

May 2026

It's Official: The *Great Deceleration* Continues...

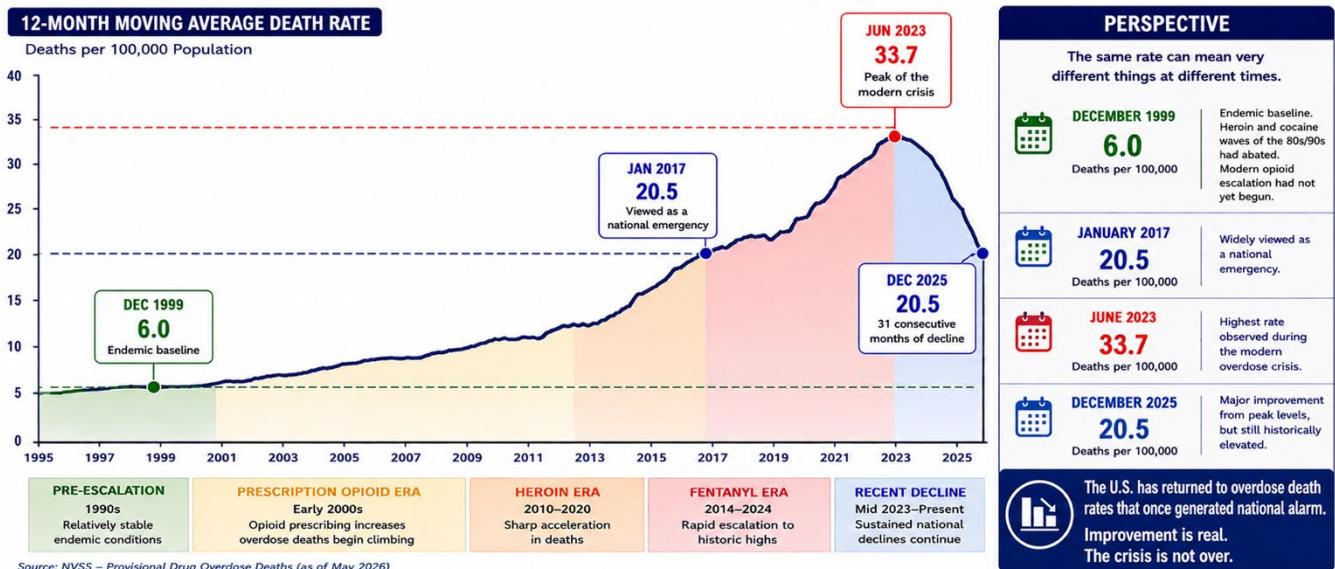
By Lori Ann Post

A. The CDC Just Dropped December 2025 Data!

We just recorded the 31st consecutive month of declining drug overdose death rates in December 2025, continuing the longest sustained downturn observed since the modern overdose crisis began. The national overdose death rate fell to 20.5 deaths per 100,000 population, down from a peak of 33.7 in June 2023. That represents a major public health improvement.

U.S. OVERDOSE DEATH RATES: THE BIG PICTURE

31 Straight Months of Decline. Historic Improvement. Still a Long Way to Go.



KEY TAKEAWAY: We are in the longest sustained decline of the modern crisis—31 months and counting. But today's "improved" rate was once considered a national emergency, and remains far above the pre-epidemic baseline.

Perspective matters! Conditions have improved substantially from the peak, but the nation is still operating in what was considered catastrophic territory.

B. One Nation. Fifty Different Overdose Crises!

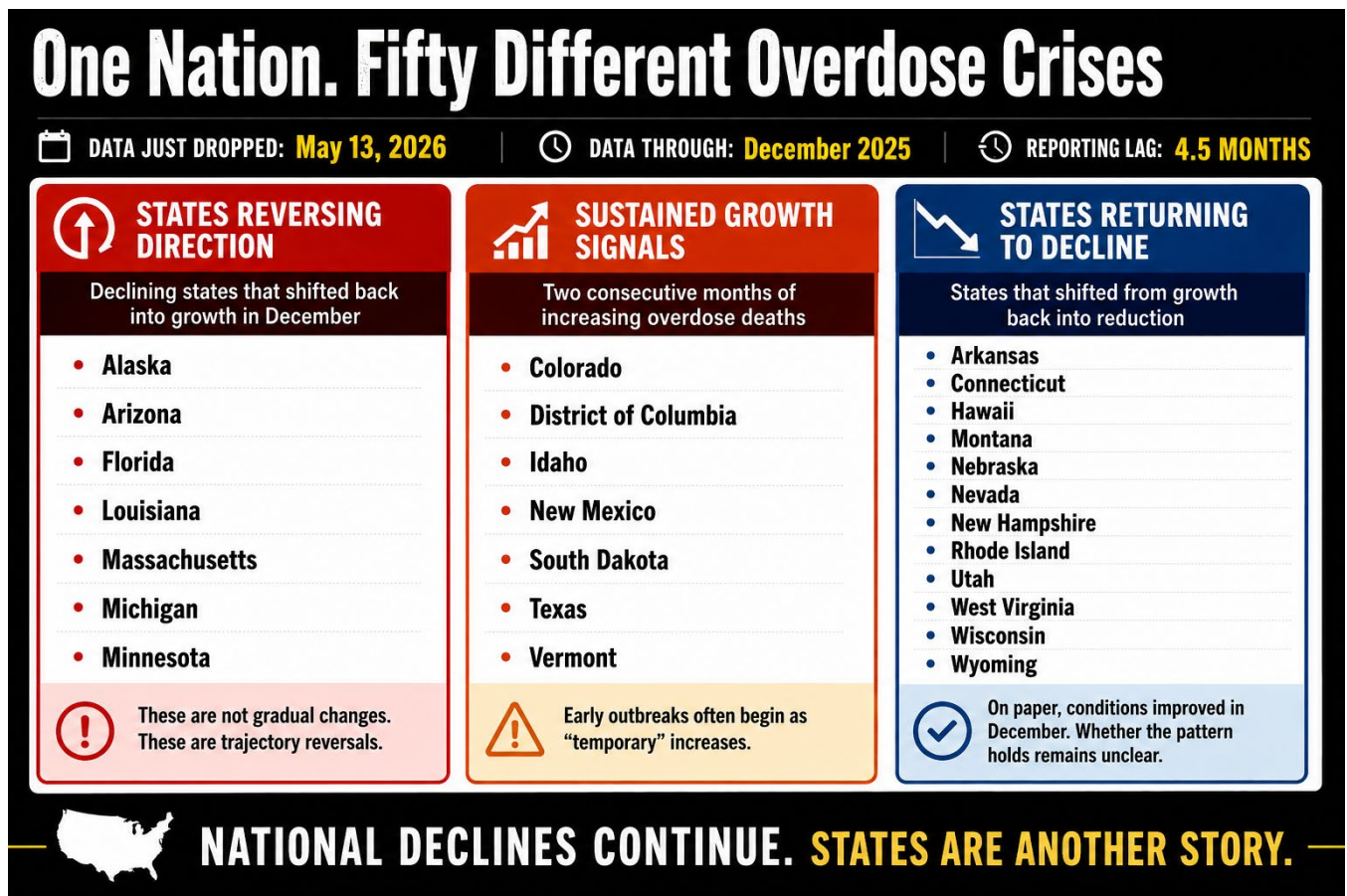
National and regional trends are clear. State trends are not.

As of December 2025, **14 states were in positive growth – which is a decrease in states with positive growth (there were 17 last month)**, meaning monthly overdose deaths were increasing, not declining: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont.

Seven states that were declining flipped to growth: Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota. These are not gradual shifts. They are reversals.

At the same time, a core group is showing persistence. **Seven states posted two consecutive months of growth:** Colorado, District of Columbia, Idaho, New Mexico, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont. That a trajectory.

Then there are the states moving in the opposite direction. **Twelve states that were positive flipped back to negative in December:** Arkansas, Connecticut, Hawaii, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming. On paper, that is improvement. Fewer states are in growth.



C. There Are No “Worst” States, Only Shifting Front Lines

The **District of Columbia** currently has the **highest overdose death rate** in the country.

But framing this as a ranking misses the point. There are no winners and losers here. The top spot is not fixed. It moves. Every month, some states rise to the top while others fall back. Some decline after peaking, only to be replaced by states moving in the opposite direction.

States are not solving the problem in isolation, and they are not failing in isolation either. They are cycling through phases of various epidemics, driven by shifting drug supply, changing use patterns, and local conditions. If one state improves, it does not mean the crisis is over. It often means the pressure has shifted somewhere else.

Watch the movement, not the rank. Because the line is always moving, and there is always another state stepping into it....

• **Highest Overdose Death Rate.**

As of December 2025, **D.C. (50.4 per 100,000 population), New Mexico (45.4 per 100,000 population), Alaska (44.7 per 100,000 population)** record the highest drug overdose death rate in the past year for the United States, based on the most recent available data.

• **Lowest Overdose Death Rate.**

As of December 2025, **Nebraska (7.2 per 100,000 population), South Dakota (9.8 per 100,000 population), Iowa (11.4 per 100,000 population)**, record the lowest drug overdose death rate in the

D. 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 May 13, 2026, are only current through December 2025 due to the 4.5 lag time between death and reporting.

