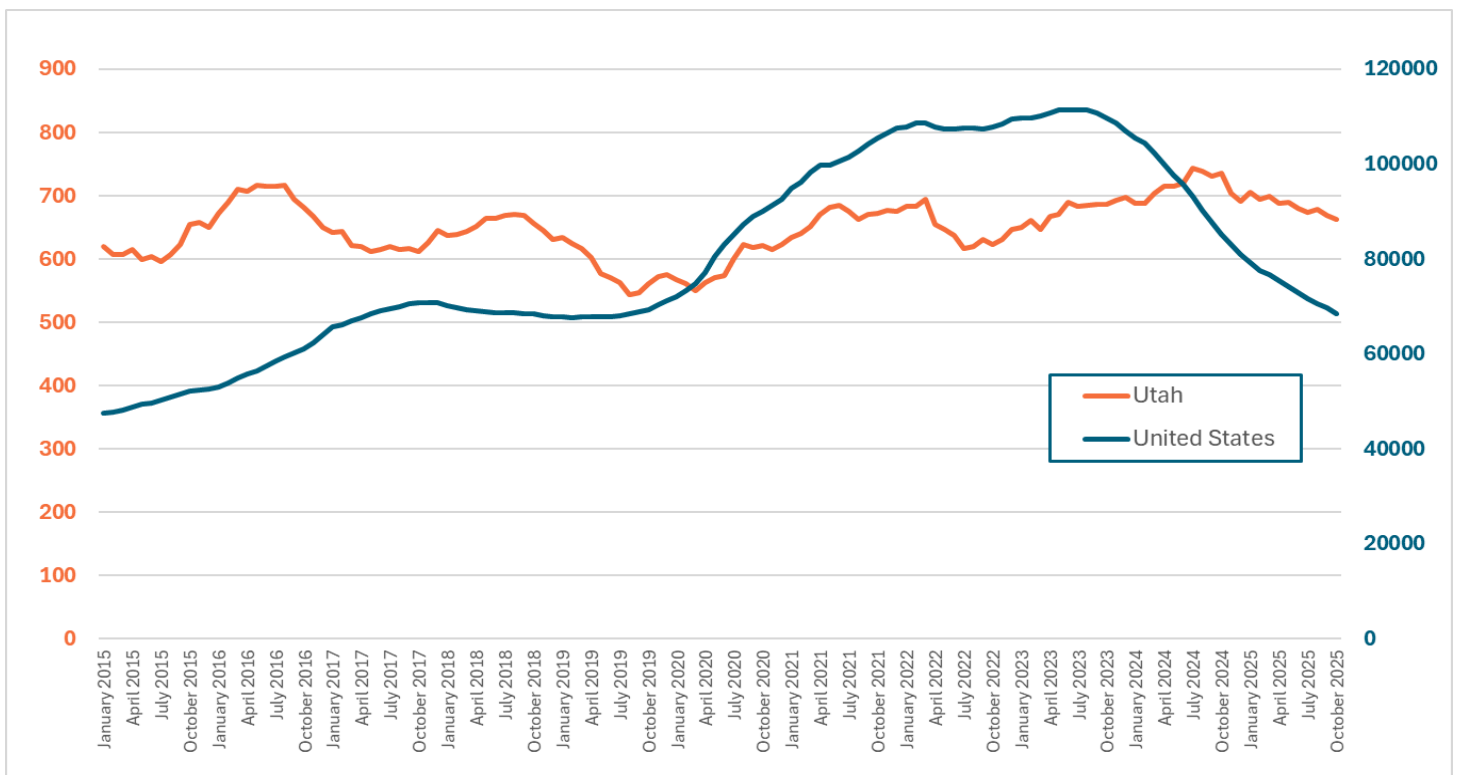
Drug overdose mortality trends in Utah and the United States



April 2026

This data brief provides an overview of trends in drug overdose deaths for Utah and the United States. Figure 1 presents the number of overdose deaths from January 2015 to October 2025 (most recent data available). The data trends at the state and national levels are quite different. At the national level, the number of drug overdoses increased rapidly from 2015 through 2023, but have dropped substantially since 2023. In Utah, the number of drug overdose deaths did not follow the same pattern. Instead, overdose deaths have increased and decreased over several cycles in a range between 540 and 750 deaths per year. More recently, there was an increasing trend from 2019 into 2024, and a slight decreasing trend evident after July 2024. While these recent declines are encouraging, drug overdose deaths clearly continue to be an important issue in Utah.

Figure 1. Number of drug overdose deaths - January 2015 to October 2025: Utah and the United States

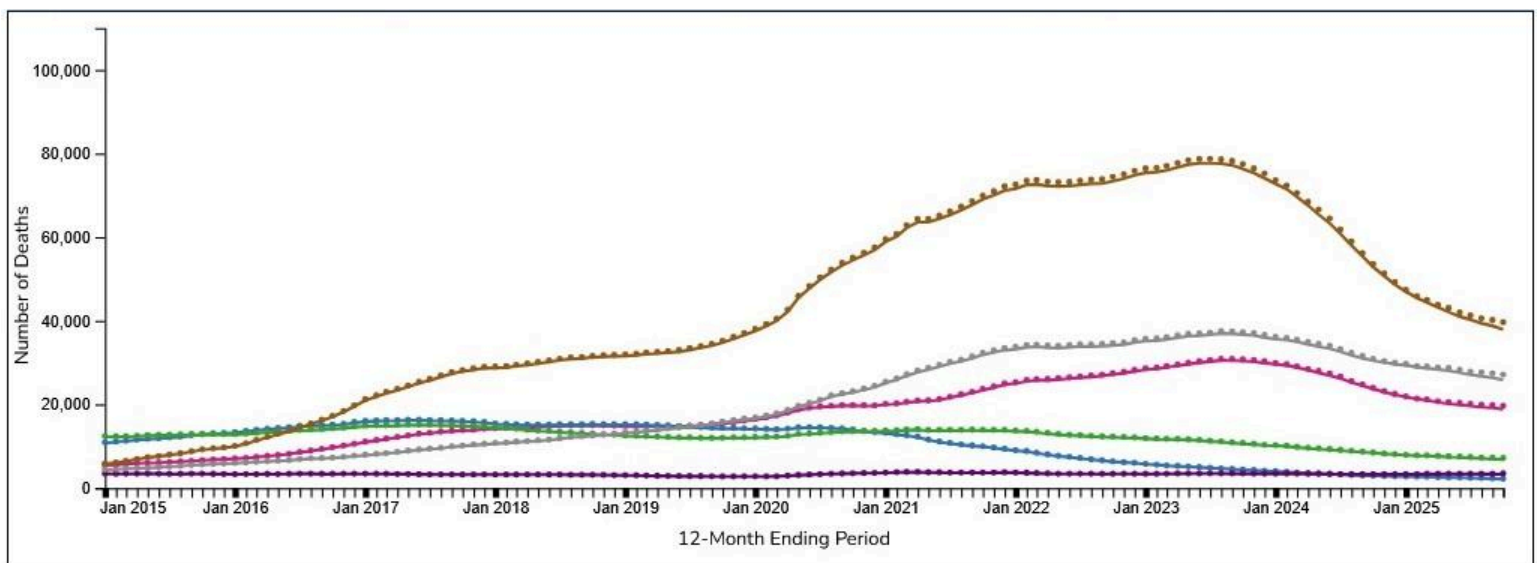


Drug overdoses by drug type

In order to effectively address drug overdose deaths, it is important to understand what substances are contributing. The charts below provide a breakout by drug type using coding from the International Classification of Diseases-10th Edition (ICD-10). ICD-10 doesn't have specific codes for every drug, therefore data are generally provided by different drug classes (cocaine, heroin and methadone have unique codes). For context, fentanyl is the primary driver in the "Synthetic opioid, excluding methadone" category, methamphetamine is the primary driver in the "Psychostimulants" category, and prescription opioid medications drive the "Natural and semi-synthetic opioids" category.

Figure 2 presents trends of drug types associated with drug overdose deaths for the United States. At the national level, overdose deaths were most frequently associated with prescription opioid medications (natural and semi-synthetic opioids) and heroin prior to 2016. At that time, the numbers of fentanyl related deaths (synthetic opioids) were relatively small, but on the rise. In 2016, fentanyl overtook other drug types and became the primary driver of a dramatic increase in overdose deaths that lasted into 2023, before a sharp decrease in overdose deaths began in the fall of 2023. While fentanyl has been the primary driver of overdose deaths at the national level over the past decade, there was also an increase in the number of deaths associated with methamphetamine (psychostimulants) and cocaine during this time frame as well. Fortunately, overdose deaths from these drugs were also on a decreasing trend starting in late 2023.

Figure 2. 12 month-ending provisional number of drug overdose deaths by drug/drug class: United States



Legend for Drug or Drug Class

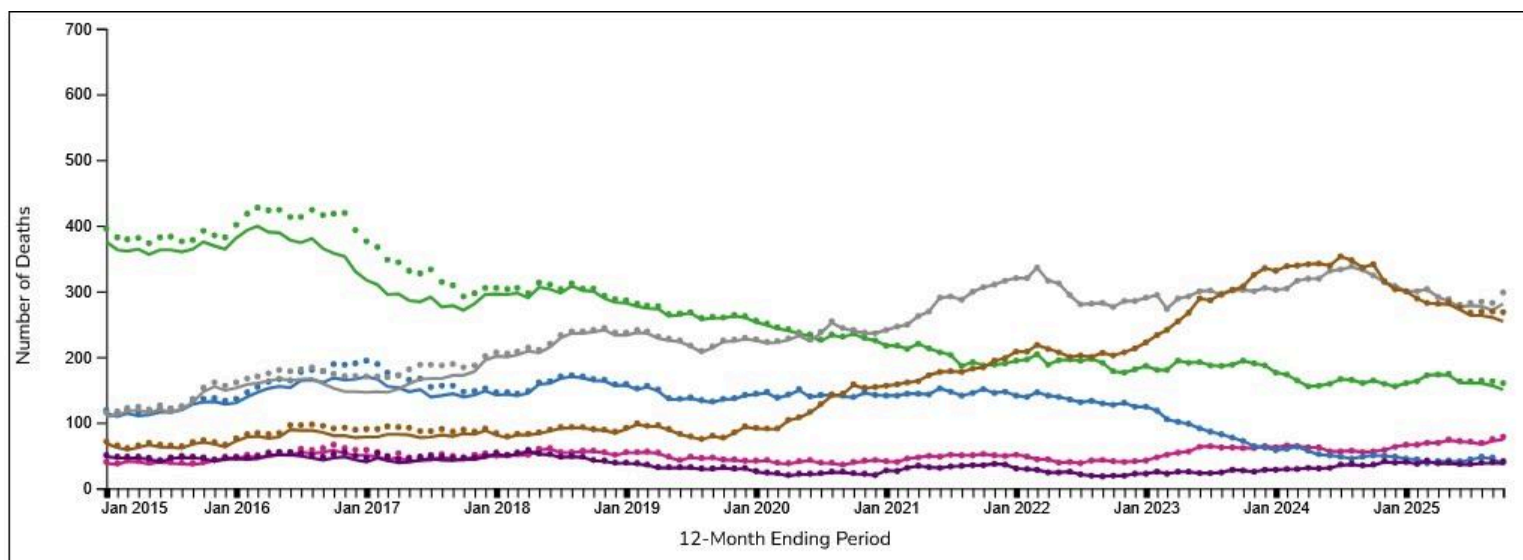
Cocaine (T40.5)	Synthetic opioids, excl. methadone (T40.4)	--- Reported Value
Heroin (T40.1)		○ Predicted Value
Methadone (T40.3)		
Natural & semi-synthetic opioids (T40.2)		
Psychostimulants with abuse potential (T43.6)		

Looking at Utah's drug overdose deaths by drug type reveals a different pattern from what was observed nationally (see Figure 3). Here in Utah, drug overdose deaths were most frequently associated with prescription opioid medications until much more recently (well into 2020). However, it is important to note that overdose deaths associated with prescription opioids began to decrease in 2016 and that continued into 2024, suggesting that state level efforts to reduce overdoses associated with prescription opioids (and prescription drug misuse in general) have had a positive impact.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for overdose deaths associated with methamphetamine and fentanyl. Methamphetamine related overdose deaths increased steadily from 2015 to 2024, becoming a major state level issue. In fact, methamphetamine was associated with more overdose deaths in Utah from 2020 to 2023 than any

other drug. Fentanyl related overdose deaths also increased substantially, but on a later timeline than at the national level. While fentanyl became the primary driver of overdose deaths nationally in 2016, it did not become a top three contributor to overdose deaths in Utah until the second half of 2020. However, fentanyl related deaths began increasing rapidly in Utah in 2020, overtaking prescription opioid related deaths in 2021, and catching methamphetamine in 2023. Since 2023, there has been a similar number of overdose deaths associated with fentanyl and methamphetamine. Fortunately, the number of deaths associated with both of these drugs decreased from 2024 through October 2025. Hopefully, this trend continues into the future.

Figure 3. 12 month-ending provisional number of drug overdose deaths by drug/drug class: Utah



Legend for Drug or Drug Class

Cocaine (T40.5)	Synthetic opioids, excl. methadone (T40.4)	---- Reported Value
Heroin (T40.1)		○ Predicted Value
Methadone (T40.3)		
Natural & semi-synthetic opioids (T40.2)		
Psychostimulants with abuse potential (T43.6)		

Data notes: These data were obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Vital Statistics System Provisional Drug Overdose Death Counts Dashboard website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

To explore these data on your own: 1) Go to the dashboard, then 2) Change the “Select a dashboard” option to “12 Month-ending Provisional Number of Drug Overdose Deaths by Drug or Drug Class...” (It is recommended to un-check the box next to “Opioids [T40-.0-T40.4, T40.6]” in the “Select specific drugs or drug classes” field as this is just the aggregate of all the opioid types combined, which is less useful and potentially distracting when you are wanting to compare/examine the specific types of opioids).

This data brief was prepared for the Utah State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup by Bach Harrison, LLC. To learn more about prevention efforts to reduce substance abuse and misuse, visit <https://utahprevention.org/>.