

Laxon, Lindsay

From: Laxon, Lindsay
Sent: Friday, October 21, 2022 1:04 PM
To: Laxon, Lindsay
Subject: Committee to Study Court-ordered Treatment for Substance Use Disorder
Attachments: Copy of Alcohol Deaths tables_2022 request.xlsx

From: Marcella Sorg <mhsorg@maine.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, September 28, 2022 4:08 PM
To: Smith, Gordon <gordon.smith@maine.gov>
Cc: Laxon, Lindsay <Lindsay.Laxon@legislature.maine.gov>
Subject: Re: Committee to Study Court-ordered Treatment for Substance Use Disorder

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

Hi Lindsay,

I am attaching an Excel spreadsheet with data on deaths due to alcohol 2015-2020. These are the most recent data available from the Maine Office of Data, Research, and Vital Records. There is one tab for each of the years. The data are divided into several categories:

- Deaths due directly to alcohol (Direct Causes)
- Deaths due indirectly to alcohol (Indirect Causes)
- Unintentional injuries (accidents)
- Intentional injuries (suicides and homicides). The indirect, unintentional, and intentional causes use a multiplier or algorithm called an "attributable fraction." These causes also specify what age groups to apply the attributable fraction to. Multiplying by this attributable fraction produces an estimate of the proportion of deaths within that cause that can be attributable to alcohol (even though the death certificate may not actually say the cause was alcohol. For example cirrhosis of the liver is sometimes indirectly caused by alcohol. That is, the death certificate says the cause of death was cirrhosis, but alcohol probably caused the cirrhosis. Looking on the tab for the 2020 deaths, line 29, you can see that attributable fraction of cirrhosis deaths due to alcohol in column C is .35 (35%) applied to deaths among those over the age of 35 (column D), the total number of cirrhosis deaths (column E), which yields 25.5 males, 12.5 females, a total of 38 deaths.

If you let me know exactly what you need for data on the drug deaths I can provide you with those figures as well. In the absence of that information, I can tell you the following based on data from the Office of Chief Medical Examiner:

- The estimated number of drug deaths for 2021 is currently 631. Approximately 87% of drug deaths are due to opioids. Approximately 77% of the deaths are due to fentanyl alone or in combination. About a third of these deaths had a prior nonfatal overdose. The 2021 report of confirmed drug deaths will be out in October. The August 2022 report of suspected and confirmed drug deaths will probably be out by Friday.
- Alcohol is mentioned as a co-intoxicant cause of death on many of Maine's drug deaths. That is, the death certificate mentions drug intoxication that caused the death and alcohol is also mentioned along with drugs as one of these toxic substances. In 2021, the estimated number of these deaths is 114, which is estimated at 18% of all drug deaths. In all of those cases alcohol was mentioned on the death certificate as a cause of death in combination with one or more drugs.
- The data on the attached Excel spreadsheet are from Vital Records and do not overlap with these data from the Office of Chief Medical Examiner.

I'm happy to try to answer any other questions you have. The website mainedrugdata.org has the up-to-date drug death data.

Marci Sorg

--

Marcella H. Sorg
Research Professor
Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center
Department of Anthropology
Climate Change Institute
University of Maine
5784 York Complex #4
Orono ME 04469-5784
207-581-2496
mhsorg@maine.edu