

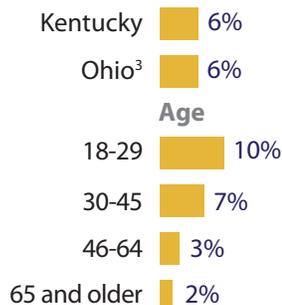
# Misuse of prescription pain relievers in Kentucky

Kentucky ranks sixth in the nation for overdose deaths involving prescription pain relievers; in 2008, its rate was 17.9 deaths per 100,000 residents.<sup>1</sup> These drug overdose deaths correspond to a steep increase in the sale of opioid prescription pain relievers (which include OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet and codeine). Kentucky

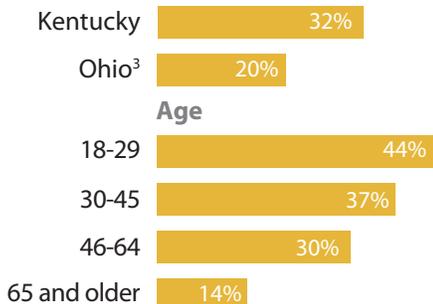
is in the top quarter of states in the rate of prescription pain relievers sold per capita.<sup>2</sup>

To understand prescription pain reliever use in Kentucky, the 2011 **Kentucky Health Issues Poll (KHIP)** asked several questions about prescription pain reliever use and misuse.

## Have you ever used a pain reliever when not prescribed or for the feeling it caused?



## Have any of your family members or friends experienced problems as a result of abusing prescription pain relievers?



## Majority prescribed pain drug in last five years

More than half of Kentucky adults (55%) reported being prescribed a pain reliever that could not be bought over the counter, such as OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet or codeine, in the last five years. Of these adults, almost 7 in 10 (67%) reported that they had been prescribed the right amount of pills needed to control pain. About 1 in 6 (18%) felt they had been prescribed more pills than were needed.

## One in 3 knows someone who has abused pain drug

Kentucky adults were asked if they had ever, even once, used a

pain reliever such as OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet or codeine when not prescribed or for the experience or feeling it caused. Only about 1 in 16 (6%) said they had done so. However, almost 1 in 3 Kentuckians (32%) reported that they have friends or family members who have experienced problems as a result of abusing prescription pain relievers, compared with about 1 in 5 Ohioans (20%).<sup>3</sup>

## Young adults more likely to report having misused

Young adults are more likely to have misused a prescription pain reliever. About 1 in 10 Kentuckians ages 18 to 29 (10%) reported ever

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<sup>1</sup> Paulozzi, LJ, Jones, CM, Mack, KA, Rudd, RA. (2011.) Vital Signs: Overdoses of Prescription Opioid Pain Relievers – United States, 1999-2008. MMWR 60(43):1487-1492. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/3llb65s>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Ohio Health Issues Poll (OHIP) conducted in July 2011, results available at: [https://www.healthfoundation.org/data\\_publications/ohip.html](https://www.healthfoundation.org/data_publications/ohip.html)

These findings unless otherwise noted are from the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, funded by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati. The Kentucky Health Issues Poll was conducted Sept. 27- Oct. 27, 2011, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 1,621 adults from throughout Kentucky was interviewed by telephone. This included 1,313 landline interviews and 308 cell phone interviews. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to  $\pm 2.5\%$ . There are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects that can introduce error or bias.

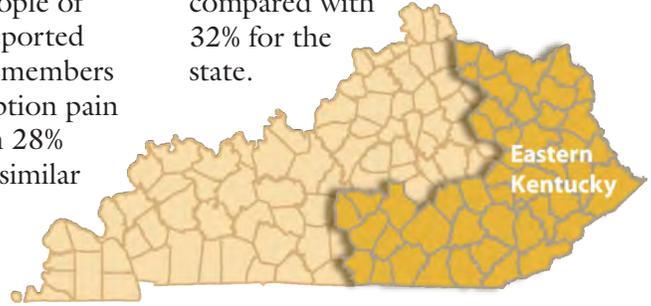
For more information about the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, please visit [www.healthy-ky.org](http://www.healthy-ky.org) or [www.healthfoundation.org/khip.html](http://www.healthfoundation.org/khip.html).

misusing a prescription pain reliever, compared with only 2% of adults older than 65. Likewise, young adults were more likely to know someone who has experienced problems because of abusing a prescription pain reliever. More than 4 in 10 Kentuckians ages 18 to 29 (44%) reported they have friends or family members who have experienced problems because of abusing prescription pain relievers. Only 14% of adults ages 65 and older have friends or family members who have experienced problems because of abusing prescription pain relievers.

## Appalachians and Eastern Kentuckians at greater risk

About 4 in 10 (39%) people of Appalachian heritage<sup>4</sup> reported having friends or family members who had abused prescription pain relievers, compared with 28% of non-Appalachians. A similar percentage of Eastern Kentucky<sup>5</sup> residents (43%) reported having

friends or family members who had experienced problems as a result of abusing prescription pain relievers, compared with 32% for the state.



<sup>4</sup> Appalachians are adults who were born or had at least one parent born in an Appalachian county, as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

<sup>5</sup> Eastern Kentucky is the 46-county region defined by the Big Sandy, Buffalo Trace, Cumberland Valley, FIVCO, Gateway, Kentucky River and Lake Cumberland Area Development Districts. Most of the counties in Eastern Kentucky have been classified as part of the Appalachian Region by the Appalachian Regional Commission.