



## Drugs in New York City: Misuse, Morbidity and Mortality Update

- More than one million New Yorkers (16%) report using [illicit drugs](#) or medications in a manner other than prescribed in the past year. The national rate is 15%.<sup>1</sup>
- Death from unintentional drug poisoning decreased by 24% between 2005 and 2009.<sup>5</sup>
- Despite an overall decrease in unintentional drug poisoning deaths, benzodiazepine and [opioid analgesic](#) poisoning deaths increased by 17% and 20% respectively.<sup>5</sup>

### Drug use in New York City<sup>1</sup>

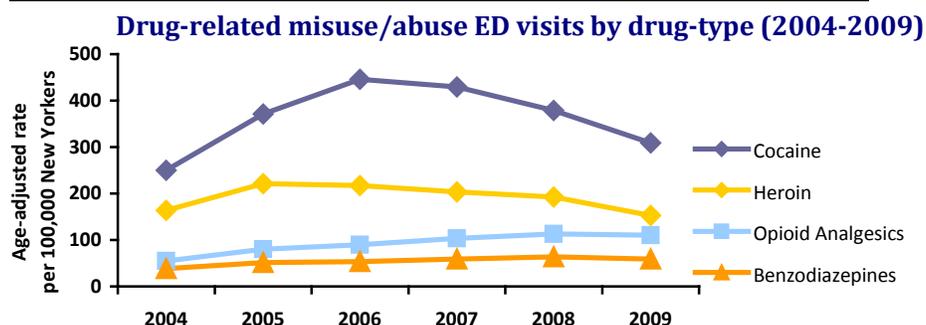
- In 2008-2009, marijuana use was reported by approximately 850,000 (14%) New Yorkers aged 12 and older in the past year.
- Also in 2008-2009, 3% of New Yorkers reported past year cocaine use, 1.4% reported benzodiazepine use, and 0.1% reported heroin use. Opioid analgesics were reported by 4% of New Yorkers and were the most commonly reported drug after marijuana.

### Drug use among adolescents<sup>2,3</sup>

- In 2008, 14% of youth in grades seven through 12 in New York City public and private schools reported any drug use (excluding alcohol and tobacco) in the past month, compared with 18% of youth in New York State overall.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2009, lifetime cocaine use among New York City public high school youth in grades nine through 12 was 4%, while 15% reported marijuana use in the past month.<sup>3</sup>

### Drug-related misuse/abuse emergency department visits<sup>4</sup>

- Drug-related emergency department (ED) visits increased 40% between 2004 (33,000) and 2009 (47,000), rising from 408 to 556 visits per 100,000 New Yorkers.
- Drug-related ED visits in 2009 were most common among adults aged 35 to 44 (1,118/100,000).
- The drug most commonly reported in drug-related ED visits was cocaine (309/100,000 in 2009). Between 2004 and 2009, benzodiazepine-related ED visits increased 59% from 38/100,000 to 59/100,000 and opioid analgesic-related visits doubled, from 55/100,000 to 110/100,000.



Source: Drug Abuse Warning Network; Analysis by SAMHSA, 2009

### Data Sources

**<sup>1</sup>NSDUH:** The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) conducted annually by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA] includes a representative sample of NYC residents aged 12 years and older. Two-year averages are presented.

**<sup>2</sup>YDS:** The Youth Development Survey (YDS) conducted by the NYS Office of Alcohol Substance Abuse Services assesses risk (including substance use) and protective factors for academic success among public and private school students in grades seven through 12. Only 2008 data are presented.

**<sup>3</sup>YRBS:** The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), conducted in collaboration by the Health Department and the NYC Department of Education, is an anonymous, biennial study of NYC public high school students. Only 2009 data are presented.

**<sup>4</sup>DAWN:** The Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), managed by SAMHSA, is a database of drug-related visits to hospital emergency departments (EDs), including 61 NYC EDs. Data were weighted to produce citywide estimates of drug-related ED visits for 2004-2009.

**<sup>5</sup>OV5/OCME:** Mortality data were collected through an in-depth review of data and charts from the Health Department's Bureau of Vital Statistics and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for 2005-2009. Rates are age adjusted to the year 2000 standard population, except those for specific age groups.

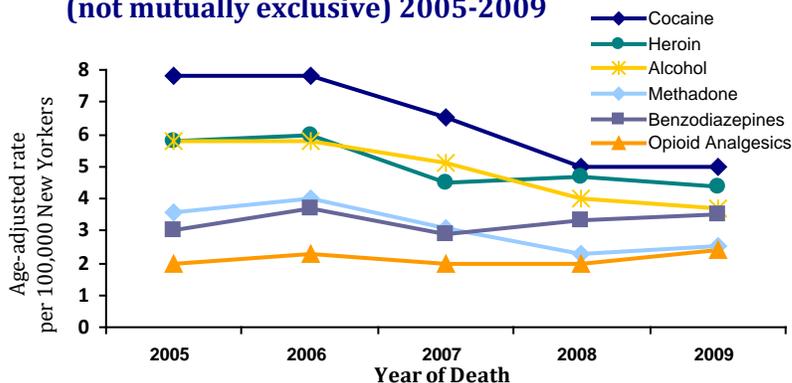
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## Unintentional drug poisoning deaths<sup>5</sup>

- Nearly all (98%) unintentional drug poisoning deaths (3,589) involved more than one type of drug.
- More than one quarter (26%) of decedents had three types of drugs in their systems when they died. The most common drug combinations involved cocaine, heroin and alcohol.
- New Yorkers who died of an unintentional drug poisoning were more likely to be aged 45-54 and reside in low-income neighborhoods.

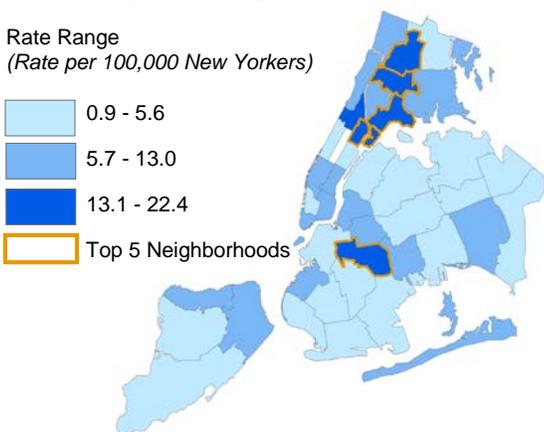
**Rates of unintentional drug poisoning by drug type, (not mutually exclusive) 2005-2009**



Source: Office of Vital Statistics & Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 2005-2009

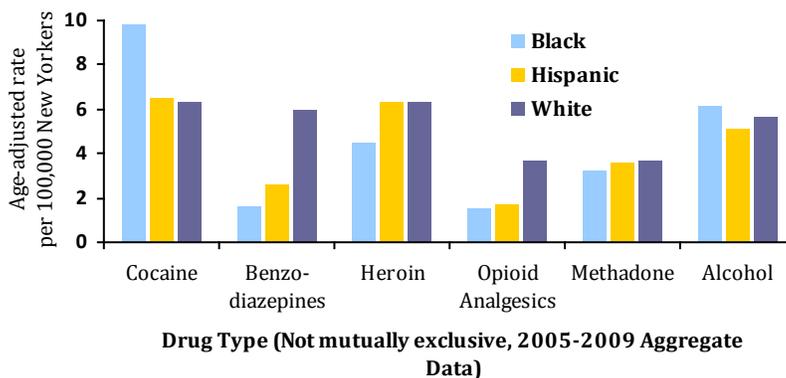
- Opioid analgesic poisoning deaths increased 20% from 2.0/100,000 in 2005 to 2.4/100,000 in 2009.
- Benzodiazepines were involved in 38% of the unintentional poisoning deaths in 2009. Alprazolam (Xanax<sup>®</sup>) was the most common benzodiazepine, present in 43% of those deaths.
- Among the neighborhoods with the five highest rates of unintentional drug poisoning deaths, three were low-income and in the Bronx.
- Cocaine poisoning was highest among blacks (9.8/100,000); benzodiazepine poisoning was highest among whites (6.0/100,000).

### Rates of unintentional drug poisoning deaths by NYC neighborhood, 2005-2009



Source: Office of Vital Statistics & Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 2005-2009

### Rates of unintentional drug poisoning by drug type and race/ethnicity, 2005-2009



Source: Office of Vital Statistics & Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 2005-2009

**Definitions:** The United Hospital Fund (UHF) classifies NYC into 42 neighborhoods, comprised of contiguous zip codes. Income is defined by the percent of households below 200% of the federal poverty level (Census 2000) and separated into three groups: low-income (43%-70%), medium-income (30%-43%) and high-income (13%-30%). Benzodiazepines are central nervous system depressants used primarily to treat anxiety, sleep disorders and muscle spasms. Opioid analgesics are prescription medications derived from both natural and synthetic opioids used to treat pain. For the OVS/OCME data, methadone is analyzed separately. **Notes:** Please see the Epi data brief highlighting [opioid analgesic](#) use in NYC, published in May 2011 for more detail.

#### MORE New York City Health Data and Publications

- For complete tables of data presented in this Brief, visit [www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/datatable10.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/datatable10.pdf)
- For more information on drug use, check out the following Health Department resources: [Help to Stop Using](#); [Vital Signs: Illicit Drug Use in New York City](#); and [Opioid Analgesic Epi Data Brief](#)
- Visit EpiQuery – the Health Department’s online, interactive health data system at [www.nyc.gov/health/EpiQuery](http://www.nyc.gov/health/EpiQuery)