



U.S. Opioid Epidemic

HUGHF Crash Course

What are opioids?

- Pain relievers derived from opium
- 2000-2010: prescriptions skyrocket
 - OxyContin (oxycodone), Vicodin (hydrocodone), morphine, methadone
- Most opioid addictions begin with abuse of prescription medication
- Heroin, fentanyl



National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)



Atlantic 2015



Why have we heard about an ‘opioid epidemic’... And seen headlines likes these?

**Opioid addiction is the biggest
drug epidemic in U.S. history.**

PBS 2017

How painkillers are turning young athletes into
heroin addicts

Sports Illustrated 2015

**‘We’re losing the battle’:
Heroin infiltrates small-town Maine**

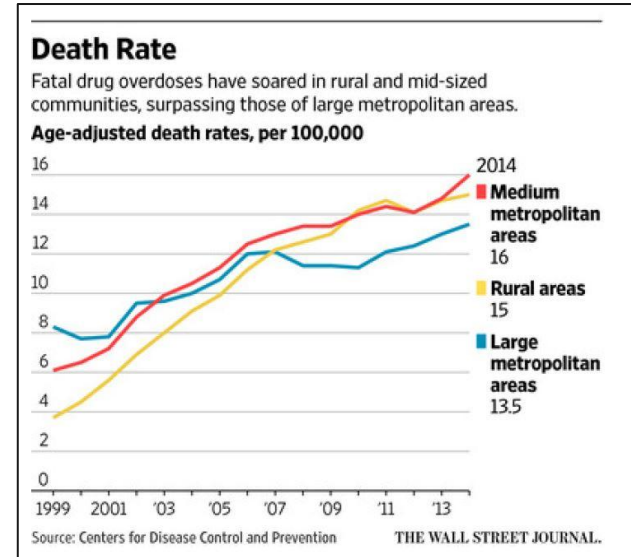
Bangor Daily News 2015

[You Draw It: Just How
Bad Is The Drug
Overdose Epidemic?](#)

New York Times 2017

Who has the opioid epidemic affected?

- Shifting demographics of drug addiction
- Epicenter of heroin addiction today: white, non-urban, middle class communities
 - 90% of first-time heroin users between 2004 and 2014 were white.
 - Source: [Journal of the American Medical Association](#)
- Compare with heroin epidemic in 1960s, crack epidemic in 1980s among communities of color
- Why this shift? How has this affected responses to the epidemic?



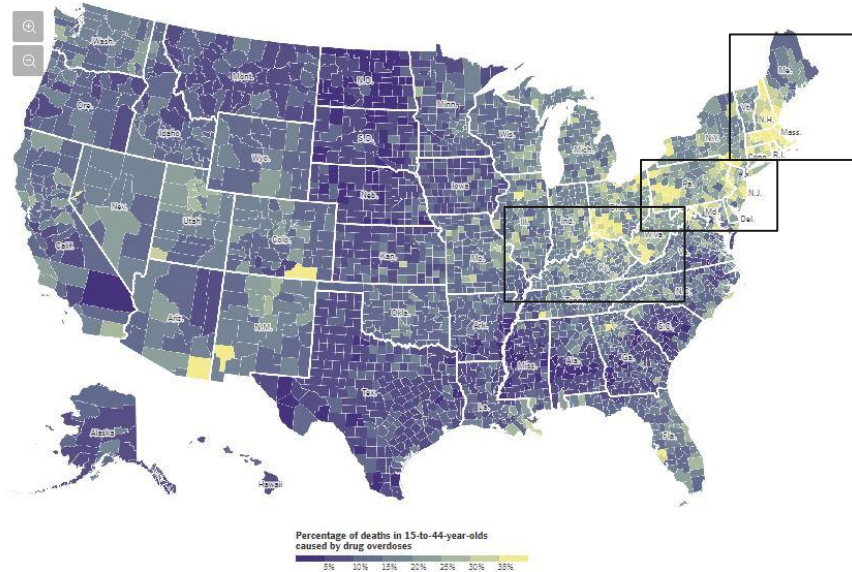
The Hungry Heart - 2013



thehungryheartmovie.org



Where has the opioid epidemic hit hardest?



Note: In counties with fewer than 10 drug overdose deaths, the map combines observed totals with modeled estimates.



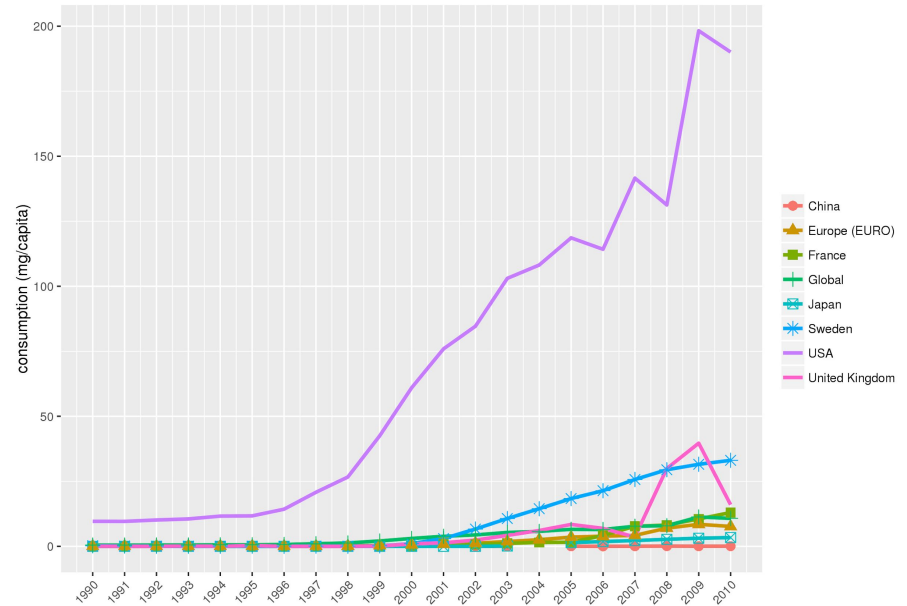
How has the opioid epidemic impacted Massachusetts?

- Department of Public Health: 2000 deaths linked to opioids in 2016
 - Is spread of epidemic slowing?
- Fentanyl - 50 times more powerful than heroin
- Governor Baker has increased funding for fighting addiction from \$120mil to \$180mil
- **Questions for Maura Healy?**

How did this epidemic come to be?

- 1990s: movement for better treatment of pain
- Marketing of opioid painkillers as non-addictive
- Drawback of cutting down availability of prescription opioids?

Oxycodone consumption (mg/capita)
1990-2010



Sources: International Narcotics Control Board; World Health Organization population data
By: Pain & Policy Studies Group, University of Wisconsin/WHO Collaborating Center, 2017



How has the U.S. responded?

- Discouraging over-prescription of opioids
- Promoting alternative pain management methods
- Increasing access to treatment
 - Availability of treatment has not kept up
- Change in 'war on drugs' rhetoric?



More to learn...

- How has the epidemic affected other public health issues?
- What can be done in Massachusetts?
- How should the epidemic shape our approach to pain management around the world?
- Why the U.S.? Why not other developed countries?
- How is drug addiction treated in the U.S.? Around the world?



Sources

- <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/index.html>
- <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/teaching-packets/neurobiology-drug-addiction/section-iii-action-heroin-morphine/4-opiates-binding-to-opiate-rece>
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