

# Can policymakers fix the opioid crisis?



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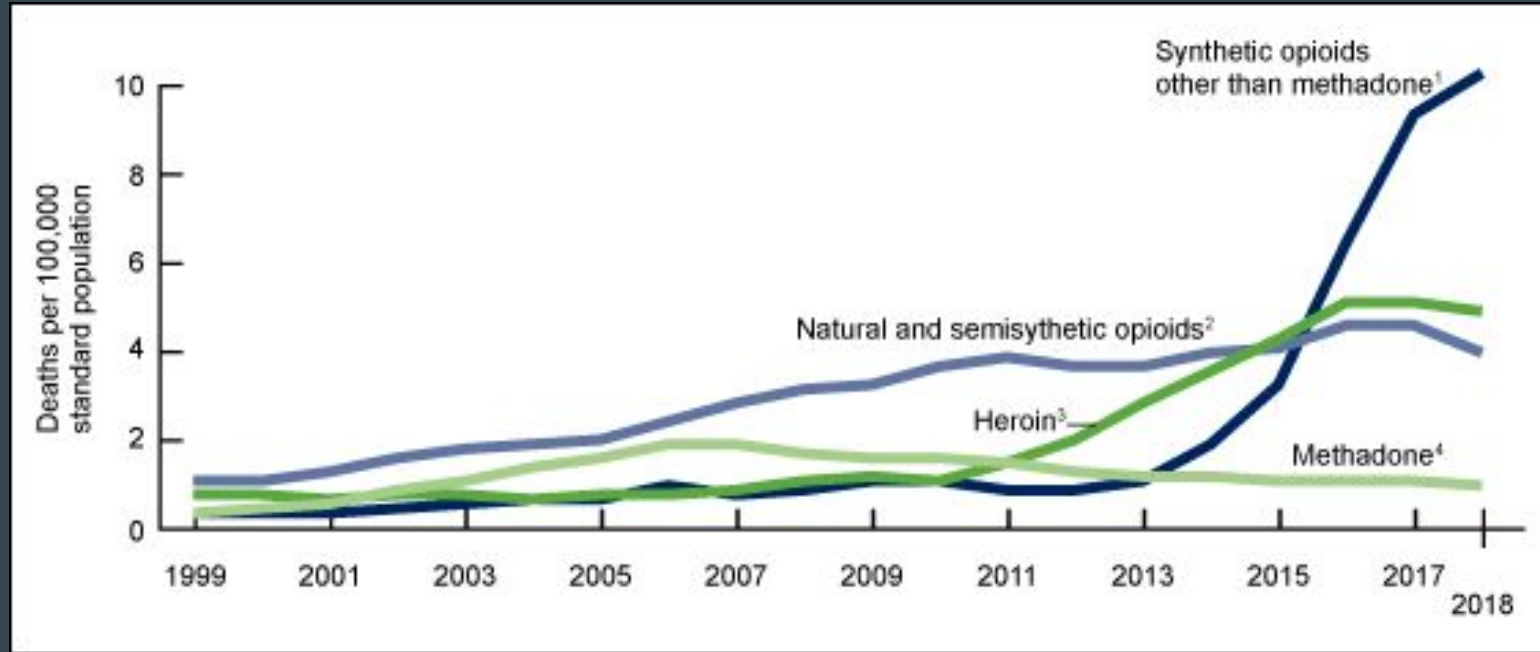
# Drug death toll

- 67,367 people died from a drug overdose in 2018
- 46,802 of the drug deaths were from opioids
- 31,335 deaths from opioids were from fentanyl

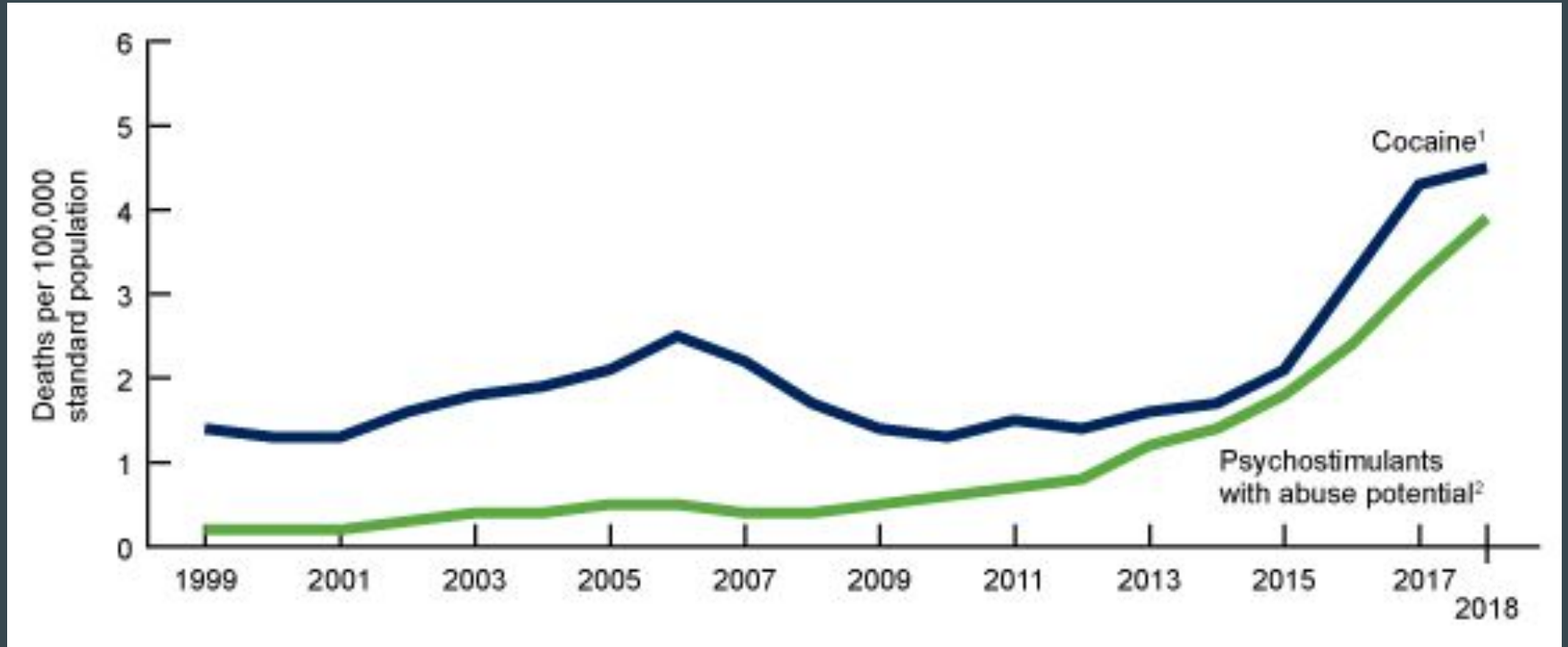
(DEA photo)



# Breakdown of death rates from opioids (CDC)



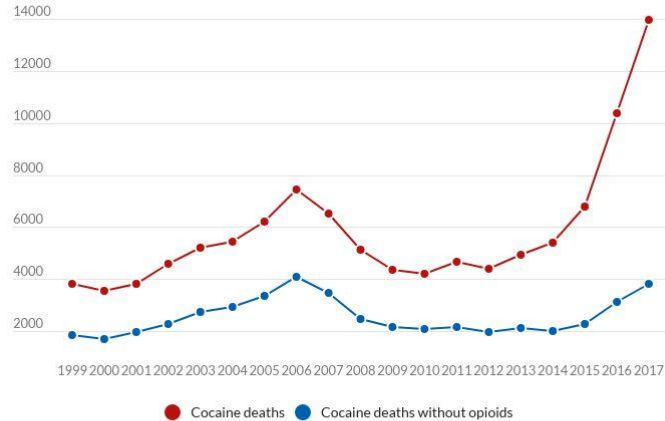
# Meth and coke deaths rising



# Deaths are driven by drug cocktails

## Cocaine-related deaths, 1999-2017

Cocaine deaths have soared in recent years, particularly when mixed with opioids. To a lesser extent, alcohol and benzodiazepines, such as Valium, also contribute to cocaine deaths.

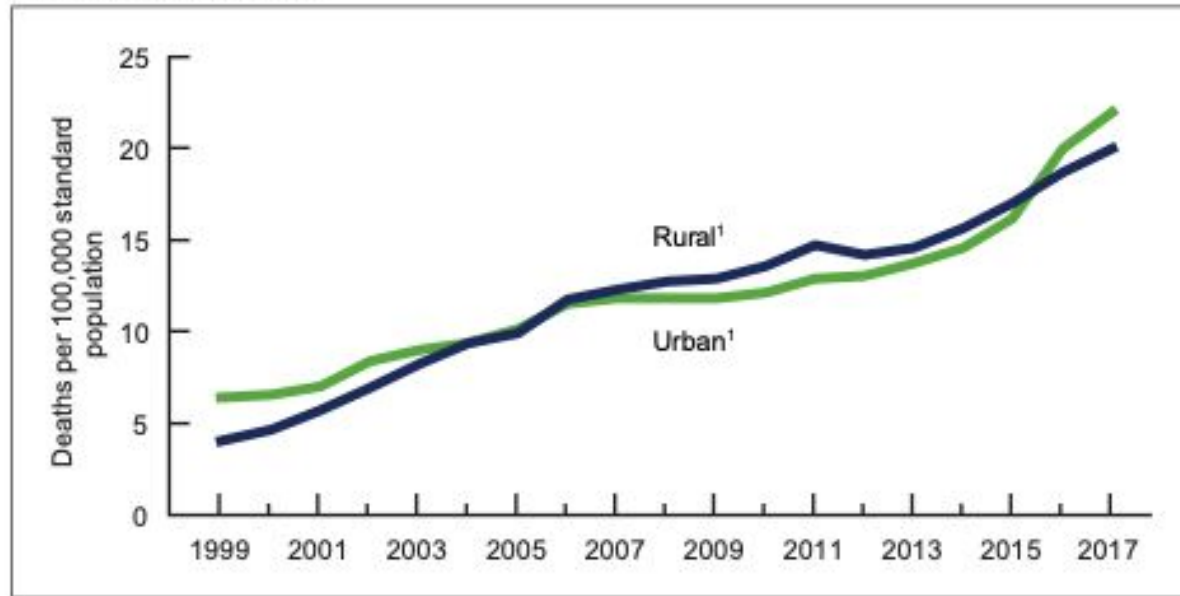


Source: CDC WONDER

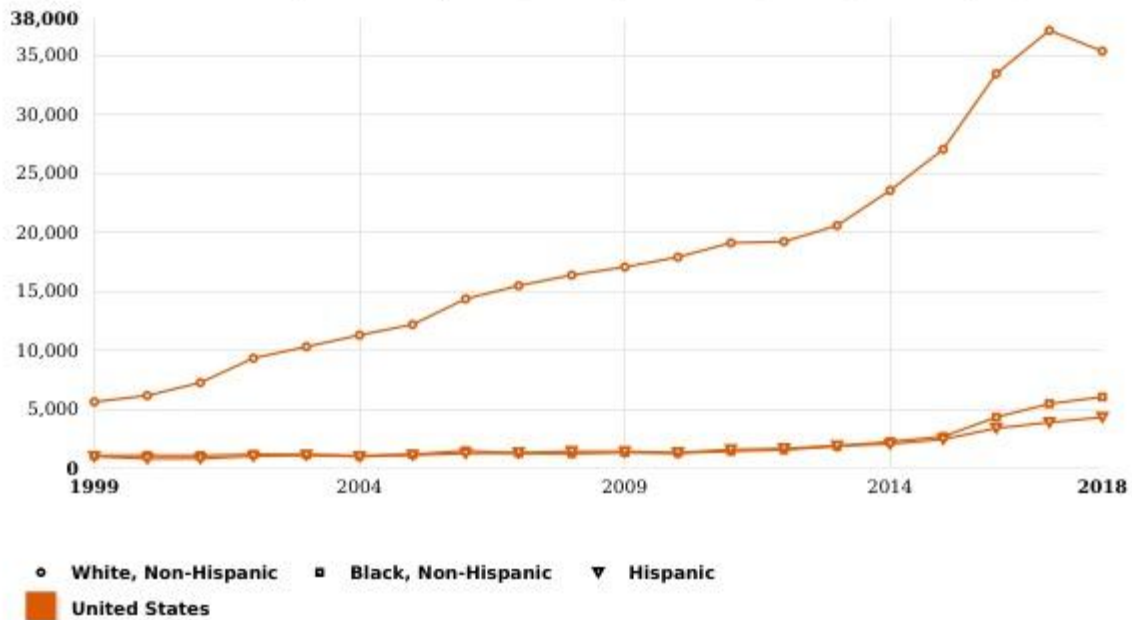
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# Both urban and rural areas affected (CDC)

Figure 1. Age-adjusted rates of drug overdose deaths, by urban and rural residence: United States, 1999–2017

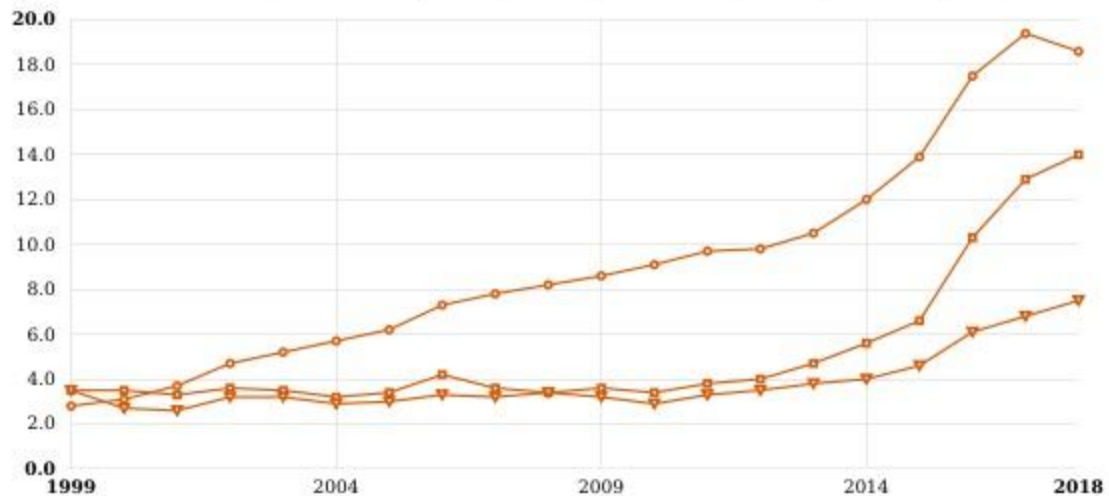


**Opioid Overdose Deaths by Race/Ethnicity: White, Non-Hispanic & Black, Non-Hispanic & Hispanic, 1999 - 2018**



**SOURCE:** Kaiser Family Foundation's State Health Facts.

Opioid Overdose Deaths by Race/Ethnicity: White, Non-Hispanic & Black, Non-Hispanic & Hispanic, 1999 - 2018



○ White, Non-Hispanic    ■ Black, Non-Hispanic    ▼ Hispanic  
■ United States

SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation's State Health Facts.



# Policy response

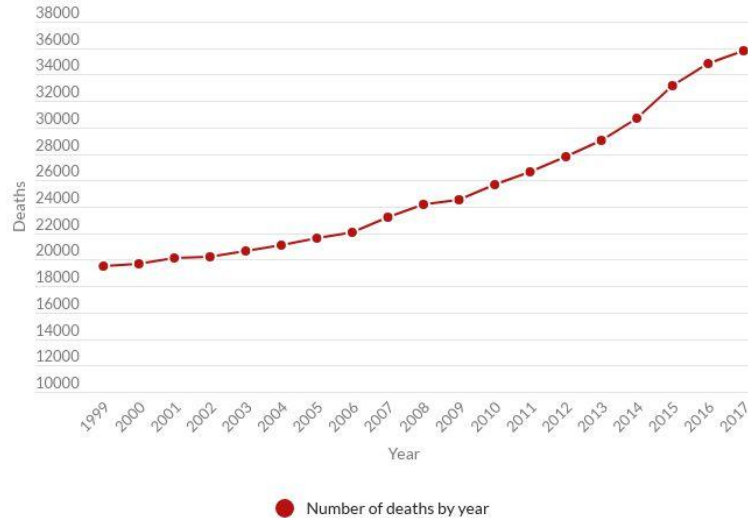
- Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016
- 21st Century Cures Act
- SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act in 2018
- IMD exclusion suspended in states
- Wider naloxone distribution encouraged by the surgeon general
- Syringe exchange services programs and supervised injection sites
- Medicaid expansion in the Affordable Care Act
- Expanding Medicaid to moms post-birth

# Contrasts with the crack epidemic

- Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986
  - Distribution of 5 grams of crack carries a minimum 5-year federal prison sentence, while distribution of 500 grams of powder cocaine carries the same 5-year mandatory minimum sentence.
  - Disparity narrowed in the Fair Sentencing Act and then became retroactive in the First Step Act, applying to 2,600 people in federal prison
- 2,252 deaths from crack
- Industry influence
- Poor infrastructure: Only 10% of the 22 million people with addictions will get treatment (SAMHSA)

## Deaths from alcohol misuse, 1999-2017

Deaths include alcohol poisonings, alcoholic liver disease, and cirrhosis. They do not include deaths from accidents people have while drinking.



Source: CDC WONDER

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