

Overdose deaths dropped sharply last year in Maryland, Baltimore

[Alissa Zhu](#)

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A Bmore POWER worker distributes Narcan — a brand name for the generic naloxone — in 2023. (Jessica Gallagher/The Baltimore Banner)

Overdose deaths in Maryland fell “dramatically” last year, Gov. Wes Moore announced Tuesday.

Preliminary data from the state show about 1,550 fatal overdoses were reported in 2024, a 38% decrease from the previous year, and the lowest number recorded since 2015.

[Maryland’s overdose data dashboard](#) shows Baltimore — which in recent years has been [experiencing the worst overdose crisis](#) ever seen in a major American city — also saw a similarly significant decrease in fatalities. There were 680 reported overdose deaths last year, down from 1,043 in 2023, preliminary data shows.

Falling overdose deaths is not unexpected as [nationwide numbers have been decreasing since 2023](#). But the scale of Maryland's decline is startling, and likely one of the biggest in the country, according to Brendan Saloner, a professor of health policy and management at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health.

By comparison, as of August 2024, there was about a 22% decrease in overdose deaths nationally compared to the previous 12 months, according to [the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

"The size of the drop is really something to celebrate," Saloner said. But he added, "It's no time for ticker tape parades when numbers are still incredibly high. It's no time to be complacent."

Some factors behind the drop may include improved education about the presence of deadly synthetic opioid fentanyl in the drug supply, the wide availability of overdose-reversal drug naloxone, and the accessibility of medications to treat opioid addiction, Saloner said.

The numbers released Tuesday are preliminary. The final overdose numbers for last year will still take months to compile and could be higher than what preliminary data shows, Saloner said. But he believes the trend will hold true even if some numbers change.

"The decrease in fatal overdoses that we're seeing in Maryland is historic, and it's proof that our investments in behavioral health and substance use care and the incredible efforts of people all around our state are paying off," Gov. Moore said in a statement Tuesday.

"However, we still have work to do," the governor added. "We are still losing far too many of our loved ones and neighbors to preventable overdoses, and we will not let up in our efforts to meet people where they are and make connections to care."

Though overdose deaths decreased across all demographics, the crisis continues to hurt some populations more than others, the state's press release said. [Older Black men](#) and younger Hispanic people in Maryland have died at disproportionately high rates. The state [established a workgroup](#) to study and make recommendations on how to tackle racial disparities, the release said.

Dr. Eric Weintraub, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Maryland's School of Medicine, said some populations have a harder time accessing appropriate health care and putting their trust in traditional medical institutions.

Weintraub said the city and state should continue to focus on "reaching hard to reach individuals" by continuing to explore the possibility of [opening safe drug consumption sites](#). He said other measures should include expanding efforts to work with first responders to connect people to treatment and bringing medical care to community settings, such as churches.

The fall in overdose deaths comes as opioid manufacturers and distributors are paying out hundreds of millions of dollars to Maryland and Baltimore to tackle the drug crisis, presenting a “once-in-a-generation opportunity” to invest in solutions, Saloner said.

“There were thousands of people who died in the state and we’ll be living with the impact of that for a very, very long time,” he said. “I hope that the feeling that some progress is being made is also being accompanied by the sense that there is so much more we can do.”

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