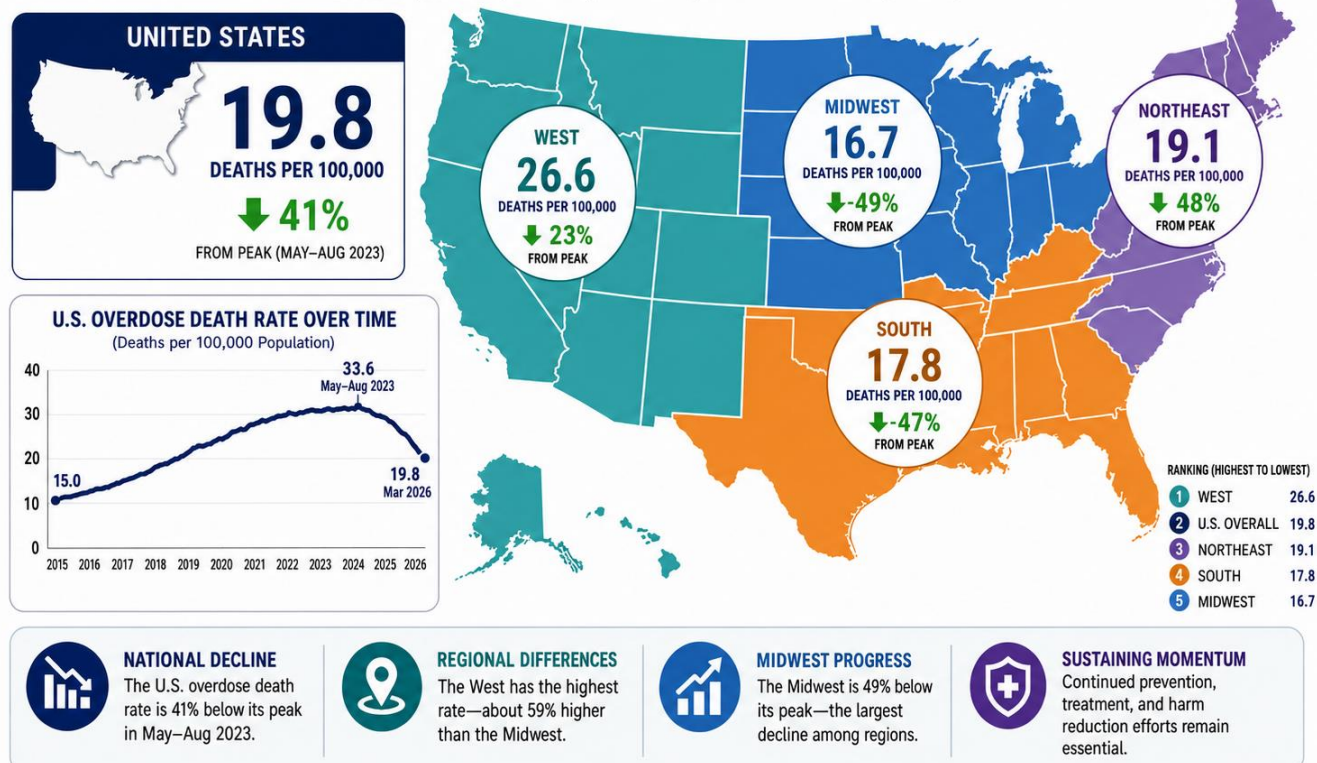


August 2026

A. Trend That WON'T BREAK

OVERDOSE DEATH RATE BY REGION

Deaths per 100,000 Population (12-Month Moving Sum)



Source: NVSS Provisional Overdose deaths, US Census for denominator and numerator is 12-month moving sum.

The U.S. recorded its **34th consecutive month of declining overdose death rates** in March 2026, the longest sustained downturn of the modern overdose crisis. The national rate fell to **19.8 deaths per 100,000**, down from a peak of **33.6 in May–August 2023**. That puts the country roughly back to **late 2016 levels** and below the 21.9 rate recorded when HHS declared the opioid crisis a **Public Health Emergency in October 2017**.

B. The “New” New Mexico: What Is Going On?

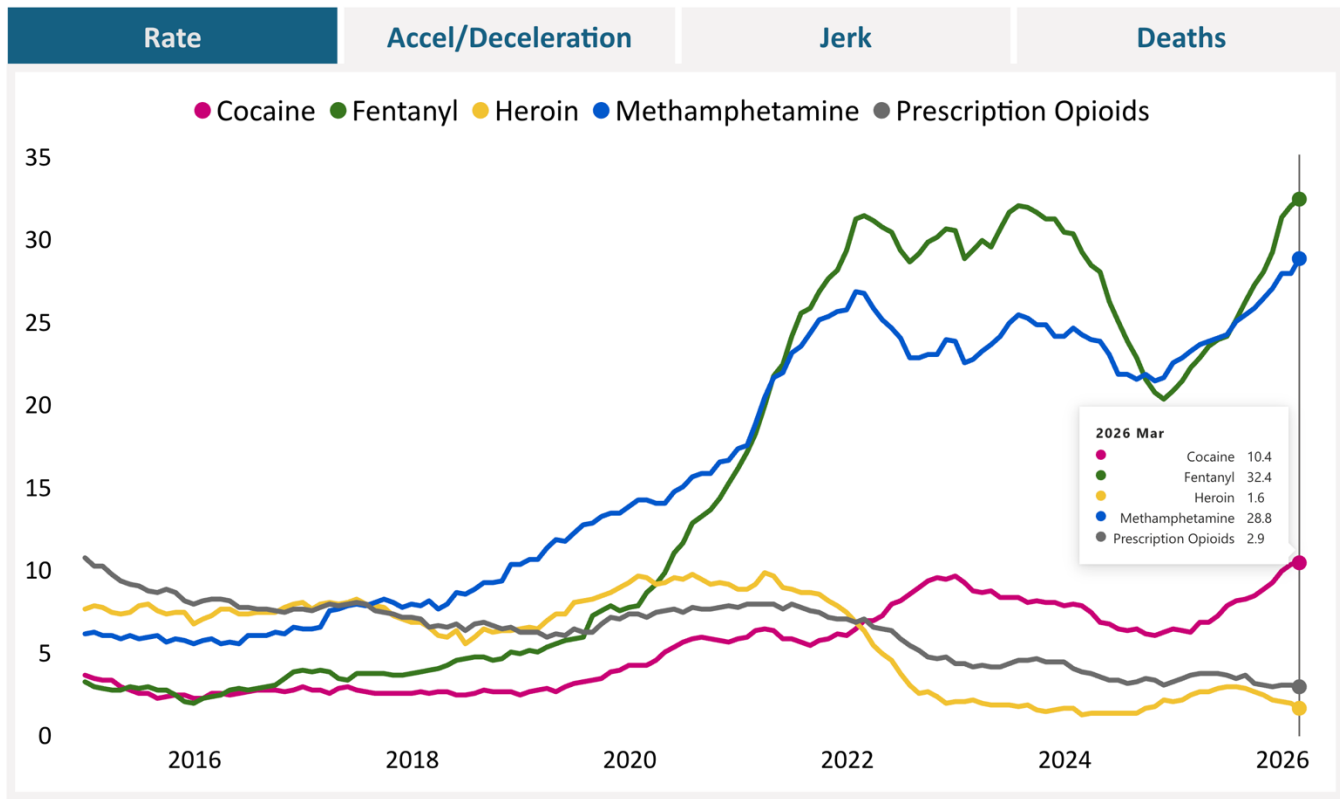
New Mexico is now in its **15th consecutive month of overdose death-rate growth**. After peaking in March 2022, rates decline, however, the rebound now looks less like a blip and more like a march toward a **new peak**. No other state is showing this same pattern.

The drug mix is also unusual. **Methamphetamine began accelerating sharply in 2018**, well before the pandemic. Fentanyl arrived later, consistent with the broader West, and overtook meth as the leading underlying cause of overdose death in **July 2021**. Meth moved back into first place in **October 2024**, only for fentanyl to retake the lead again recently.

Now both are climbing fast.

By **March 2026**, **fentanyl, methamphetamine, and cocaine each reached their highest overdose death rates on record in New Mexico**. Fentanyl deaths are now higher than at any point during the pandemic, meth remains close behind, and cocaine is also rising.

The overall overdose death rate has not yet surpassed the March 2022 peak because deaths involving **heroin and prescription opioids** were still contributing more heavily then. But the current trajectory is deeply concerning: **New Mexico is not simply relapsing into its old overdose crisis. It appears to be building a new one.**



C. Time Travel: Historical Twin.

There has been a lot of attention on whether overdose death rates have returned to **pre-pandemic levels**. Nationally, they already have. In fact, the current U.S. overdose death rate is now **below the rate recorded when HHS declared the opioid crisis a national Public Health Emergency in 2017**.

So we asked a different question: **How far back in time has each geography traveled?**

For each state and Census region, we identify the **historical twin date**: the last time before the peak when the overdose death rate was lower than today's rate. We then calculate the **time-travel gap**: the number of months between that twin date and March 2026.

The farther back the twin date, the more ground that geography has regained since its peak. Some states have traveled back **more than a decade**. Others have only moved back a few years.

HOW FAR BACK IN TIME HAS EACH GEOGRAPHY TRAVELED?

Twin date = the last pre-peak month when the overdose death rate was strictly lower than the March 2026 rate.

Twin rate = the overdose death rate at that twin date.

Rank	Geography	March 2026 Rate	Months Traveled Back	Twin Date	Twin Rate	Rank	Geography	March 2026 Rate	Months Traveled Back	Twin Date	Twin Rate
1	Arkansas	11.3	>134	Pre-2015	—	29	District of Columbia	46.8	78	Sep 2019	46.0
2	Kentucky	23.5	>134	Pre-2015	—	30	Louisiana	25.8	78	Sep 2019	25.5
3	Massachusetts	18.4	>134	Pre-2015	—	31	Maine	25.9	78	Sep 2019	24.9
4	Michigan	17.0	>134	Pre-2015	—	32	Iowa	10.5	77	Oct 2019	10.2
5	New Hampshire	18.0	>134	Pre-2015	—	33	Alabama	15.9	74	Jan 2020	15.6
6	Ohio	19.6	>134	Pre-2015	—	34	South Carolina	22.4	74	Jan 2020	22.3
7	Pennsylvania	21.3	>134	Pre-2015	—	35	North Dakota	13.9	73	Feb 2020	13.5
8	Rhode Island	16.9	>134	Pre-2015	—	36	Georgia	14.0	72	Mar 2020	13.7
9	Utah	18.2	>134	Pre-2015	—	37	Mississippi	14.1	72	Mar 2020	14.0
10	Midwest	16.7	131	Apr 2015	16.5	38	Nebraska	7.8	72	Mar 2020	7.6
11	Northeast	19.1	128	Jul 2015	18.7	39	Wyoming	14.9	69	Jun 2020	14.5
12	New Jersey	16.0	127	Aug 2015	15.5	40	Minnesota	17.0	68	Jul 2020	16.6
13	Connecticut	21.7	126	Sep 2015	20.8	41	Vermont	23.7	68	Jul 2020	23.4
14	Maryland	20.8	126	Sep 2015	20.2	42	California	22.3	66	Sep 2020	22.1
15	West Virginia	38.3	126	Sep 2015	37.7	43	Kansas	16.0	64	Nov 2020	15.3
16	Illinois	14.9	122	Jan 2016	14.7	44	Texas	14.0	64	Nov 2020	13.9
17	Indiana	18.9	122	Jan 2016	18.6	45	West	26.6	61	Feb 2021	26.1
18	Virginia	12.2	122	Jan 2016	12.0	46	Montana	15.3	59	Apr 2021	15.0
19	Florida	16.9	121	Feb 2016	16.7	47	Oklahoma	19.8	58	May 2021	19.7
20	Wisconsin	16.6	119	Apr 2016	16.4	48	Oregon	23.2	58	May 2021	22.4
21	Missouri	19.2	117	Jun 2016	19.0	49	South Dakota	9.4	56	Jul 2021	9.0
22	South	17.8	115	Aug 2016	17.6	50	Colorado	30.8	55	Aug 2021	30.7
23	Delaware	26.2	114	Sep 2016	25.8	51	New Mexico	50.0	50	Jan 2022	49.8
24	New York	18.6	113	Oct 2016	18.4	52	Washington	32.6	41	Oct 2022	32.3
25	U.S.	19.8	112	Nov 2016	19.5	53	Hawaii	21.1	35	Apr 2023	20.6
26	North Carolina	19.8	110	Jan 2017	19.8	54	Alaska	40.2	32	Jul 2023	39.3
27	Tennessee	27.8	93	Jun 2018	27.5	55	Nevada	42.3	32	Jul 2023	41.0
28	Idaho	13.3	89	Oct 2018	13.2	56	Arizona	37.7	8	Jul 2025	37.3

Darker blue = more time traveled back



Most time travel: 9 geographies fell below every observed rate since Jan 2015 (>134 months).

Least time travel: Arizona traveled back 8 months.

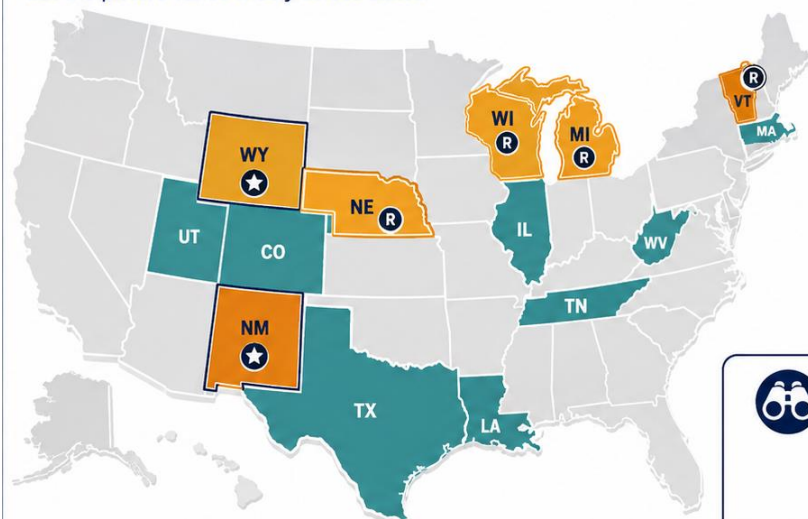
Source: NVSS provisional overdose deaths; 12-month moving sum; rates per 100,000 population. March 2026 used as the current rate.

Method: Twin date = most recent month before the geography's peak when the overdose death rate was strictly lower than the March 2026 rate.

1 Nation, 50 Drug Epidemics

C. National Decline. Uneven State Trajectories.

National and regional overdose trends continue to decline, but the picture varies widely across states.



Positive growth in March 2026
Increase in overdose deaths

Shifted from growth back to decline
Returned to decline in overdose deaths

No significant change / continue to decline
No growth or still declining

(R) Reversal to growth
Shifted back to growth after previous decline

(★) 2 consecutive months of growth
Growth in both February and March 2026



6

States in positive growth
MI, NE, NM, VT, WI, WY



4

Reversals to growth
MI, NE, VT, WI



2

Persistent growth
NM, WY



8

Returned to decline
CO, IL, LA, MA, TN, TX, UT, WV



Watch the Movement, Not the Rank

- ✓ New Mexico currently has the nation's highest overdose death rate.
- ✓ There are no winners or losers. Rankings are only a snapshot.
- ✓ What matters most is which states are moving into growth, which are returning to decline, and how quickly those shifts occur.

Highest overdose death rates, March 2026

- 1 New Mexico — 50.0 per 100,000
- 2 District of Columbia — 46.8
- 3 Nevada — 42.3

Lowest overdose death rates, March 2026

- 1 Nebraska — 7.7 per 100,000
- 2 South Dakota — 9.4
- 3 Iowa — 10.5

Source: NVSS Provisional Overdose Deaths; U.S. Census population estimates; monthly 12-month moving sum.

As of March 2026, **six states** were in positive growth, down from nine the previous month: **Michigan, Nebraska, New Mexico, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Wyoming**. **Four states** - **Michigan, Nebraska, Vermont, and Wisconsin** - shifted from decline to growth. These were **reversals**, not gradual changes. **Two states** - **New Mexico and Wyoming** - posted growth for two consecutive months, suggesting a more persistent trajectory. Meanwhile, **eight states returned to decline**: Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia. Fewer states are now moving in the wrong direction.

Watch the Movement, Not the Rank!

New Mexico currently has the nation's highest overdose death rate, but rankings are only a snapshot.

Highest rates: New Mexico (50.0 per 100,000), District of Columbia (46.8), and Nevada (42.3).

Lowest rates: Nebraska (7.7 per 100,000), South Dakota (9.4), and Iowa (10.5).

What matters most is **which states are moving into growth, which are returning to decline, and how quickly those shifts occur**.

Lag Time in Reporting

There is a 4-to-5-month lag because overdose deaths must first be investigated and certified by medical examiners, confirmed through toxicology testing, reported through local and state health departments, and then finalized in the national vital statistics system. Data released today on August 12, 2026, are only current through March 2026 due to the 4.5 lag time between death and reporting.