Opioids in Cowlitz County – Opioid-induced deaths

Key findings

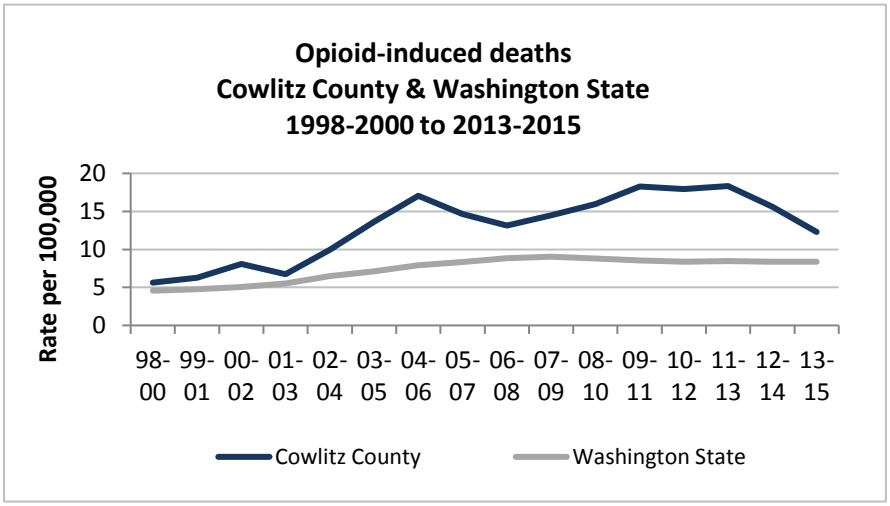
- Cowlitz County's opioid-induced death rate is 12 per 100,000, which is **similar** to the state's rate of 8 per 100,000.
- Cowlitz County's opioid-induced death rate was **higher** than the state's for most of the early-mid 2000's through the early-mid 2010's and was **similar** before that.
- An average of 13 people die each year from opioids in Cowlitz County.
- Cowlitz County's **opioid-induced death rate tripled** from the late 90's to the mid-00's while the state's rate increased by two-thirds. Cowlitz County's rate has been **stable** since then, while the state's has been slowly decreasing.
- Over half of drug-induced deaths are due to opioids in both Cowlitz County and Washington State.
- Opioids cause more deaths than falls, breast cancer, prostate cancer, or skin cancer, individually; or more than traffic accidents, homicide, drowning, and HIV combined.
- The following groups have high rates of opioid-induced deaths in Washington State, in order of severity:
  - **Native American residents**
  - **45-54-year-olds**
  - **Males**
  - **White residents**
- Cowlitz County has high opioid-induced death rates among **25-34-year-olds** and **45-54-year-olds**.
- **Residents of areas with high levels of poverty** or **low levels of education** have high drug-induced death rates in Washington State.

In 2013-15, Cowlitz County's opioid-induced death rate was 12 per 100,000, which was **similar** to the state's rate of 8 per 100,000. While the rate for this most recent time period was similar to the state's, Cowlitz County's rate was **higher** than the state's from 2003-05 through 2012-14, and was **similar** before that.

An average of 13 people died each year from opioids in Cowlitz County from 2013 to 2015.

Cowlitz County's **opioid-induced death rate tripled** from 1998-2000 to 2004-2006, while the state's rate increased by two-thirds. Cowlitz County's rate has remained stable since then, while the state's rate has been slowly decreasing since 2006-2008.

Over half of drug-induced deaths are due to opioids in both Cowlitz County and Washington State.



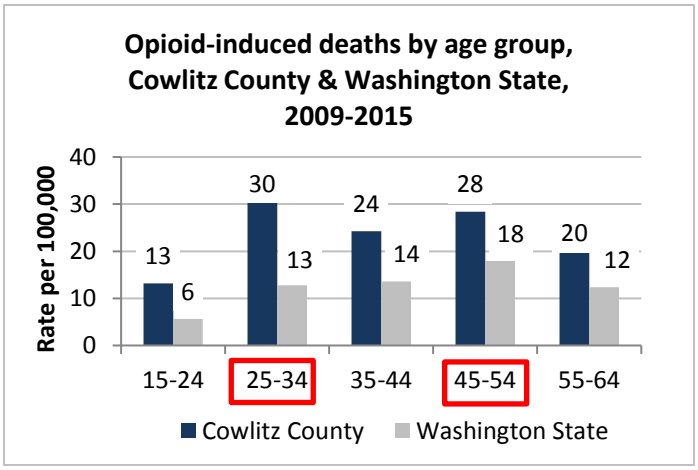
In the last 5 years in Cowlitz County, opioids caused more deaths than falls, breast cancer, prostate cancer, or skin cancer (individually), and caused more deaths than traffic accidents, homicide, drowning, and HIV combined.

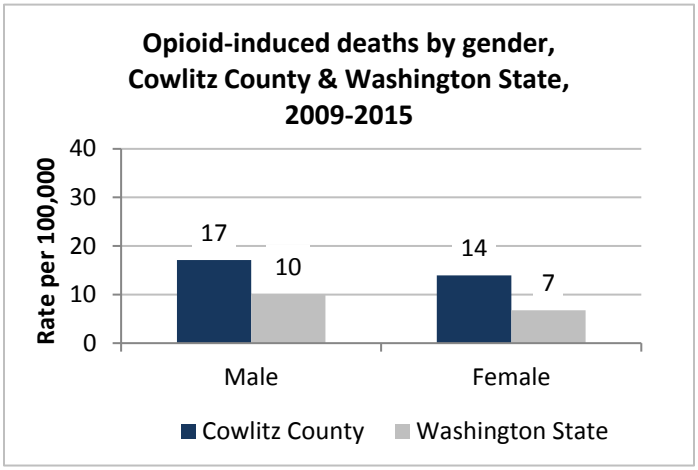
In Washington State, approximately half of opioid-induced deaths are among individuals who had a prescription for opioids. It is not known if the medication was being used for medicinal or illicit purposes at the time of the death. Also at the state level, 45-54-year-olds are prescribed more opioids than other age groups.

Demographic disparities

In Cowlitz County in 2009-2015, **25-34-year-olds** and **45-54-year-olds** had higher opioid-induced death rates than the county average. During this time period, Cowlitz County had no opioid-induced deaths among residents older than 74, and fewer than 10 among those aged 0-17 or 65-74. Time trend analysis by age cannot be done for Cowlitz County due to small numbers.

In Washington State, less than 1% of opioid-induced deaths are younger than 18, and these deaths peak among 45-54-year-olds. Also at the state level, prescription-drug-related overdoses seem to have increased most among 45-54-year-olds, while heroin overdoses have increased more among 15-34-year-olds.





In Cowlitz County in 2009-2015, males and females had **similar** opioid-induced death rates. Males had **higher** rates than females at the state level. In Cowlitz County, male and female rates have followed roughly the same trends over time. No formal time trend analysis by gender has been done at the state level.

Our ability to look at opioid deaths by race/ethnicity is limited due to small numbers. Cowlitz County had no opioid-induced deaths in a racial or ethnic minority group from 2009 to 2015. During this time period at the state level, **Native American** and **White** residents had a higher death rate than the state average, at 26 and 10 per 100,000, respectively. The **Native American rate was 3 times the state average**. **Hispanic** and **Asian** residents had lower-than-average rates, at 3 and 1, respectively. Time trend analysis by race/ethnicity has not been formally done at the state level.

While it did not look at opioid-induced deaths specifically, a Washington State report found that residents living in **high-poverty** or **low-education areas** have high rates of drug-induced deaths. Time trend analysis was not done in this report.

Our ability to look at opioid deaths in specific geographic areas of the county is also limited due to small numbers. Over the past 7 years, Castle Rock, Kalama, Toutle Lake, and Woodland School Districts all had fewer than 10 opioid-induced deaths and could not be assessed statistically. From 2009-2015, Longview and Kelso School Districts' opioid-induced death rates were 17 and 14 per 100,000, respectively, and both were **similar** to the county average.

Technical notes & data sources

Other than age-specific rates, all rates are age-adjusted.

Data sources

- Bensley, L, & Sabel, J. The Health of Washington State, Drug Abuse and Overdose. Washington State Department of Health. Updated 3/4/2014. Available online at: http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5500/RPF-Drg2014.pdf.
- Sabel, J. Washington State Department of Health. Personal communication, 9/12/2016.
- Time trend analyses were performed using: Joinpoint Regression Program, Version 4.2.0.2 – June 2015; Statistical Methodology and Applications Branch, Surveillance Research Program, National Cancer Institute.
- All other statistical analyses performed using: Community Health Assessment Tool (CHAT) [Computer software for public health assessment, 2016, Washington State Department of Health. Olympia, WA.
- Data source: Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Death Certificate Data, 1990-2015, August 2016.

Color coding

Color coding has been used to aid in interpreting these indicators. All differences between groups and changes over time identified in this report are statistically significant.

- **Black font** indicates that Cowlitz County is similar to Washington State, a rate is not changing over time, or subgroups are similar to the county or state average.
- **Red font** identifies areas where Cowlitz County is faring worse than Washington State, a rate is getting worse over time, or demographic groups are faring worse than the county or state average.
- **Green font** identifies areas where Cowlitz County is faring better than Washington State, a rate is improving over time, or demographic groups are faring worse than the county or state average.