

# Drug Related Deaths in Southwark JSNA Factsheet

*Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment*

People & Health Intelligence

Southwark Public Health Department

10 August 2017

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## GATEWAY INFORMATION

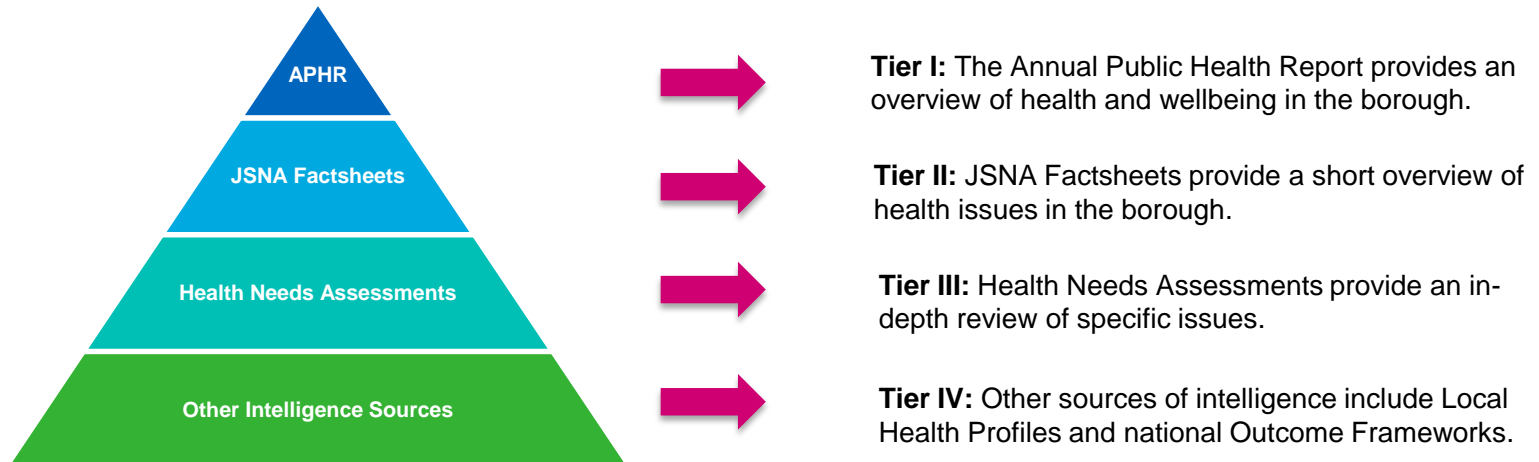
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# JSNA Factsheets form part of Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process

## BACKGROUND

**The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is the ongoing process through which we seek to identify the current and future health and wellbeing needs of our local population.**

- The purpose of the JSNA is to inform and underpin the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and other local plans that seek to improve the health of our residents
- The JSNA is built from a range of resources that contribute to our understanding of need. In Southwark we have structured these resources around 4 tiers:



- This document forms part of those resources
- All our resources are available via: [www.southwark.gov.uk/JSNA](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/JSNA)

# JSNA Factsheets are data packs designed to provide a short summary of key facts on specific topic areas

## AIMS & OBJECTIVES

**This factsheet aims to provide an overview of drug related deaths in Southwark. The document is structured into a number of sections, covering:**

- The definition of drug related deaths
- The national picture relating to drug related deaths
- The local picture relating to drug related deaths
- A summary of key findings

**The purpose of this document is to support the work of the Southwark drug related death panel**

# Drug misuse is a significant cause of premature mortality in the UK and is a key measure in the PHOF

## INTRODUCTION

The Public Health Outcome Framework monitors deaths from drug misuse, however it is important to note there is also a broader definition of deaths from drug poisoning that is also used when presenting statistics on drug related deaths.

Classification	Definition	Includes	Excludes
<b>Death from drug misuse</b>	1) A death where the underlying cause is drug abuse or drug dependence; or  2) A death where the underlying cause is drug poisoning and where any of the substances are controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.	Deaths due to accidents and suicides that involve drug poisonings, as well as deaths from drug abuse and drug dependence.	Deaths from other adverse effects of drugs e.g.: anaphylactic shock, or other types of accidents e.g.: a car crash where the driver was under the influence of drugs.  Alcohol and tobacco.
<b>Death from drug poisoning</b>	Drug poisoning deaths involve a broader spectrum of substances, including legal and illegal drugs, prescription type deaths (either prescribed to the individual or obtained by other means), and over-the-counter medicines.	May include deaths caused by complications of drug abuse e.g.: deep vein thrombosis, septicaemia, or heart disease due to chronic cocaine use, rather than acute drug overdose.	

### References

- Office for National Statistics (2016) Deaths related to drug poisoning in England & Wales

# More than two in three drug poisoning deaths in England and Wales are from drug misuse

## THE NATIONAL PICTURE

There were 3,674 drug poisoning deaths registered in 2015, with 67% due to drug misuse i.e.: involving illegal drugs

- Males accounted for three quarters of drug misuse deaths in England & Wales
- The drug misuse mortality rate has increased significantly over the past 3 years, particularly among males
- It is possible the greater proportion of accidental poisoning deaths in males contributes to this steeper rise, along with differences in the types of controlled drugs used by males and females

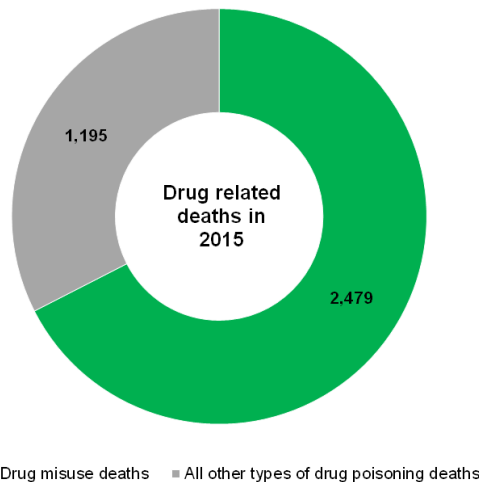


Figure 1: Drug related deaths in England & Wales (2015) by category<sup>1</sup>

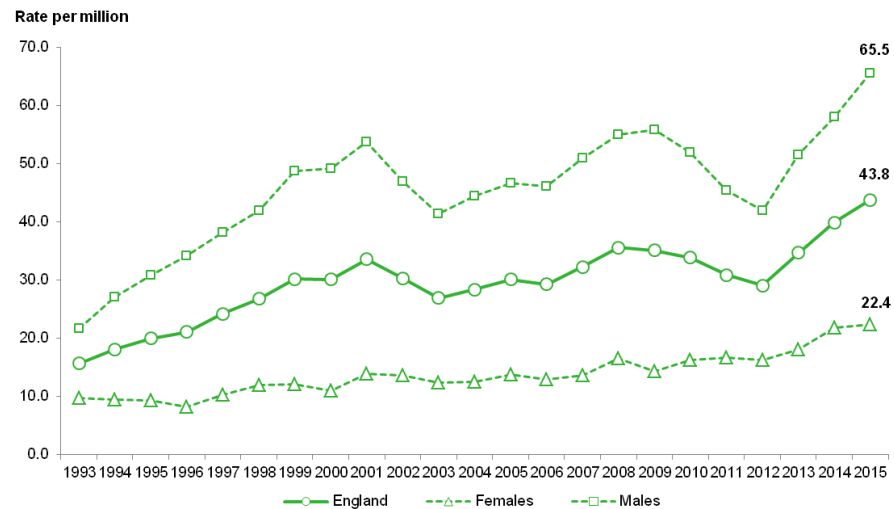


Figure 2: Directly age standardised mortality rate from drug misuse in England & Wales<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. Office for National Statistics (2016) Deaths related to drug poisoning in England & Wales

# Deaths involving heroin and/or morphine doubled in the last 3 years and are now the highest on record

## THE NATIONAL PICTURE

**Data on deaths involving specific substances is based only on information reported on the coroner's death certificate and need to be interpreted with caution.**

- Deaths involving heroin and/or morphine doubled between 2012 and 2015
- The Serious Organised Crime Agency reports there was a “heroin drought” in the UK during 2011-12 and 2012-13 which had the affect of reducing the purity of street heroin. This reduction in purity has since reversed to “pre-drought” levels, which may partly explain the increase in heroin-related deaths
- Deaths involving cocaine have increased for 4 years in a row, reaching an all time high
- Over half of drug deaths involve more than 1 drug and / or alcohol

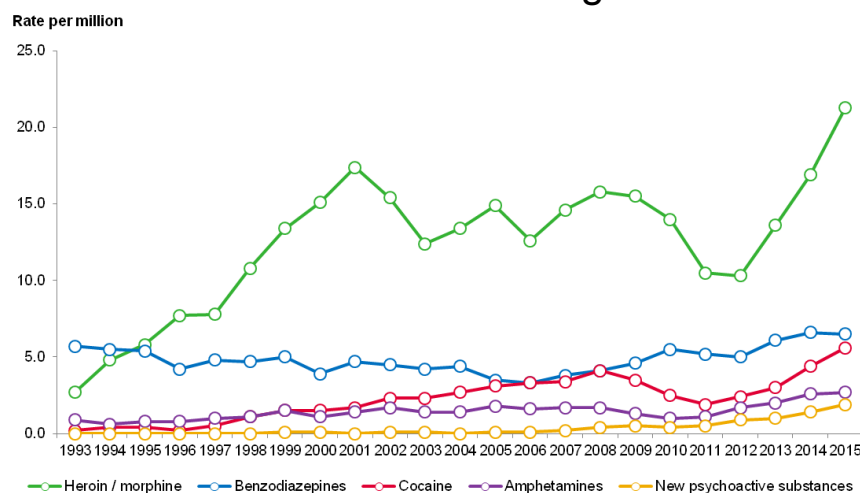


Figure 3: Directly age standardised mortality rate for selected substances in England & Wales<sup>1</sup>

### References

1. Office for National Statistics (2016) Deaths related to drug poisoning in England & Wales

# Age is also a factor behind the increasing number of deaths from drug misuse

## THE NATIONAL PICTURE

**As heroin users are getting older and they often have other conditions, such as lung disease and hepatitis, that make them particularly vulnerable.<sup>1</sup>**

- Mortality rates are highest among those aged between 30 and 49 years old
- In addition to the long term increase in mortality rates among this age group there has been a particularly sharp increase in the mortality rate since 2012
- There is also a long term increase in mortality among those aged 50 to 69 years
- Recording of COPD and diseases of the liver on drug misuse death certificates has increased significantly since 2001, underlining the increasing prevalence of poor physical health among those dying from drug misuse

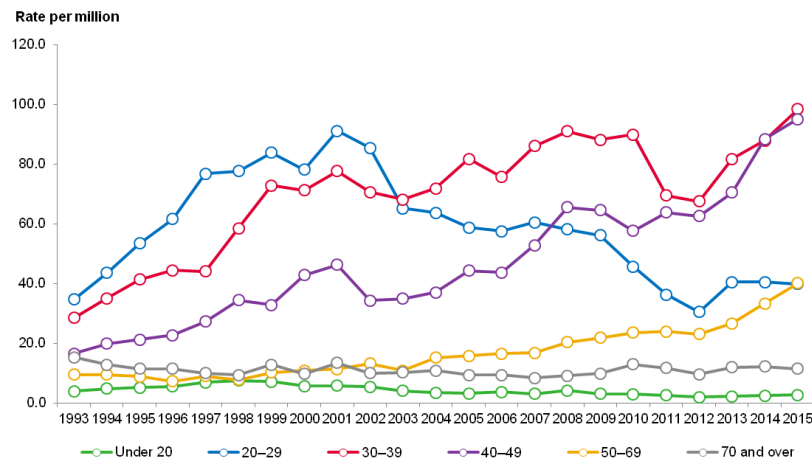


Figure 4: Drug misuse deaths in England & Wales by underlying cause in 2015<sup>1</sup>

### References

1. Office for National Statistics (2016) Deaths related to drug poisoning in England & Wales



# Accidental poisonings account for the majority of drug misuse deaths in England & Wales

## THE NATIONAL PICTURE

**In both males and females, the largest proportion of drug misuse deaths were caused by accidental poisoning.**

- The proportion of drug misuse deaths among males caused by accidental poisoning increased significantly between 2014 and 2015, whereas levels among females remained stable
- The proportion of drug misuse deaths among females that are suicides is significantly higher than among males, and reached the highest level recorded in 2015

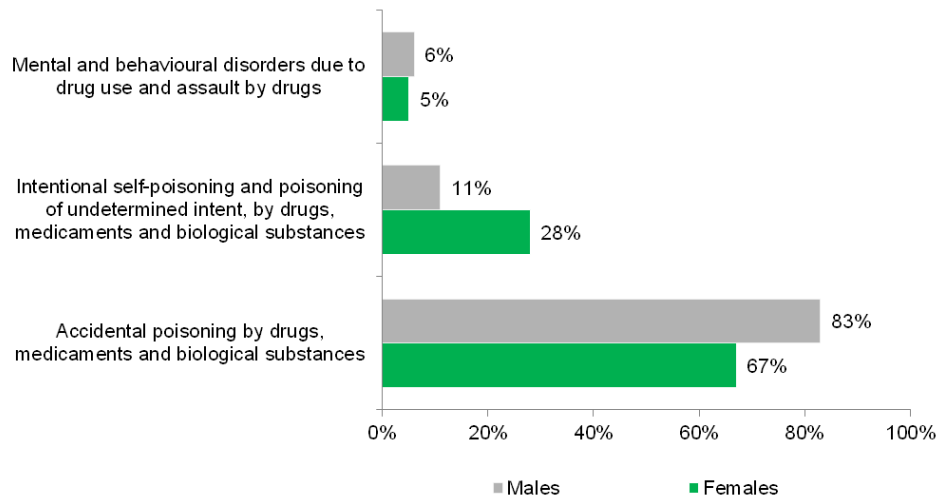


Figure 5: Drug misuse deaths in England & Wales by underlying cause in 2015<sup>1</sup>

### References

1. Office for National Statistics (2016) Deaths related to drug poisoning in England & Wales

# The rate of deaths from drug misuse in Southwark is comparable to London and national levels

## THE PICTURE IN SOUTHWARK

**There were 35 deaths registered in Southwark over the 2013-15 period with an underlying cause of drug misuse, equating to under 12 cases per year.**

- The number of drug misuse deaths in Southwark has increased in recent years, mirroring the national trend
- While there has been an increase in drug misuse deaths in the borough, the change is not statistically significant

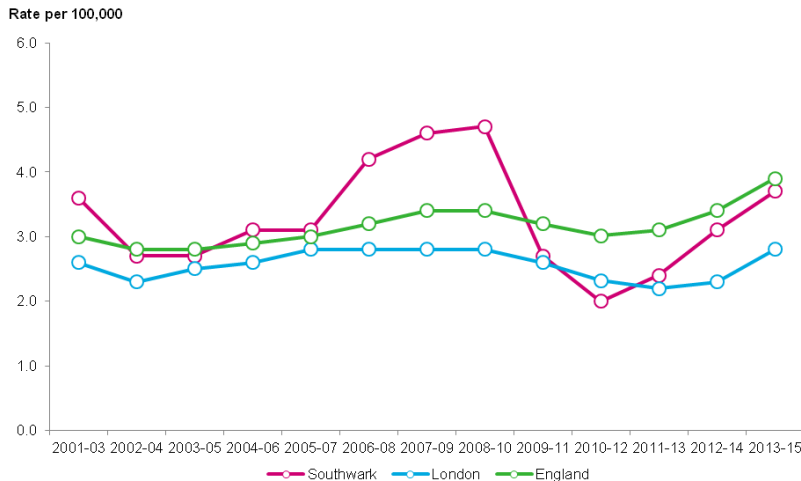


Figure 6: Directly age standardised mortality rate per 100,000 population for deaths related to drug misuse<sup>1</sup>

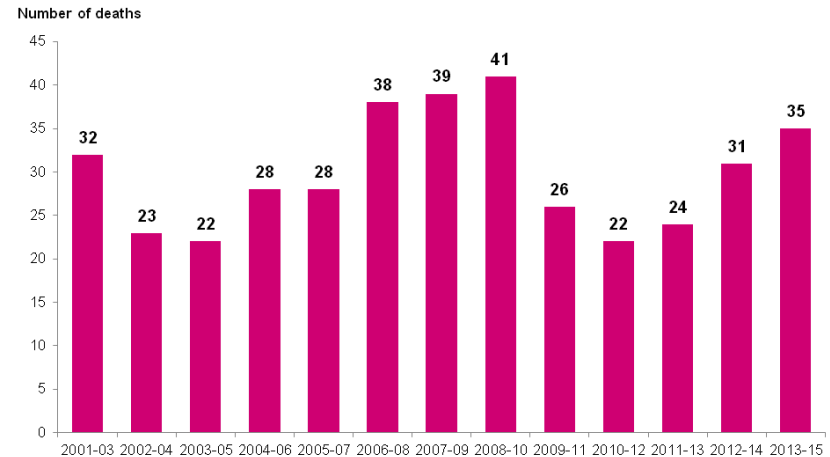


Figure 7: Number of deaths related to drug misuse in Southwark (3 year pooled figures)<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. PHE (2017) Public Health Outcomes Framework. Indicator 2.15iv – Deaths from drug misuse.

# Drug use and drug dependence are significant causes of premature mortality

## SUMMARY & KEY FINDINGS

### **Drug use and drug dependence are significant causes of premature mortality, with the number of cases increasing in recent years**

- There were just under 2,500 drug misuse deaths in England & Wales in 2015
- Males account for three quarters of drug misuse deaths
- The national drug misuse mortality rate has increased significantly over the past 3 years, particularly among males
- Deaths involving heroin and/or morphine doubled between 2012 and 2015 – though data on deaths involving specific drugs needs to be interpreted with caution.
- Over half of drug deaths involve more than 1 drug and / or alcohol
- Mortality rates are highest among those aged between 30 and 49 years old
- Recording of COPD and diseases of the liver on drug misuse death certificates has increased significantly since 2001, underlining the increasing prevalence of poor physical health among those dying from drug misuse
- In both males and females, the largest proportion of drug misuse deaths were caused by accidental poisoning
- There were 35 deaths registered in Southwark over the 2013-15 period with an underlying cause of drug misuse, equating to under 12 cases per year
- While there has been an increase in drug misuse deaths in the borough, the change has not been statistically significant

#### References

1. PHE (2017) Public Health Outcomes Framework. Indicator 2.15iv – Deaths from drug misuse.
2. Office for National Statistics (2016) Deaths related to drug poisoning in England & Wales

**Find out more at**  
[southwark.gov.uk/JSNA](https://southwark.gov.uk/JSNA)

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