

# Heroin use and prescription drug misuse in Kentucky

Kentucky ranks second in the nation along with New Mexico for the most drug overdose deaths per capita. Only West Virginia has more overdose deaths.<sup>1</sup> Drug overdose deaths in Kentucky quadrupled from 241 in 2000 to 1,077 in 2014.<sup>2</sup> Since 2008, more Kentucky adults have died each year from drug overdoses than from motor vehicle accidents.<sup>3</sup>

The 2015 **Kentucky Health Issues Poll (KHIP)** asked Kentucky adults about the influence of drug misuse on their family members and friends.

## More than 1 in 10 knows someone who has had problems because of heroin use

KHIP asked, “Have any of your family members or friends

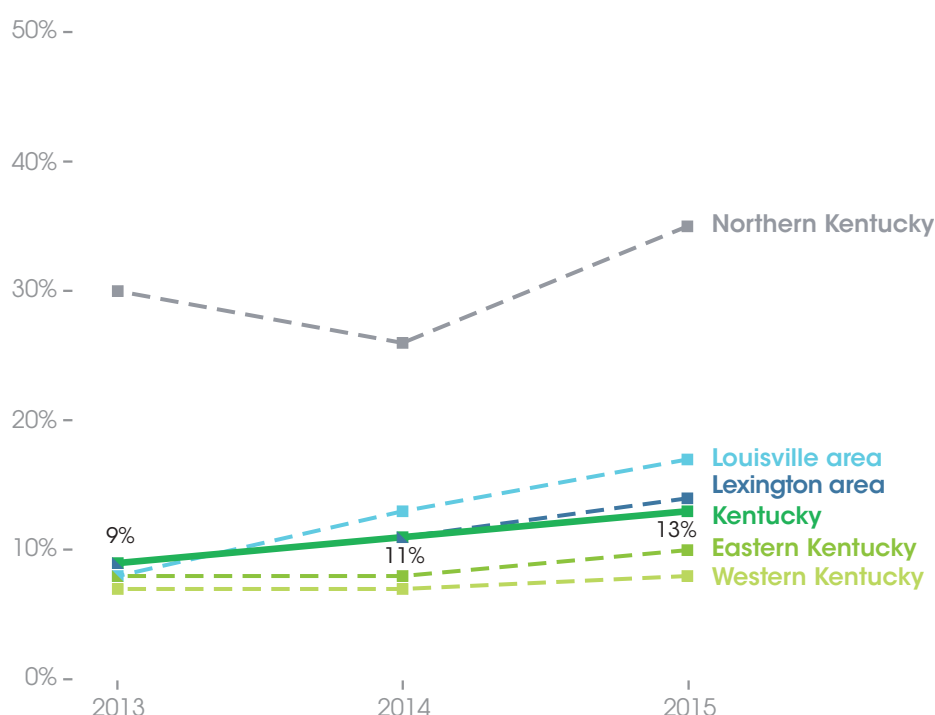
<sup>1</sup> Trust for America's Health (June 2015). The Facts Hurt: A State-By-State Injury Prevention Policy Report. Retrieved Dec. 17, 2015 from <http://www.healthy-americans.org/reports/injuryprevention15/>.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2014 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released 2015. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10.html> on Jan. 13, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center and Kentucky Department of Public Health (October 2015). Kentucky Special Emphasis Report: Drug Overdose Deaths, 2000-2014. Retrieved Dec. 17, 2015 from <http://www.mc.uky.edu/kiprc/>.

These findings unless otherwise noted are from the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, funded by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and Interact for Health. The Kentucky Health Issues Poll was conducted Sept. 17-Oct. 7, 2015, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 1,608 adults from throughout Kentucky was interviewed by telephone. This included 986 landline interviews and 622 cell phone interviews with cell phone users. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to  $\pm 2.4\%$ . 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.interactforhealth.org/kentucky-health-issues-poll](http://www.interactforhealth.org/kentucky-health-issues-poll).

Percentage of adults reporting that they had family members or friends who had experienced problems as a result of using heroin



experienced problems as a result of using heroin?” More than 1 in 10 Kentucky adults (13%) said yes. This is about the same as in 2014 (11%), but it is an increase since 2013, when only 9% of adults knew someone who had problems due to heroin use.

Responses varied by region. More than 3 in 10 Northern Kentucky adults (35%) reported that they knew someone who had problems

due to heroin use. That compares with nearly 2 in 10 Louisville area adults (17%). About 1 in 10 adults knew someone who had problems because of heroin use in the Lexington area (14%), in Eastern Kentucky (10%) and in Western Kentucky (8%). Since 2013, the percentage of adults who said yes to this question has remained stable in Eastern and Western Kentucky, but has risen in other regions.

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## Young adults more likely to know someone who has used heroin

Young adults are more likely than older adults to report having friends or family members who had problems as a result of using heroin. One in 4 adults ages 18 to 29 (25%) reported knowing someone who had problems due to heroin use. This compares with about 1 in 10 adults 30 to 45 (12%), 46 to 64 (10%), and 65 and older (7%).

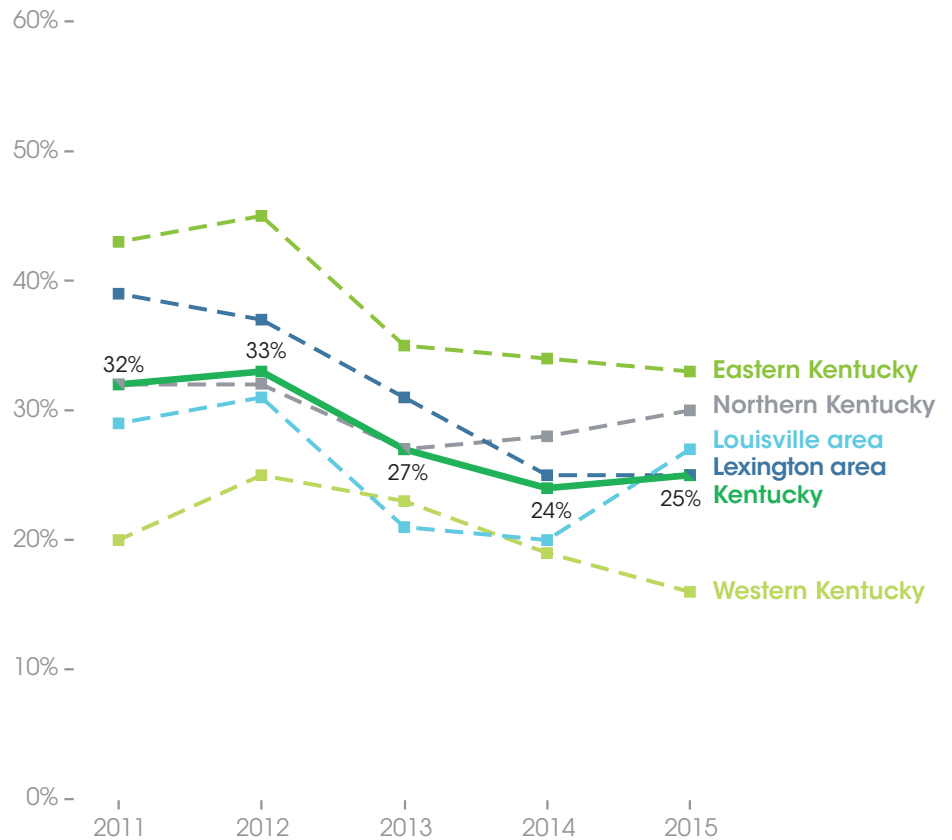
Responses to this question did not vary significantly by sex, race, education or income.

## 1 in 4 knows someone who had misused prescription drugs

KHIP also asked, “Have any of your family members or friends experienced problems as a result of abusing prescription pain relievers such as OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet or codeine?” One in 4 Kentucky adults (25%) said yes.

Western Kentucky adults were less likely than adults in other regions to report knowing someone who had problems due to prescription drug misuse. Fewer than 2 in 10 Western Kentucky adults (16%) reported this. That compares with about 3 in 10 adults in Eastern Kentucky (33%), Northern Kentucky (30%) and the Louisville area (27%), and more than 2 in 10 adults in the Lexington area (25%).

Percentage of adults reporting that they had family members or friends who had experienced problems as a result of using prescription drugs



Since 2014, the percentage of adults who reported this has risen from 20% to 27% in the Louisville area, but has remained steady in other regions.

## Some adults more likely to know someone who had misused prescription drugs

White adults (26%) were three times more likely than African American adults (9%) to report knowing someone who had problems due to prescription drug

abuse. Likewise, adults earning less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)<sup>4</sup> (29%) were more likely than adults earning more than 200% FPL (23%) to report this.

About 3 in 10 adults ages 18 to 45 (32%) knew someone who had problems due to prescription drug misuse. This compares with about 2 in 10 adults 46 to 64 (23%) and fewer than 2 in 10 adults 65 and older (16%).

<sup>4</sup> In 2014, 200% of the Federal Poverty Level was \$47,700 for a family of four.