

SOUTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC  
HEALTH

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# Drug Overdose Deaths South Carolina

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2023

*Prepared as of 3/27/2025*



## INTRODUCTION

This report describes fatal drug overdose deaths that occurred in South Carolina in 2023. Data were derived from death certificates registered with the Department of Public Health Vital Statistics and represent deaths that occurred in the state of South Carolina regardless of the residence of the decedent.

Drug overdose deaths are identified using underlying cause-of-death codes from the tenth revision of ICD (ICD–10): X40–X44 (unintentional), X60–X64 (suicide), X85 (homicide), and Y10–Y14 (undetermined). Drug overdose deaths involving selected drug categories are identified by additional multiple cause-of-death codes. The current "prescription drugs" category includes both opioid and non-opioid prescription drugs. The category "opioids" includes both legal and illegal opioids. Prescription drugs are identified by the following ICD-10 codes: T36.0--T39.9, T40.2--T40.4, T41.0--T43.5 and T43.7--T50.8. Opioids are identified by codes T40.0--T40.4, T40.6. Other codes used are: heroin T40.1, methadone T40.3, cocaine T40.5. Fentanyl is identified through a search of the literal cause of death. Psychostimulants with abuse potential, which include such drugs as methamphetamine, amphetamine, methylphenidate (Ritalin), and 3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (MDMA, Ecstasy) are identified by the code T43.6.

Drug overdose deaths may involve multiple drugs; therefore, a single death might be included in more than one category when describing the number of drug overdose deaths involving a specific drug. For example, a death that involved both heroin and fentanyl would be included in the following categories: deaths involving heroin, deaths involving fentanyl, deaths involving opioids, and deaths involving prescription drugs.

Due to privacy and confidentiality concerns, DPH will apply suppression rules for all reports containing 2023 data and forward. DPH's suppression rule is that values less than 5 will be suppressed on all Vital Statistics forms. This is reflected as "<5" in the report whenever the true value is 1-4. Additionally, in locations where only one number in a dataset is suppressed or if reidentification of the true value would still be possible, the report suppresses the next lowest number in the dataset. This is reflected as "#" in the report. For example, in the below sample dataset the rules would be applied in the following manner:

### Unsuppressed Values:

Year	Total	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3
2023	25	12	9	4
2024	27	20	4	3
2025	30	12	7	11

### Suppressed Values:

Year	Total	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3
2023	25	12	#	<5
2024	27	20	<5	<5
2025	30	12	7	11

## Executive Summary

In 2023, there were 2,157 drug overdose deaths in South Carolina, which was a 6.1% decrease from the 2,296 drug overdose deaths in 2022 (Figure 1). **This is the first time since 2014 that South Carolina has seen a decrease in the number of drug overdose deaths.** The rate of drug overdose deaths in 2023 was 41.0 per 100,000 population (Table 3A). Drug overdoses by unintentional intent continue to represent the highest percentage of drug overdose deaths (95.6%) in 2023 (Table 1). Deaths involving prescription drugs, opioids, psychostimulants with abuse potential, fentanyl, heroin and methadone decreased in 2023 as compared to 2022. However, drug overdose deaths involving cocaine increased 5.2% (Table 2, Figure 2).

While South Carolina saw a decrease in the number of drug overdose deaths in 2023, there was an increase in 15 of 46 counties, including Aiken, Charleston, Chester, Chesterfield, Colleton, Dorchester, Georgetown, Horry, Jasper, Lancaster, Marlboro, Newberry, Oconee, Williamsburg, and York (Table 4). Overdose deaths rose by more than 50% in Chesterfield and Colleton counties. Marlboro County showed an increase in overdose deaths by more than 100%.

Among opioid-involved overdose deaths, people aged 35 to 44 continued to have the highest number of deaths (483 deaths) compared to those in other age groups in 2023 (Figure 6). All age groups experienced a decrease in opioid-involved overdose deaths in 2023 compared to 2022 except for those aged 55 to 64 (+2.2%) and 65+ (no change). The highest proportion of opioid-involved (48%) and psychostimulants with abuse potential-involved (57%) overdose deaths occurred among White males. The highest proportion (37%) of cocaine-involved overdose deaths occurred among Black and other males, followed by White males (35%) (Figure 7). Compared to 2022, the proportion of psychostimulant abuse potential-involved overdose deaths among Black and other males increased by 25.0% and opioid-involved overdose deaths among Black and other males increased by 18.8% in 2023. Those who were high school graduates maintained the highest proportion of opioid (47%), cocaine (49%), and psychostimulants with abuse potential-involved (47%) overdose deaths in 2023 (Figure 8).

In 2023, the highest number of drug overdose deaths occurred in March (218 deaths), May (202 deaths), and June (210 deaths) (Figure 9). March, May and June also saw the largest increases in drug overdose deaths compared to 2022. The number of drug overdose deaths in March 2023 increased by 19.8%, May 2023 increased by 19.5%, and June 2023 increased by 8.2%. In April and October 2023, there also were slight increases from 2022 (+2.3% and +1.1%, respectively).

Figure 1.  
 Number of Drug Overdose Deaths by Intent  
 South Carolina, 2014-2023  
 Occurrence Data

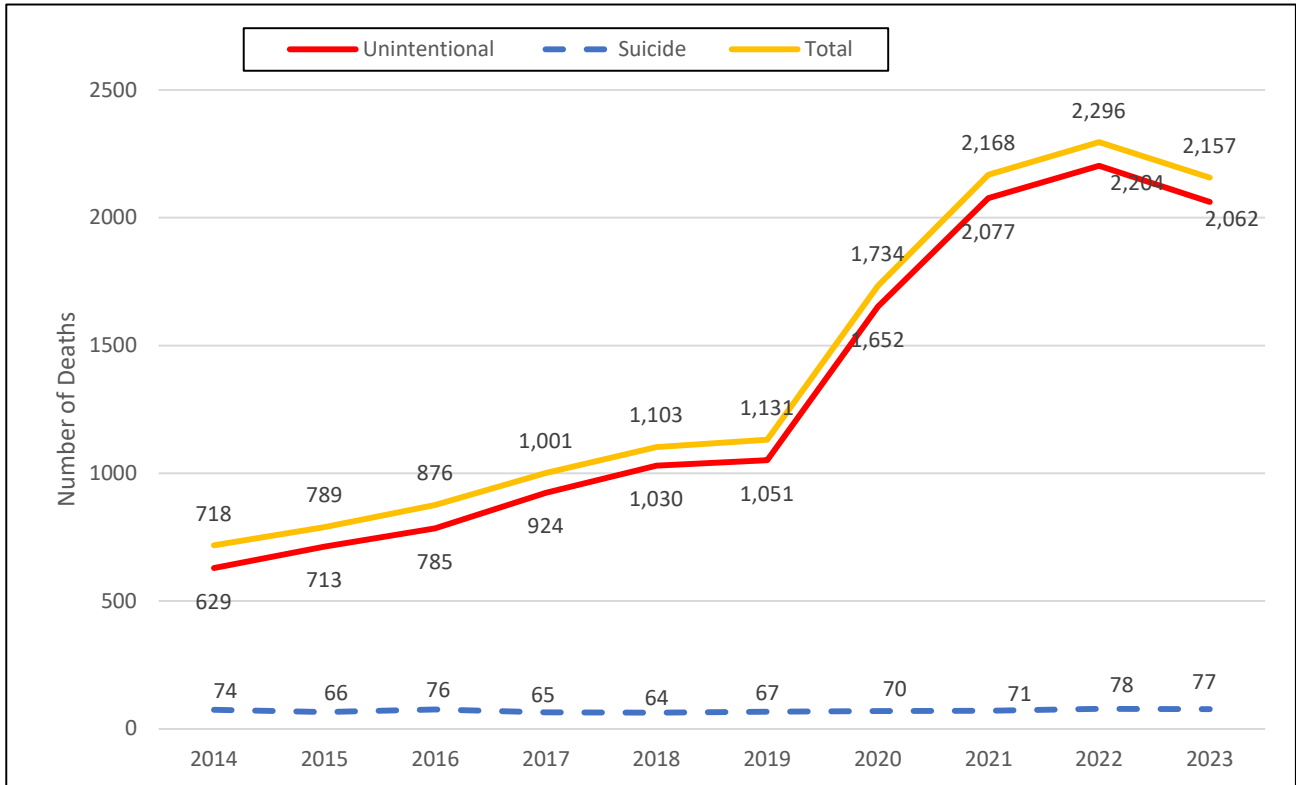


Table 1.  
 Number of Drug Overdose Deaths by Intent  
 South Carolina, 2014-2023  
 Occurrence Data

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Total</b>	718	789	876	1,001	1,103	1,131	1,734	2,168	2,296	2,157
<b>Unintentional</b>	629	713	785	924	1,030	1,051	1,652	2,077	2,204	2,062
<b>Suicide</b>	74	66	76	65	64	67	70	71	78	77
<b>Homicide</b>	3	0	3	1	3	0	1	9	3	<5
<b>Undetermined</b>	12	10	12	11	6	13	11	11	11	#

Table 2.  
 Number of Drug Overdose Deaths by Category and Selected Drugs  
 South Carolina, 2019-2023  
 Occurrence Data

Year	Total Drug Overdose	Prescription Drugs	Opioids	Psychostimulants with Abuse Potential	Fentanyl	Heroin	Methadone	Cocaine
2019	1,131	923	876	338	537	196	28	230
2020	1,734	1,463	1,400	551	1,100	244	46	352
2021	2,168	1,853	1,733	778	1,494	136	69	446
2022	2,296	1,982	1,864	794	1,660	54	58	562
2023	2,157	1,840	1,704	765	1,550	24	53	591

Figure 2.  
 Number of Drug Overdose Deaths by Drug Category  
 South Carolina, 2019-2023  
 Occurrence Data

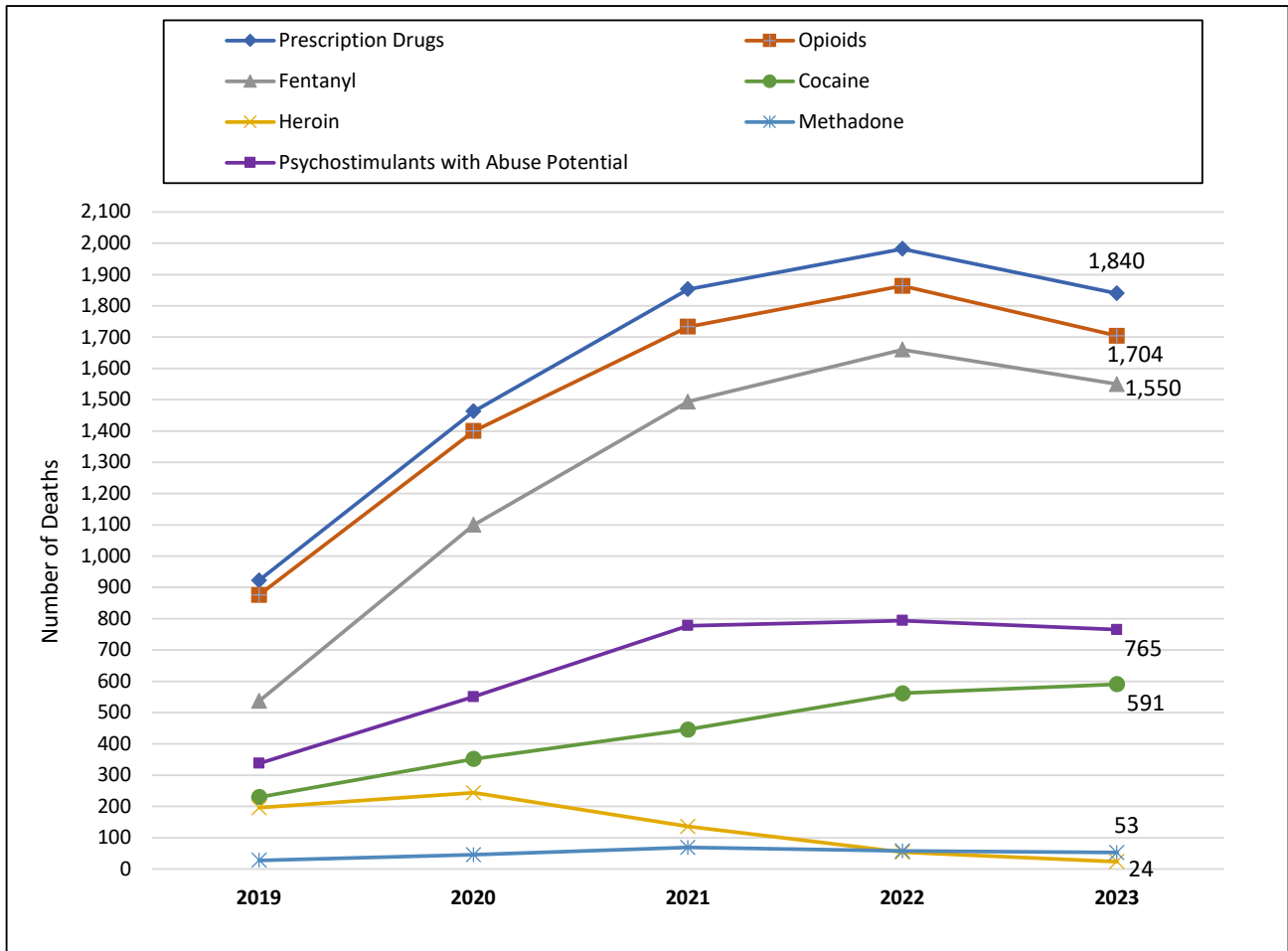


Table 3. A  
Drug Overdose Deaths by Drug Category and County  
South Carolina, 2023  
Occurrence Data

County of Death	Total Drug Overdose		Prescription Drugs		Opioids		Psychostimulants with Abuse Potential	
	Number	Rate <sup>1</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>1</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>1</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>1</sup>
<b>South Carolina</b>	2,157	41.0	1,840	35.5	1,704	33.3	765	15.1
Abbeville	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#
Aiken	100	58.4	86	50.8	82	49.0	30	18.2
Allendale	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#	-	
Anderson	64	30.1	44	21.3	41	20.0	42	19.3
Bamberg	5	39.9	<5	#	<5	#	-	
Barnwell	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#
Beaufort	33	20.5	30	19.7	28	18.8	<5	#
Berkeley	63	24.1	57	22.0	51	19.8	21	8.6
Calhoun	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#
Charleston	255	56.2	227	50.8	204	46.4	55	13.0
Cherokee	20	37.2	18	32.4	18	32.4	<5	#
Chester	16	56.4	14	51.1	14	51.1	<5	#
Chesterfield	22	51.8	21	50.4	20	49.0	<5	#
Clarendon	<5	#	<5	#	<5	3.7	<5	#
Colleton	24	66.6	19	52.9	18	51.6	10	29.6
Darlington	20	33.8	19	33.0	19	33.0	9	18.3
Dillon	19	81.1	18	76.9	18	76.9	5	22.3
Dorchester	45	26.6	42	24.8	40	23.8	14	8.3
Edgefield	10	38.9	7	29.4	7	29.4	<5	#
Fairfield	8	28.9	5	21.2	5	21.2	-	
Florence	71	56.1	61	48.3	58	46.3	27	22.3
Georgetown	39	78.8	36	73.4	33	69.5	14	30.3
Greenville	215	38.4	178	32.1	166	30.2	111	20.6
Greenwood	22	35.7	20	33.8	20	33.8	13	21.3
Hampton	5	26.9	5	26.9	<5	#	<5	#
Horry	237	67.5	204	58.5	196	57.9	74	21.9
Jasper	34	118.6	33	115.3	29	103.3	6	22.9
Kershaw	20	30.8	17	26.5	16	24.9	<5	#
Lancaster	55	50.1	49	45.6	47	44.3	16	15.6
Laurens	27	41.3	19	29.7	18	28.2	20	30.6
Lee	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#
Lexington	107	35.2	92	30.6	82	27.8	49	16.3
McCormick	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#
Marion	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#
Marlboro	11	44.1	9	36.0	9	36.0	5	19.3
Newberry	14	38.8	11	31.6	9	27.1	<5	#
Oconee	26	35.2	23	31.2	22	29.6	16	21.7
Orangeburg	37	41.8	20	24.3	18	22.7	6	7.8
Pickens	40	31.9	31	24.8	24	19.8	14	10.2
Richland	111	25.7	87	20.3	74	17.1	26	6.5
Saluda	7	31.9	6	28.8	<5	#	<5	#
Spartanburg	172	49.6	148	43.2	136	40.1	83	24.1
Sumter	38	36.5	32	30.4	32	30.8	12	12.5
Union	11	50.1	10	44.5	10	44.5	5	21.8
Williamsburg	19	60.0	13	43.1	13	43.1	7	21.0
York	111	37.3	107	36.1	99	33.4	35	11.7

<sup>1</sup>Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population. Rates calculated with 20 or fewer deaths are unreliable and should be used cautiously.

Table 3. B  
Drug Overdose Deaths by Selected Drugs and County  
South Carolina, 2023  
Occurrence Data

County of Death	Fentanyl		Heroin		Methadone		Cocaine	
	Number	Rate <sup>1</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>1</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>1</sup>	Number	Rate <sup>1</sup>
<b>South Carolina</b>	1,550	30.7	24	0.4	53	1.0	591	10.7
Abbeville	<5	#	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aiken	79	47.9	<5	#	<5	#	18	8.9
Allendale	<5	#	-	-	-	-	<5	#
Anderson	38	19.1	-	-	<5	#	17	7.9
Bamberg	<5	#	-	-	-	-	<5	#
Barnwell	<5	#	-	-	-	-	-	-
Beaufort	27	18.1	-	-	-	-	14	8.0
Berkeley	43	16.9	<5	#	<5	#	15	5.6
Calhoun	<5	#	-	-	-	-	-	-
Charleston	188	43.0	<5	#	<5	#	89	19.5
Cherokee	17	31.3	-	-	-	-	<5	#
Chester	14	51.1	-	-	<5	#	5	15.0
Chesterfield	16	37.6	<5	#	<5	#	6	12.5
Clarendon	<5	#	-	-	-	-	<5	#
Colleton	14	41.2	-	-	-	-	7	17.0
Darlington	17	28.8	<5	#	<5	#	4	4.7
Dillon	17	72.7	-	-	-	-	7	29.2
Dorchester	35	20.8	-	-	<5	#	9	5.4
Edgefield	6	25.6	-	-	<5	#	<5	#
Fairfield	5	21.2	-	-	-	-	<5	#
Florence	52	42.3	-	-	6	4.7	23	18.6
Georgetown	32	66.8	-	-	-	-	14	31.0
Greenville	151	27.7	-	-	5	0.9	56	9.1
Greenwood	20	33.8	-	-	-	-	5	8.7
Hampton	<5	#	-	-	-	-	<5	#
Horry	173	52.8	<5	#	6	1.4	72	20.1
Jasper	28	102.1	-	-	-	-	18	62.9
Kershaw	16	24.3	-	-	-	-	5	6.8
Lancaster	40	37.6	-	-	<5	#	15	13.1
Laurens	16	25.2	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#
Lee	<5	15.0	-	-	-	-	<5	#
Lexington	72	24.3	<5	#	<5	#	28	8.5
McCormick	<5	#	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marion	<5	#	-	-	-	-	<5	#
Marlboro	8	33.5	<5	#	-	-	<5	#
Newberry	8	25.4	-	-	-	-	<5	#
Oconee	14	19.4	<5	#	<5	#	<5	#
Orangeburg	15	19.5	<5	#	<5	#	14	15.0
Pickens	18	14.9	-	-	<5	#	<5	#
Richland	73	16.9	<5	#	<5	#	49	10.8
Saluda	<5	#	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spartanburg	127	37.9	<5	#	<5	#	34	9.5
Sumter	29	27.6	-	-	-	-	12	10.8
Union	9	42.2	-	-	<5	#	<5	#
Williamsburg	10	30.1	-	-	<5	#	11	31.4
York	95	32.1	-	-	<5	#	14	4.7

<sup>1</sup>Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population. Rates calculated with 20 or fewer deaths are unreliable and should be used cautiously.

Figure 3.  
Number of Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths by County  
South Carolina, 2023  
Occurrence Data

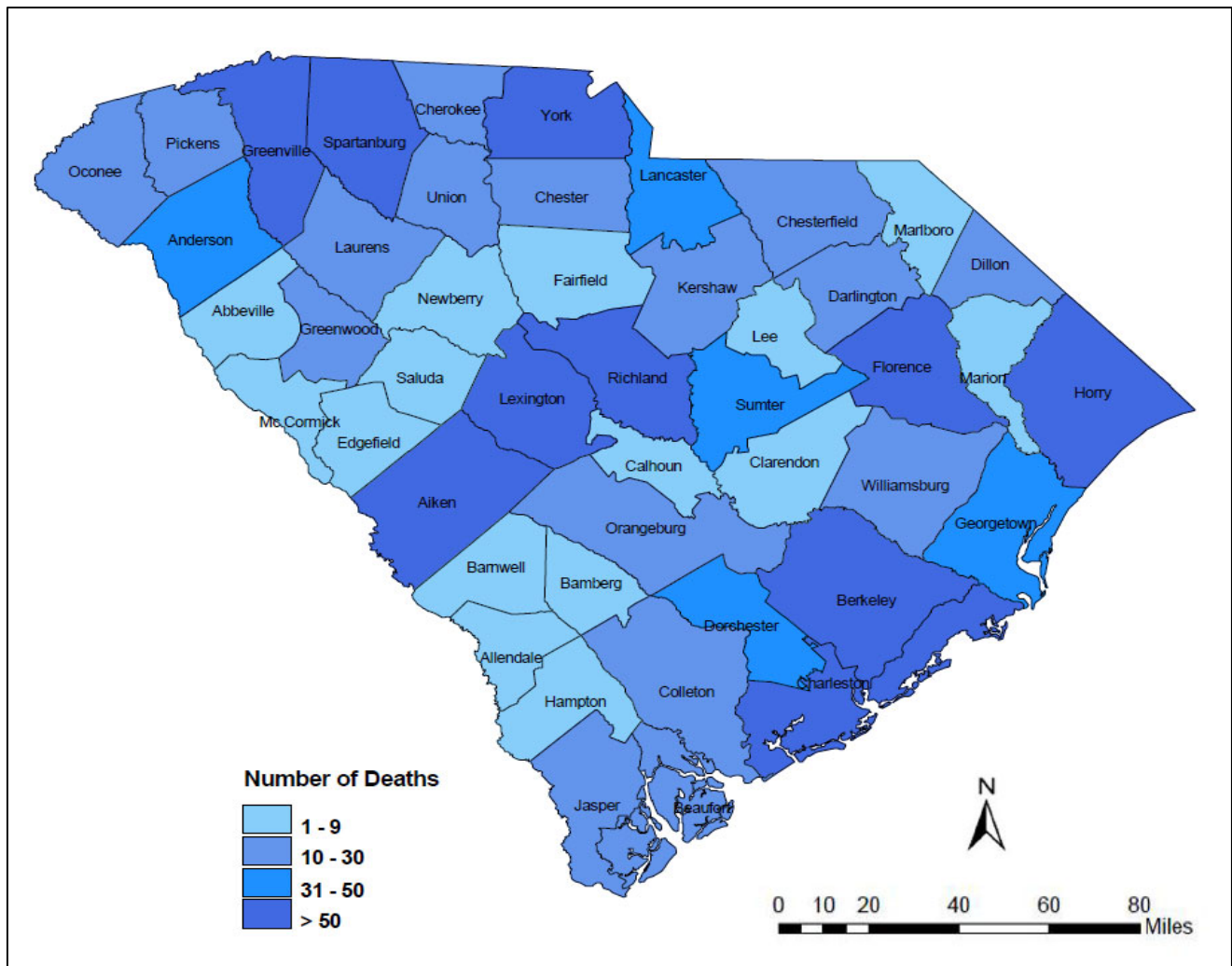




Figure 4.  
 Age-Adjusted Rate for Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths by County  
 South Carolina, 2023  
 Occurrence Data

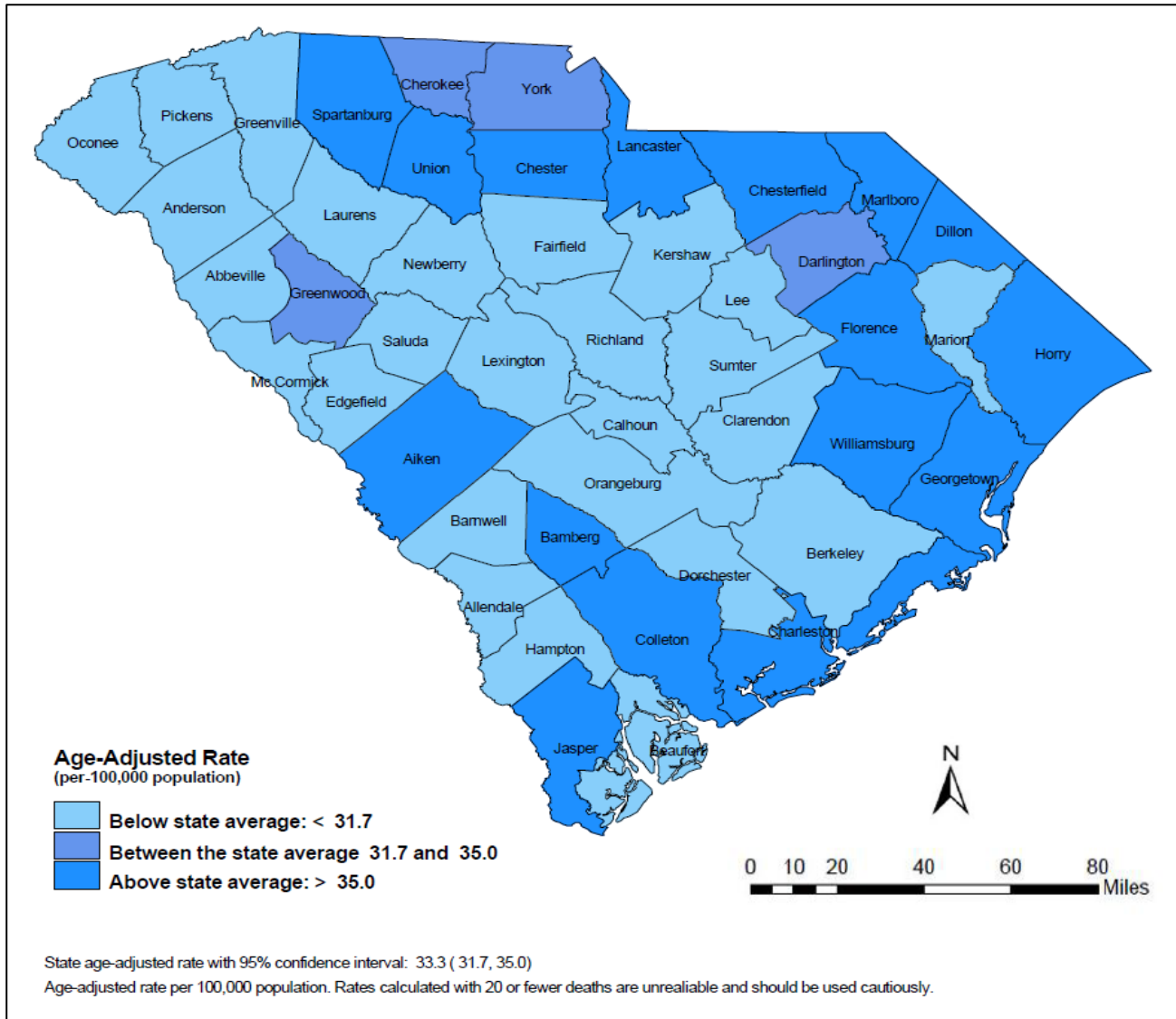


Table 4.  
Change in Drug Overdose Deaths by County  
South Carolina, 2022-2023  
Occurrence Data

County of Death	Total Drug Overdose			Opioids Overdose		
	2022	2023	Percent Change	2022	2023	Percent Change
<b>South Carolina</b>	2,296	2,157	-6.1 *	1,864	1,704	-8.6 *
Abbeville	5	<5		3	<5	
Aiken	89	100	12.4	73	82	12.3
Allendale	1	<5		-	<5	
Anderson	70	64	-8.6	49	41	-16.3
Bamberg	7	5		6	<5	
Barnwell	14	<5		11	<5	
Beaufort	42	33	-21.4	38	28	-26.3
Berkeley	70	63	-10.0	57	51	-10.5
Calhoun	6	<5		4	<5	
Charleston	220	255	15.9	174	204	17.2
Cherokee	22	20	-9.1	15	18	20.0
Chester	13	16	23.1	10	14	40.0
Chesterfield	13	22	69.2	12	20	66.7
Clarendon	6	<5		4	<5	
Colleton	12	24	100.0	9	18	100.0
Darlington	27	20	-25.9	23	19	-17.4
Dillon	21	19	-9.5	20	18	-10.0
Dorchester	41	45	9.8	35	40	14.3
Edgefield	12	10	-16.7	6	7	
Fairfield	4	8		4	5	
Florence	82	71	-13.4	66	58	-12.1
Georgetown	38	39	2.6	37	33	-10.8
Greenville	287	215	-25.1 *	231	166	-28.1 *
Greenwood	37	22	-40.5	30	20	-33.3
Hampton	3	5		3	<5	
Horry	233	237	1.7	192	196	2.1
Jasper	26	34	30.8	22	29	31.8
Kershaw	25	20	-20.0	21	16	-23.8
Lancaster	51	55	7.8	46	47	2.2
Laurens	32	27	-15.6	27	18	-33.3
Lee	10	<5		7	<5	
Lexington	125	107	-14.4	106	82	-22.6
McCormick	-	<5		-	<5	
Marion	9	<5		8	<5	
Marlboro	4	11	175.0	4	9	
Newberry	13	14	7.7	11	9	
Oconee	24	26	8.3	18	22	22.2
Orangeburg	37	37	0.0	24	18	-25.0
Pickens	52	40	-23.1	38	24	-36.8
Richland	132	111	-15.9	104	74	-28.8
Saluda	5	7		4	<5	
Spartanburg	193	172	-10.9	154	136	-11.7
Sumter	40	38	-5.0	37	32	-13.5
Union	17	11	-35.3	13	10	-23.1
Williamsburg	17	19	11.8	12	13	8.3
York	109	111	1.8	96	99	3.1

\* Percent change not calculated for counties with fewer than 10 deaths in 2023

\* Statistically significant at 95% confidence interval

Figure 5.  
 Change in Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths by County  
 South Carolina, 2022-2023  
 Occurrence Data

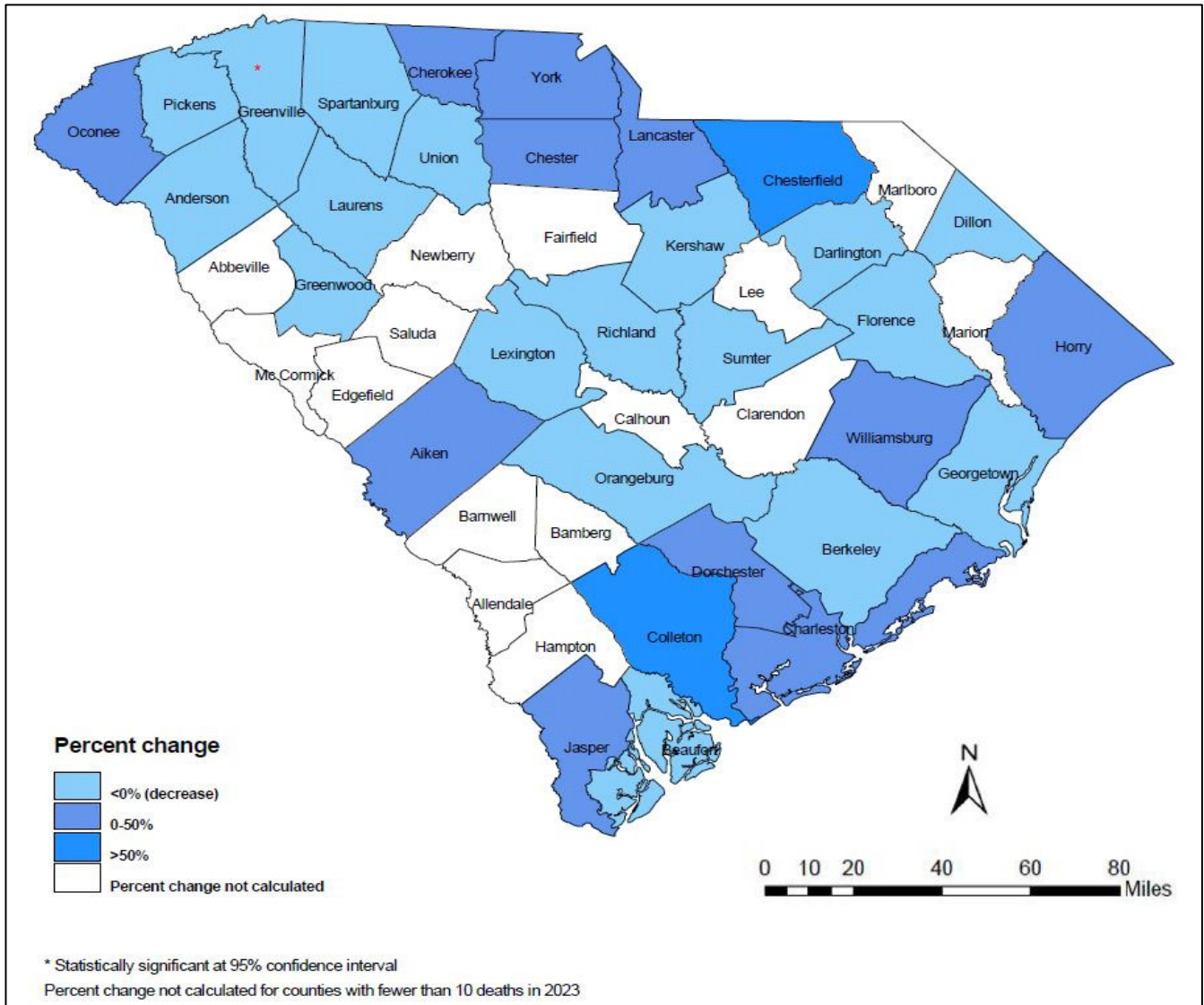


Figure 6.  
 Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths by Age  
 South Carolina, 2019-2023  
 Occurrence Data

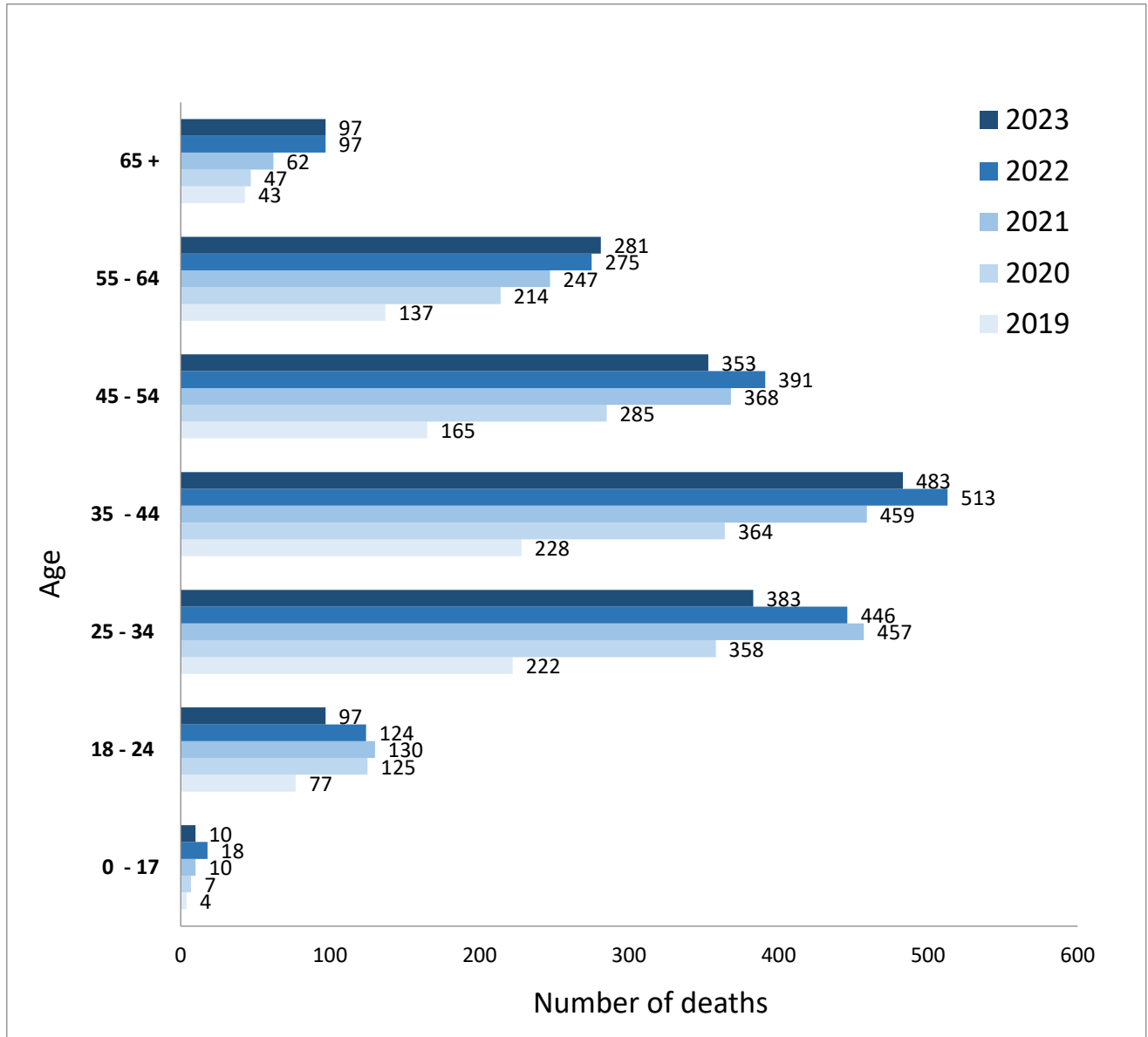


Figure 7.  
Select Drug Categories by Race/Sex  
South Carolina, 2023  
Occurrence Data

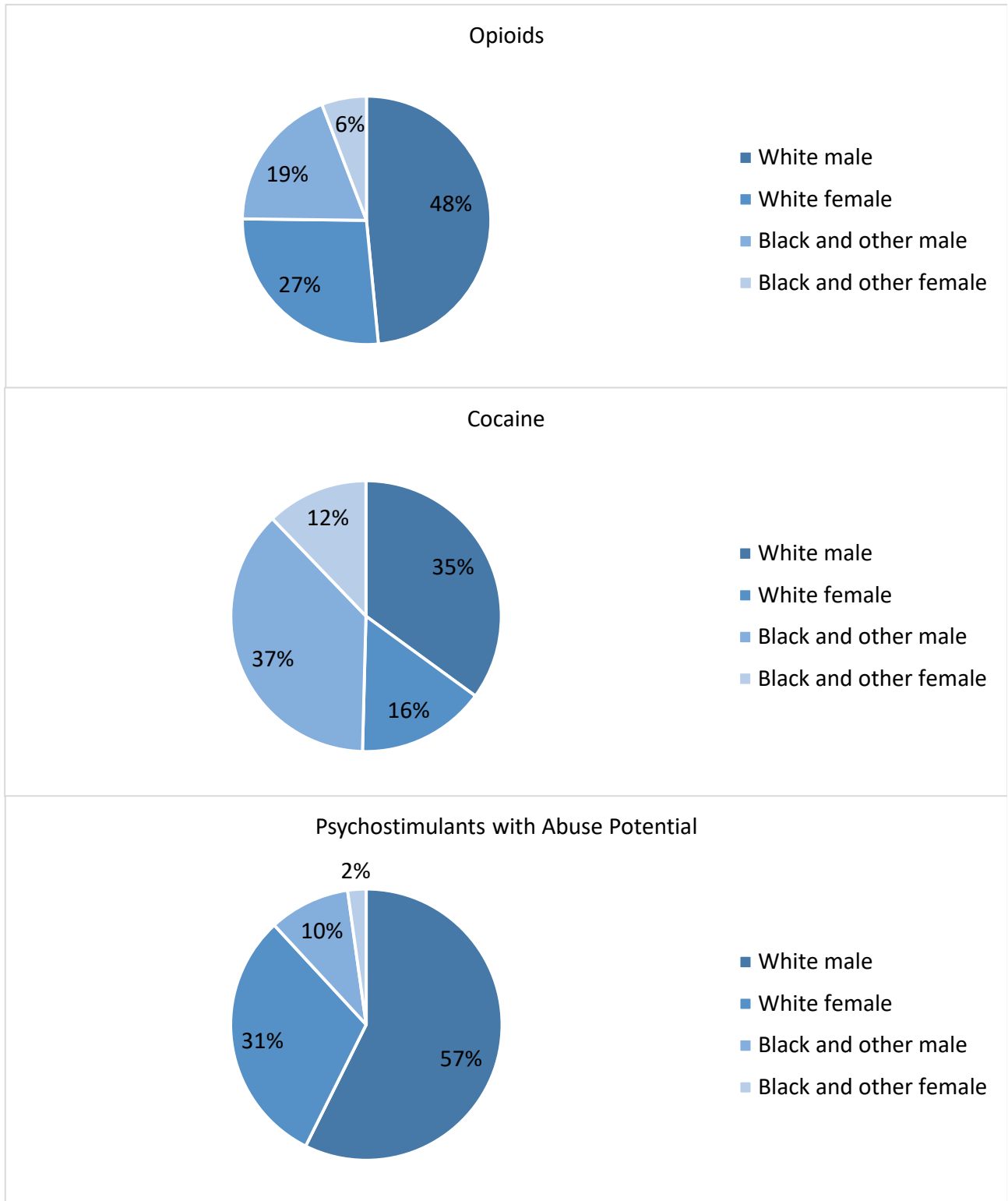


Figure 8.  
 Select Drug Categories by Education  
 South Carolina, 2023  
 Occurrence Data

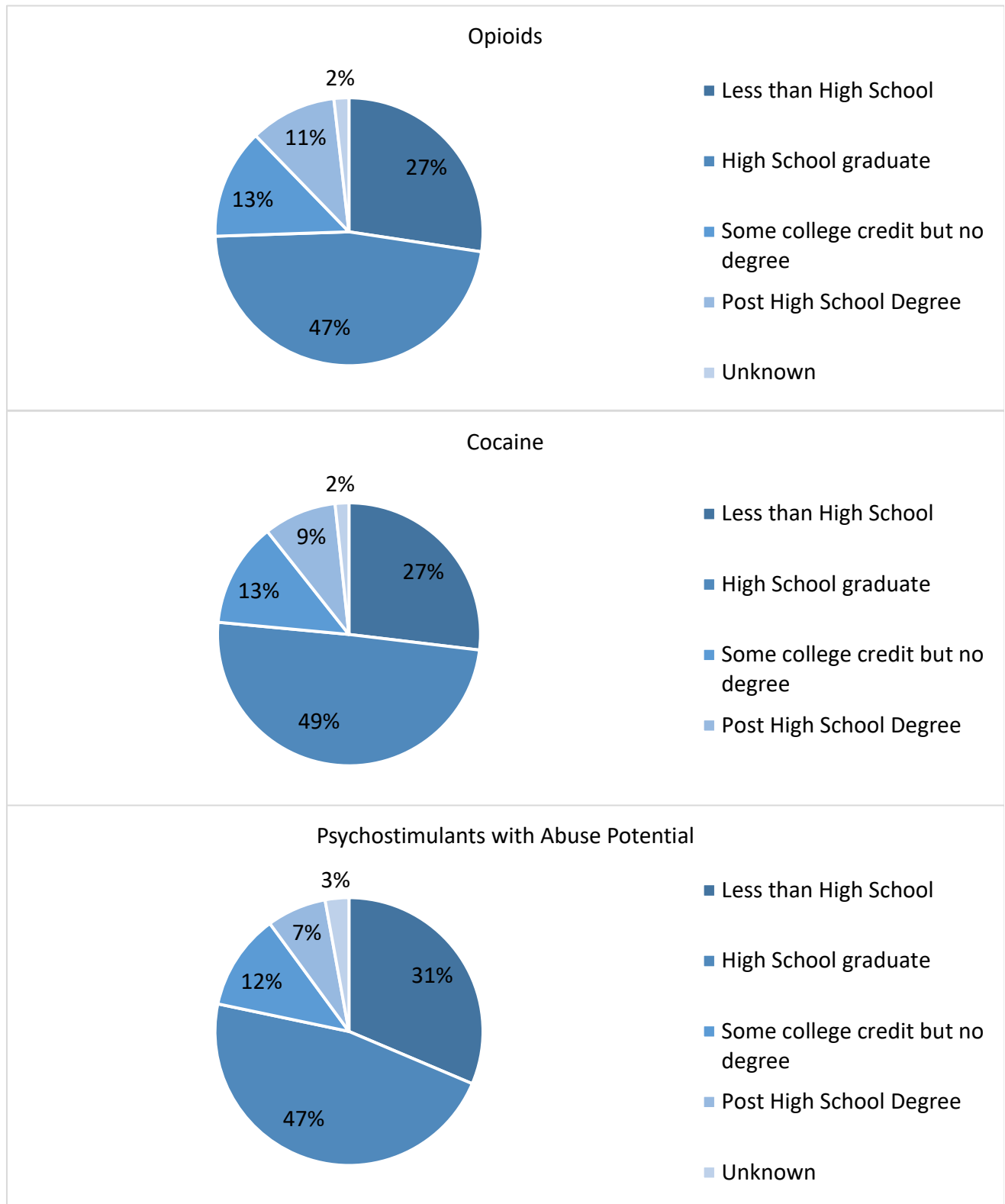


Figure 9.  
 Number of Drug Overdose Deaths by Month  
 South Carolina, 2021-2023  
 Occurrence Data

