



# Opioid & Substance Data among American Indian & Alaska Native People

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didg<sup>w</sup>álič Immersion Training, January 18, 2024



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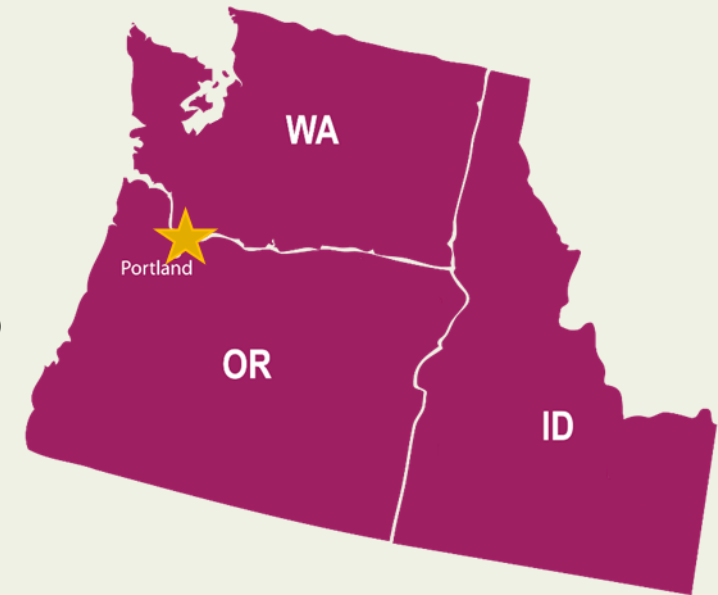
# Where do I work?

## Northwest Tribal Epidemiology Center (NWTEC)

- Housed within the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB)
- One of 12 Tribal Epicenters across the US

Our organization provides epidemiological and public health support for the **43 federally recognized tribes** in a three-state region: Washington, Oregon, and Idaho (~300,000 AI/AN)

- If you are in the NW region, contact me for data assistance!
- If you are located outside the NW, contact your EpiCenter!  
<https://tribalepicenters.org/>



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# Tribal Public Health Infrastructure Grant (TEC-PHI)

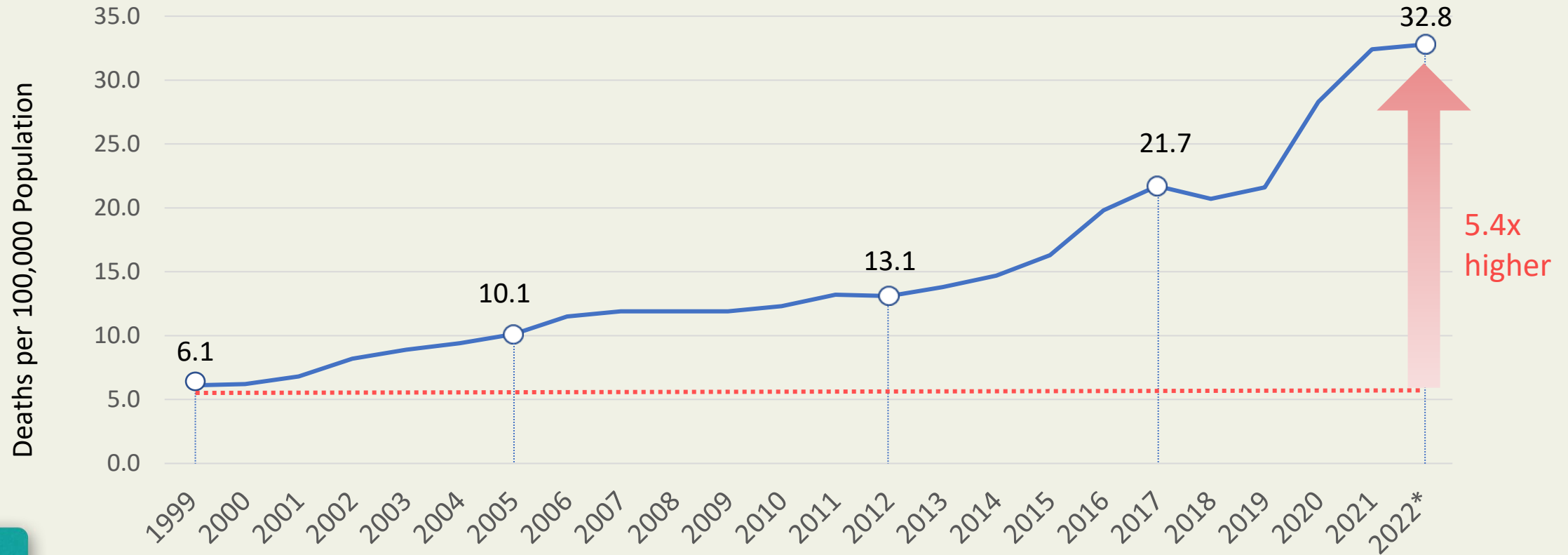
- Grant from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to Tribal Epidemiology Centers
- Specific section on **opioid & substance data** capacity building
  - Produce substance use data reports for AI/AN
    - Available online: <http://www.npaihb.org/idea-nw/>
  - Assist NW tribes with substance use data needs
    - Contact me! [cwilkie@NPAIHB.org](mailto:cwilkie@NPAIHB.org)
  - Gain access to additional opioid/substance state & federal data sources
  - Work with partners to address racial misclassification in data systems



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# National Drug Overdose Deaths: Trend Since 1999



\*Data for 2022 is preliminary

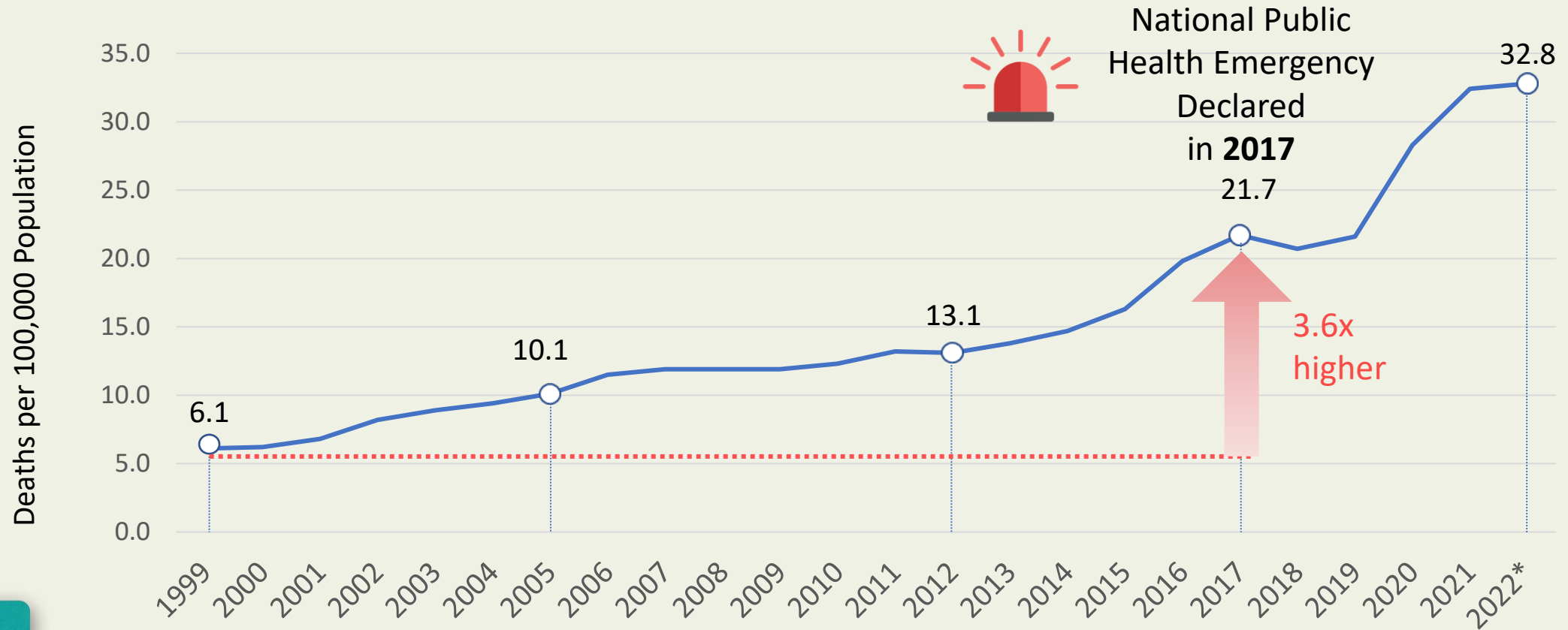


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# National Drug Overdose Deaths: Trend Since 1999



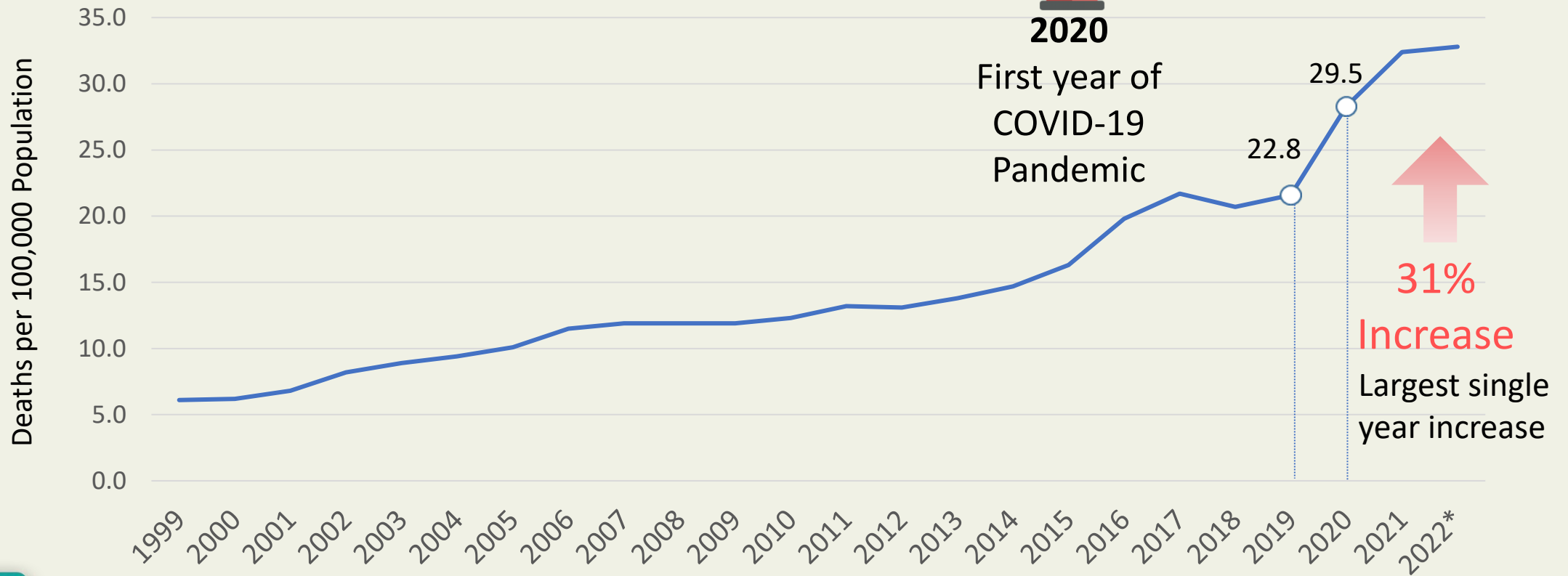
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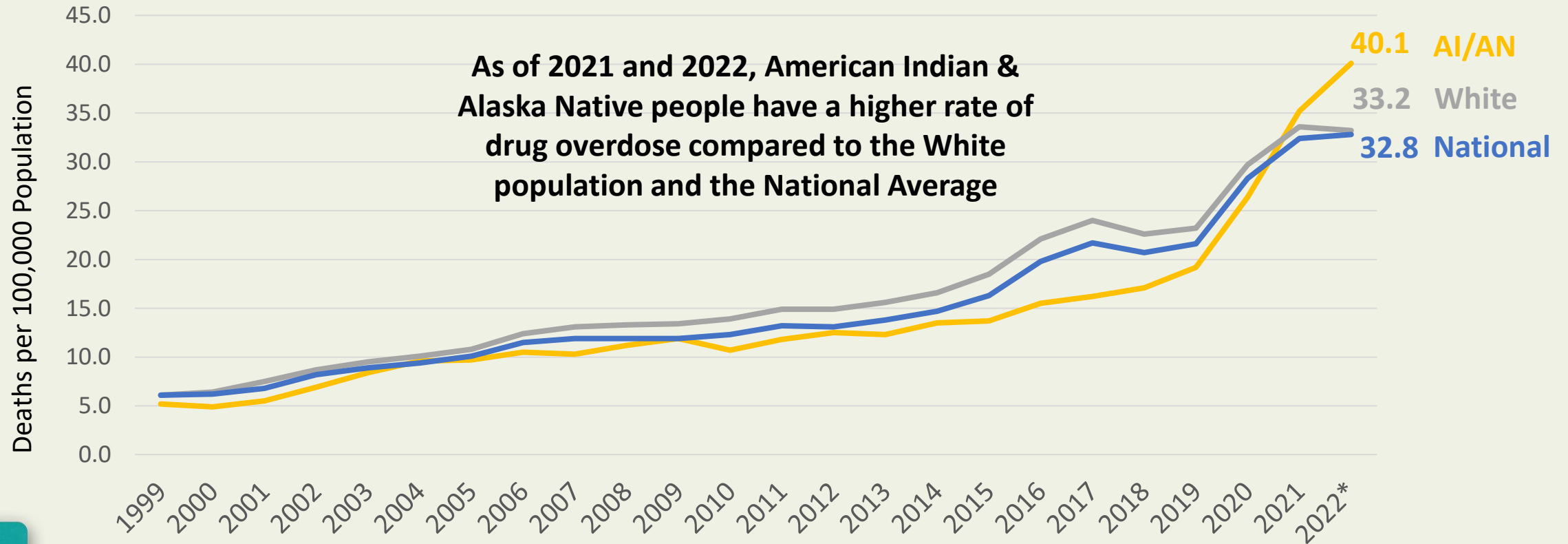
# National Drug Overdose Deaths: Trend Since 1999



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# National Drug Overdose Deaths: Trend Since 1999



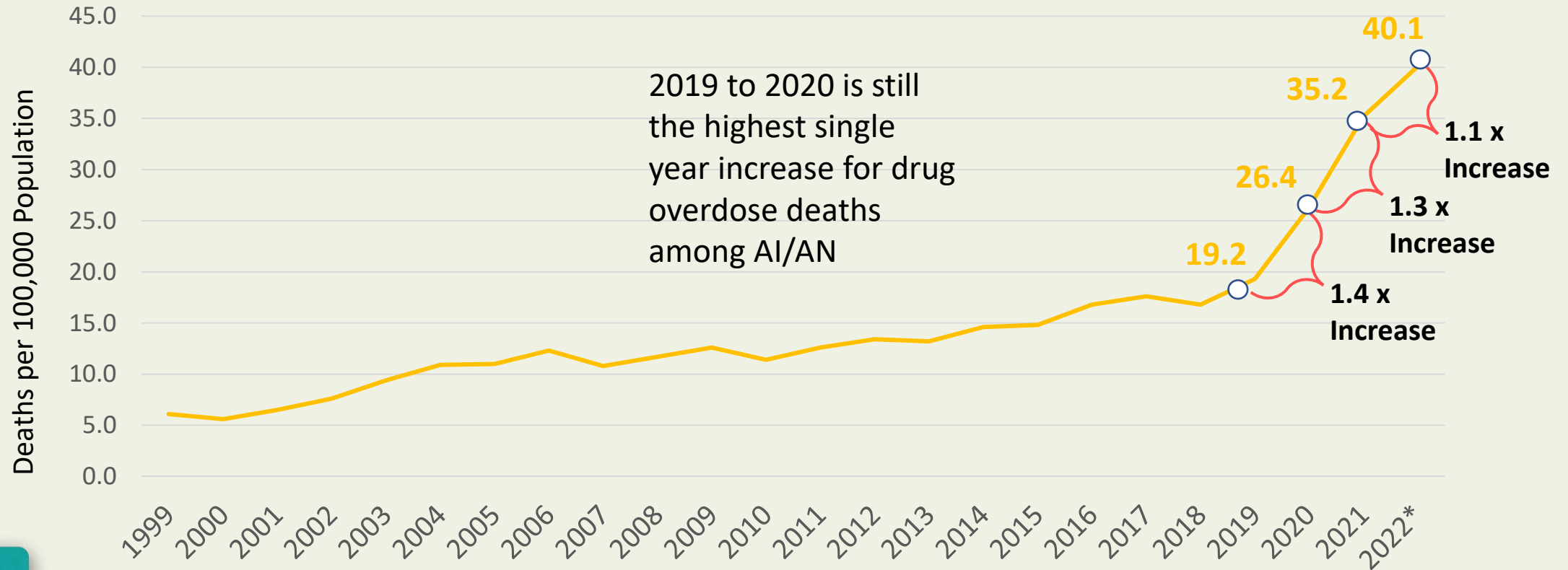
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# National Drug Overdose Deaths: AI/AN Rate



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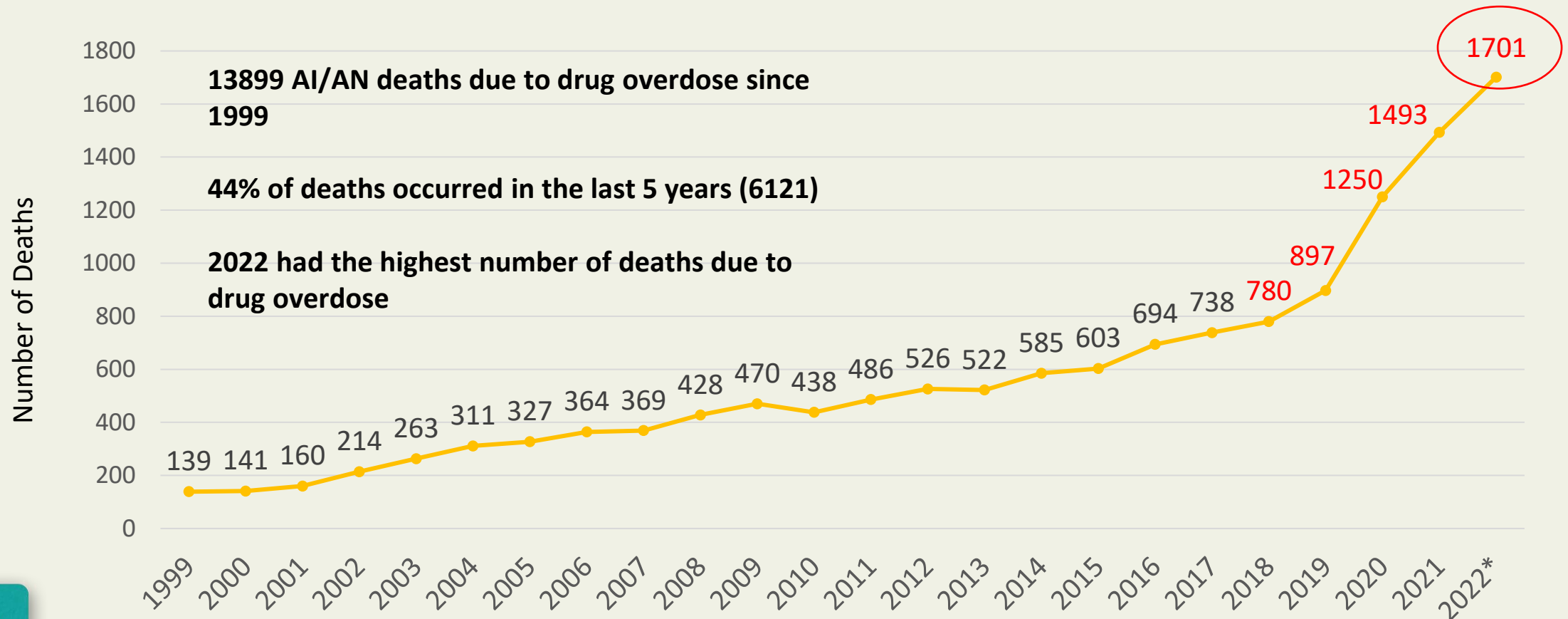


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# National Drug Overdose Deaths: AI/AN Number of Deaths



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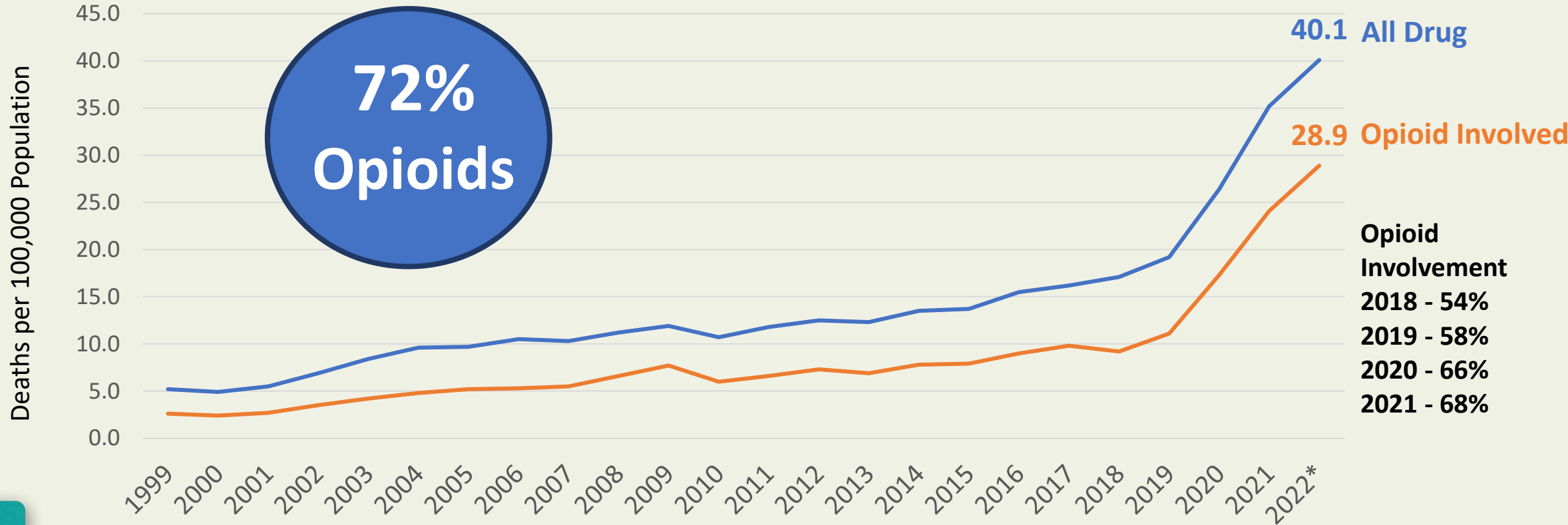
# What Drugs are Involved?



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# National AI/AN Drug Overdose Deaths: Which Drugs?



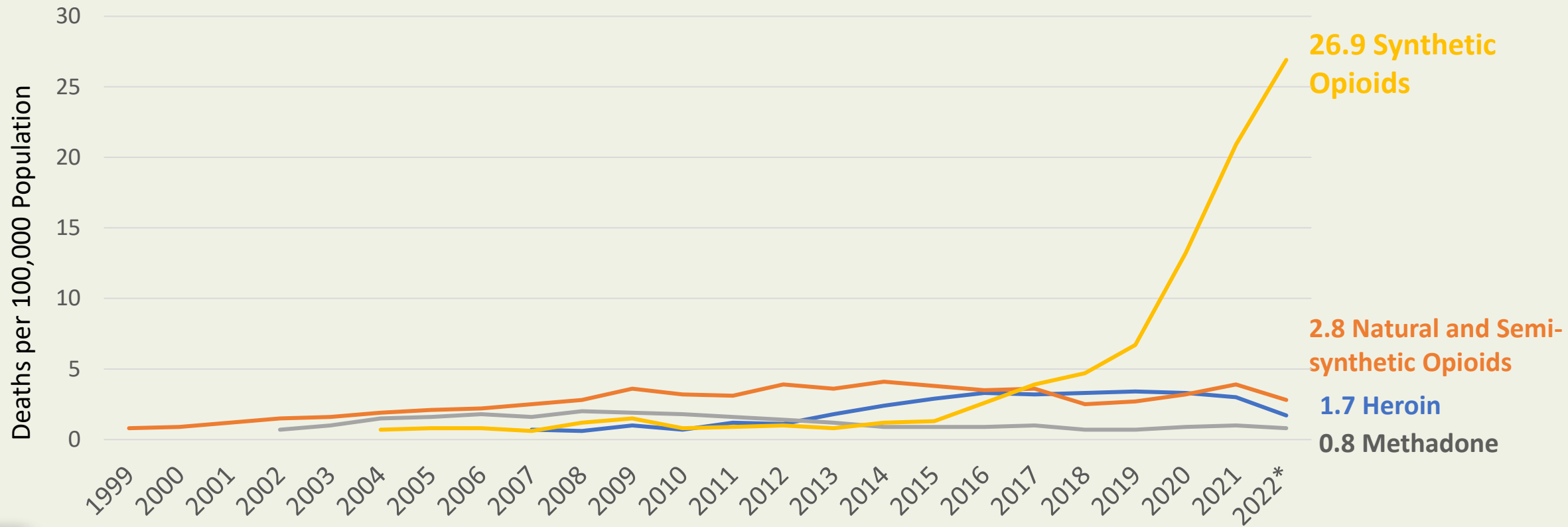
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# National AI/AN Drug Overdose Deaths: Which Opioids?



\*Data for 2022 is preliminary



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# National AI/AN Drug Overdose Deaths: Prescription Opioids



Synthetic Opioids Include:

- Fentanyl
- Tramadol

Natural and Semi-synthetic Opioids Include:

- Hydrocodone
- Oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet)
- Morphine
- Hydromorphone (Dilaudid)

The NIH National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that **fentanyl** now makes up most of this category of drugs<sup>1</sup>

Note: The individual **may or may not have had a valid prescription** for the drug. It could have been obtained illegally.

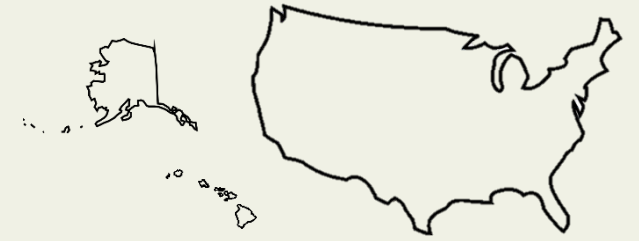


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1. <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>



# National AI/AN Drug Overdose Deaths: Fentanyl



- Fentanyl is 50-100 times stronger than morphine
  - 2 mg of fentanyl equates to a potentially deadly dose
- Originally developed for cancer patients (pain)
- Manufactured as a pharmaceutical, but increasingly manufactured illegally
- Illegally manufactured to look like other opioid pills or added to other drugs, often unknown to the person consuming it



## DEA Fentanyl Seizures in 2022:

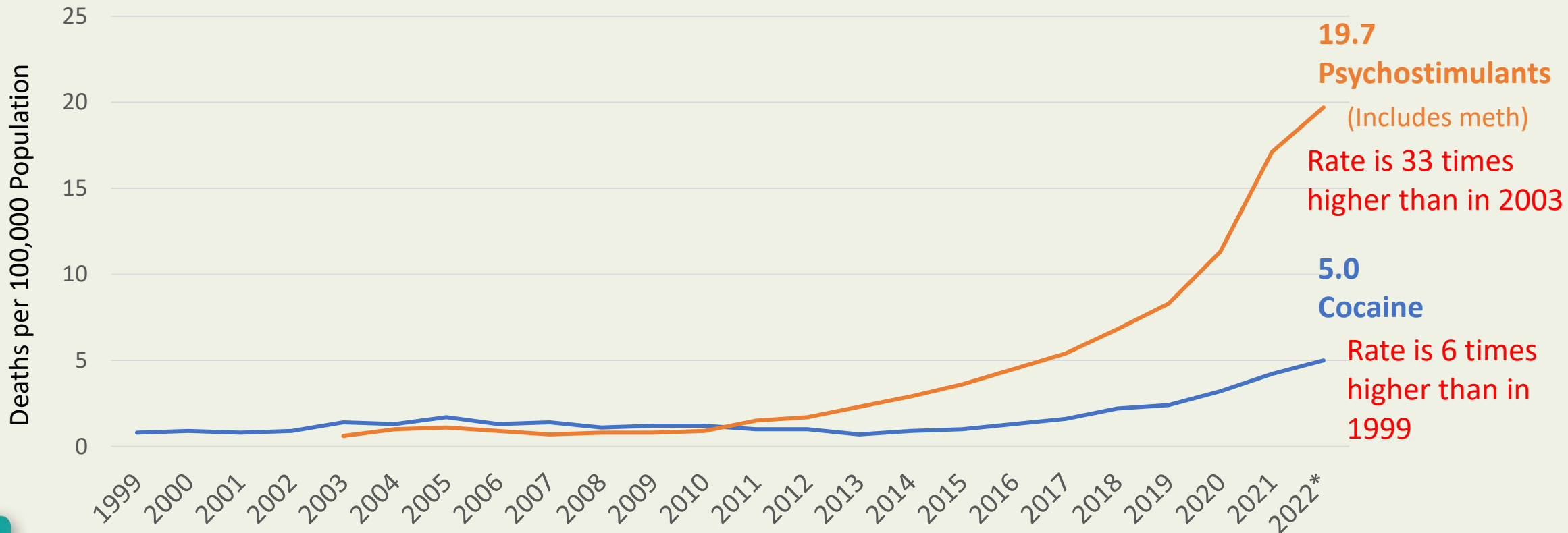
- 59.6 million fentanyl-laced fake pills
- More than 13,300 pounds of fentanyl powder
- These seizures are equivalent to more than 398 million lethal doses of fentanyl



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1. <https://www.dea.gov/factsheets/fentanyl>
2. <https://www.dea.gov>
3. <https://www.dea.gov/onepill>

# National AI/AN Drug Overdose Deaths: Other Drugs?



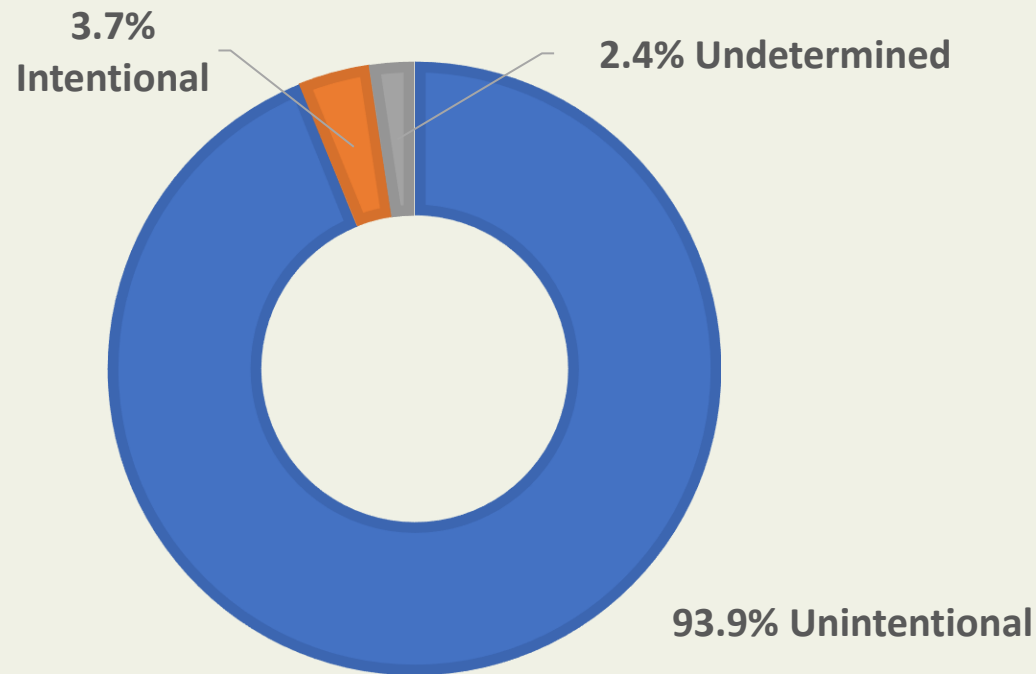
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# National AI/AN Drug Overdose Deaths: Overdose Intent, 2018-2022\*



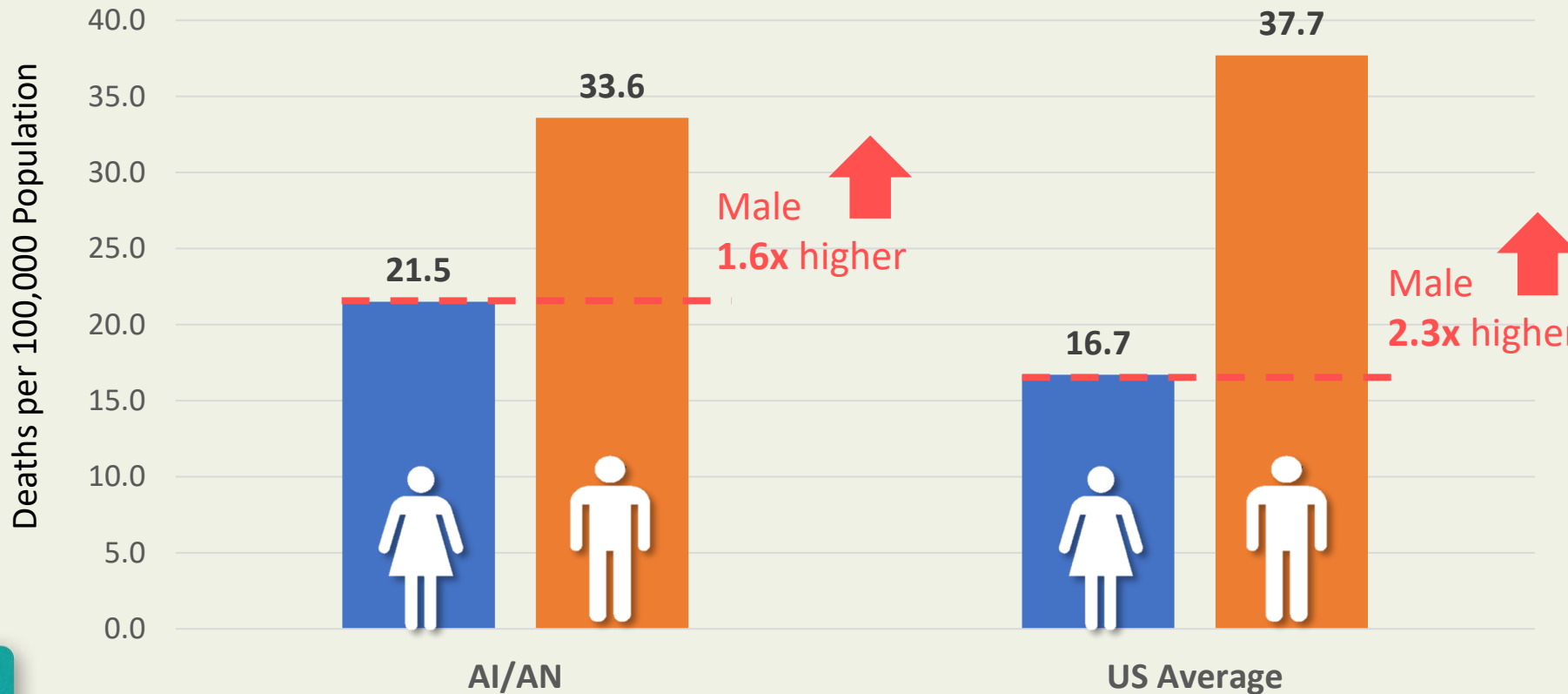
- **Most AI/AN overdose deaths were unintentional (accidental).**
- 3.7% of overdose deaths were intentional (suicide)
- In some cases, the intent could not be determined

\*Data for 2022 is preliminary; Homicide suppressed due to small numbers



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# National Drug Overdose Deaths: By Sex, 2018-2022\*



- All Drugs:
- **Less difference in rates between AI/AN males and females** compared to US average
  - AI/AN female rate 1.3x that of the US female rate
  - AI/AN male rate is lower than the US male rate

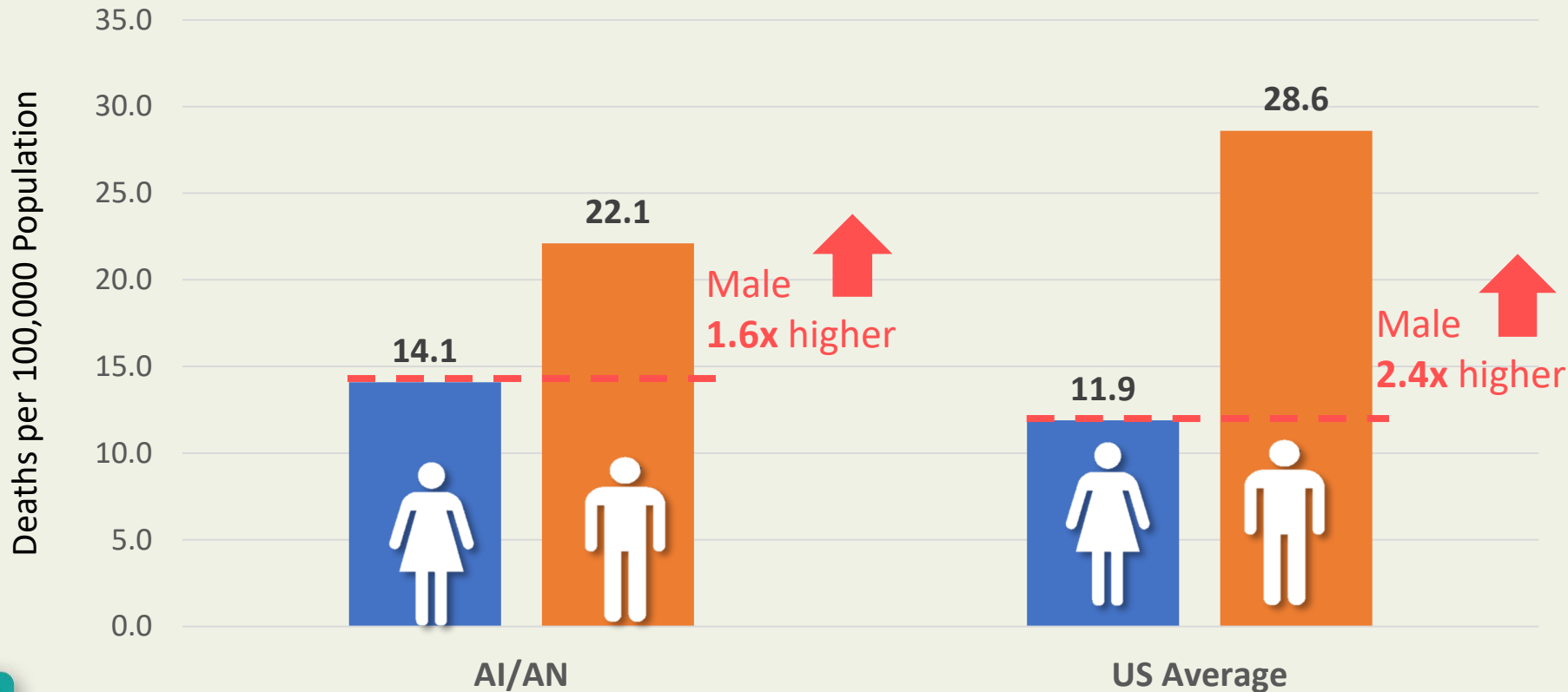
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# National Drug Overdose Deaths: By Sex, Opioids, 2018-2022\*



## Opioids:

- **Less difference in rates between AI/AN males and females** compared to US average
- AI/AN female rate 1.2x that of the US female rate
- AI/AN male rate is lower than the US male rate

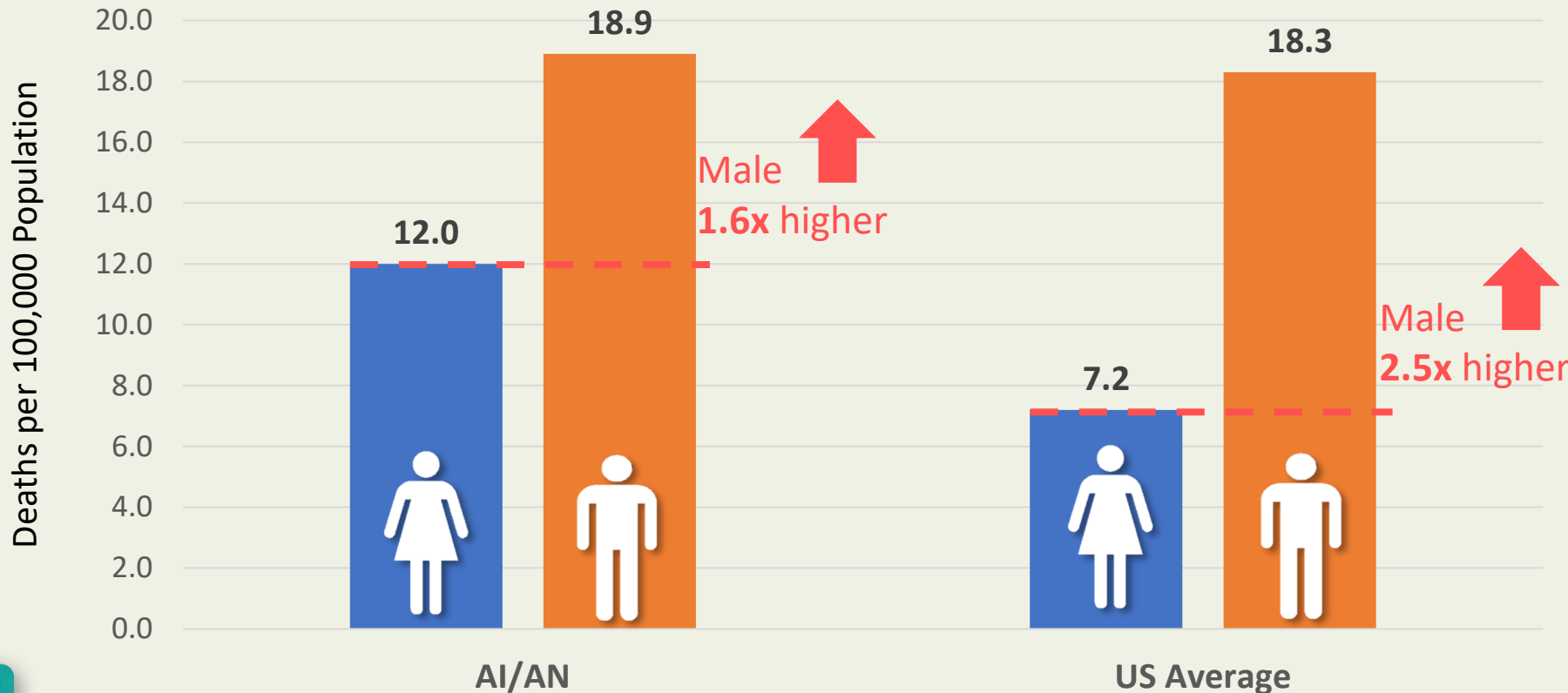
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# National Drug Overdose Deaths: By Sex, Stimulants, 2018-2022\*



## Stimulants:

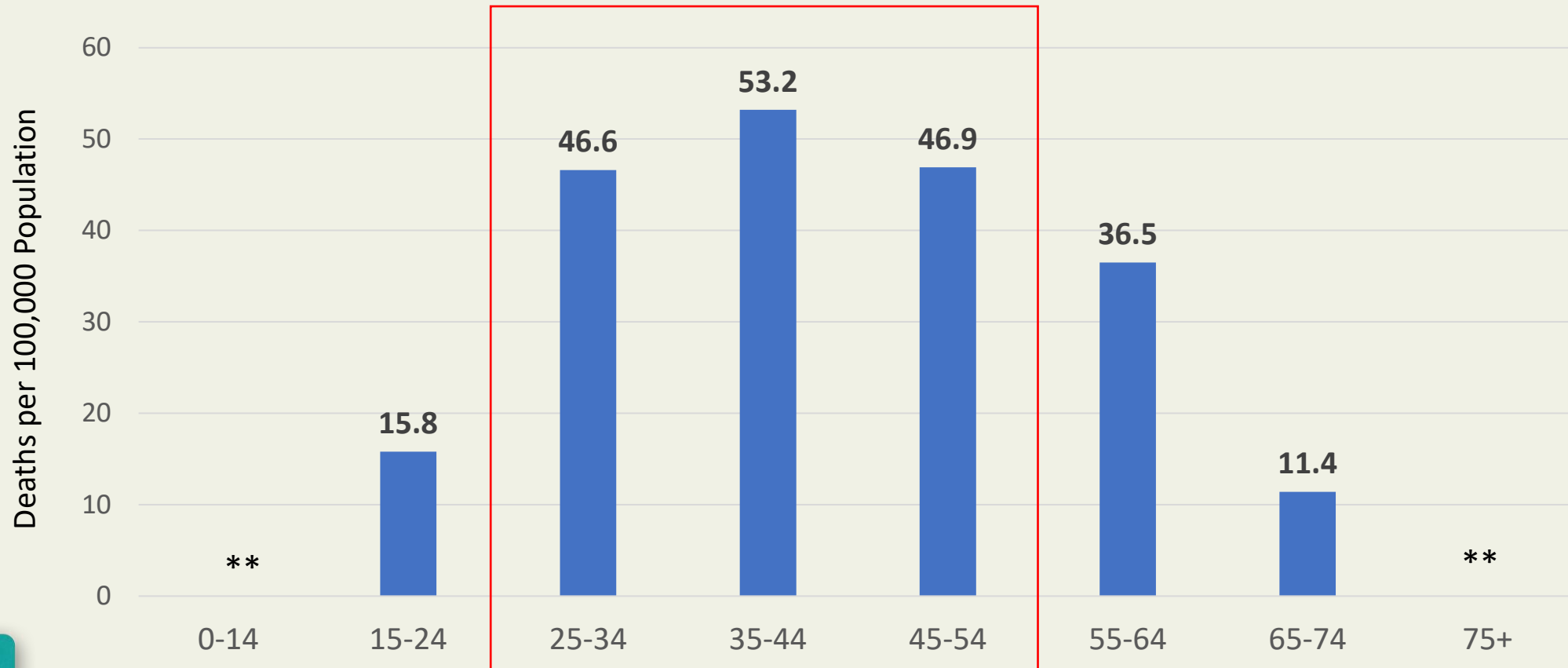
- **Less difference in rates between AI/AN males and females** compared to US average
- AI/AN female rate 1.7x that of the US female rate
- Male AI/AN rate is similar to the US male rate

\*Data for 2022 is preliminary



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# National AI/AN Drug Overdose Deaths: By Age, 2018-2022\*

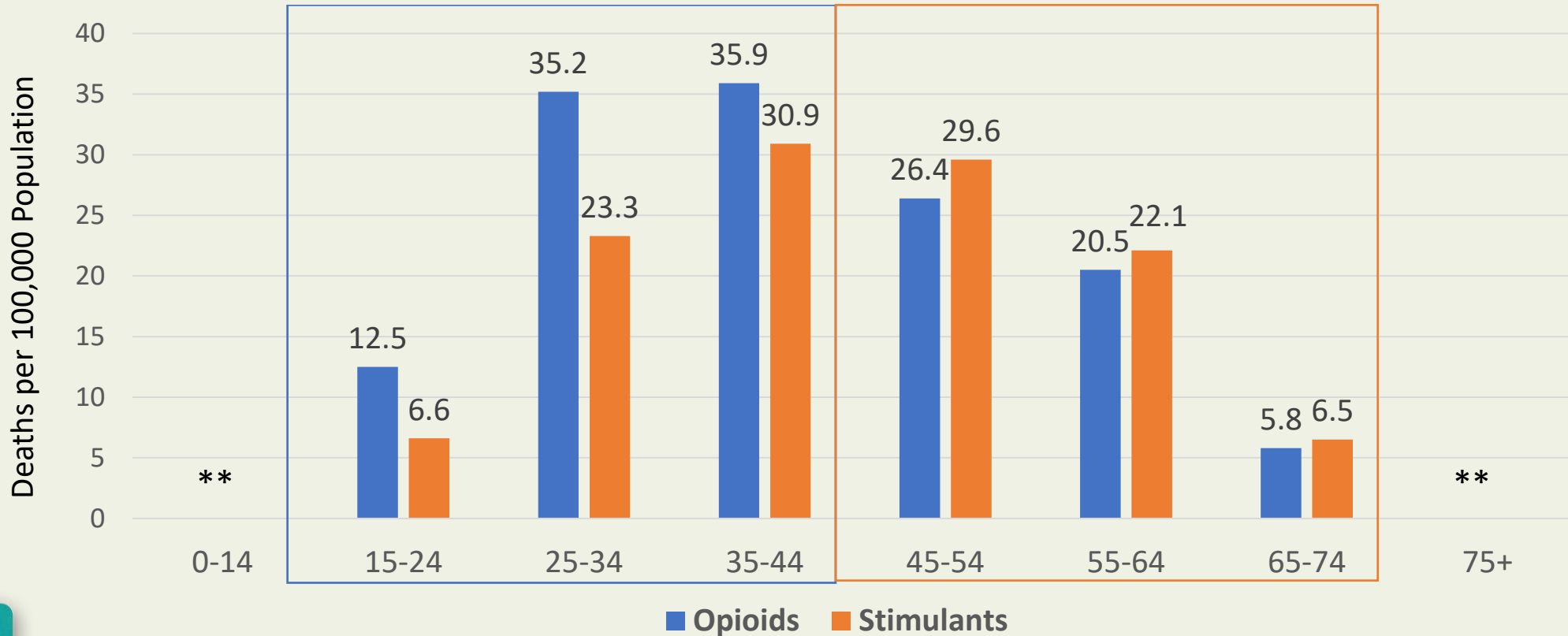


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# National AI/AN Drug Overdose Deaths: By Age & Drug, 2018-2022\*

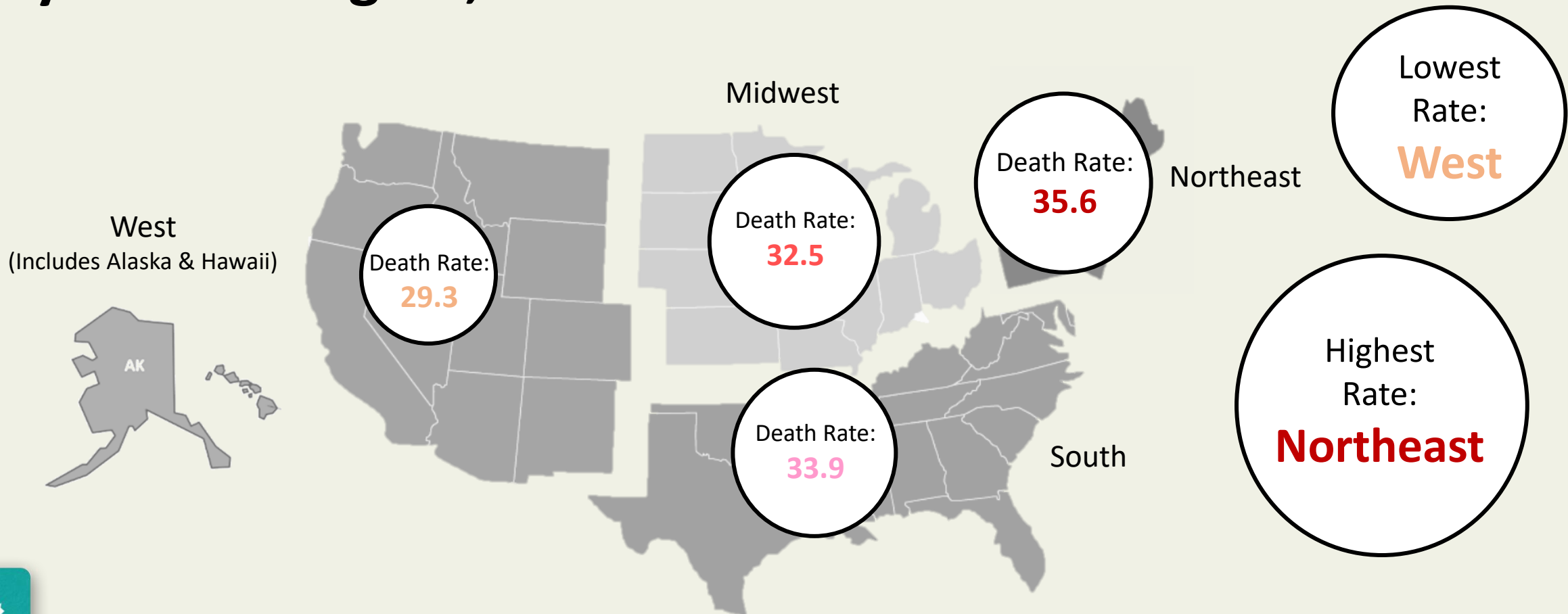


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# National All Population Drug Overdose Deaths: By Census Region, 2022\* Rates

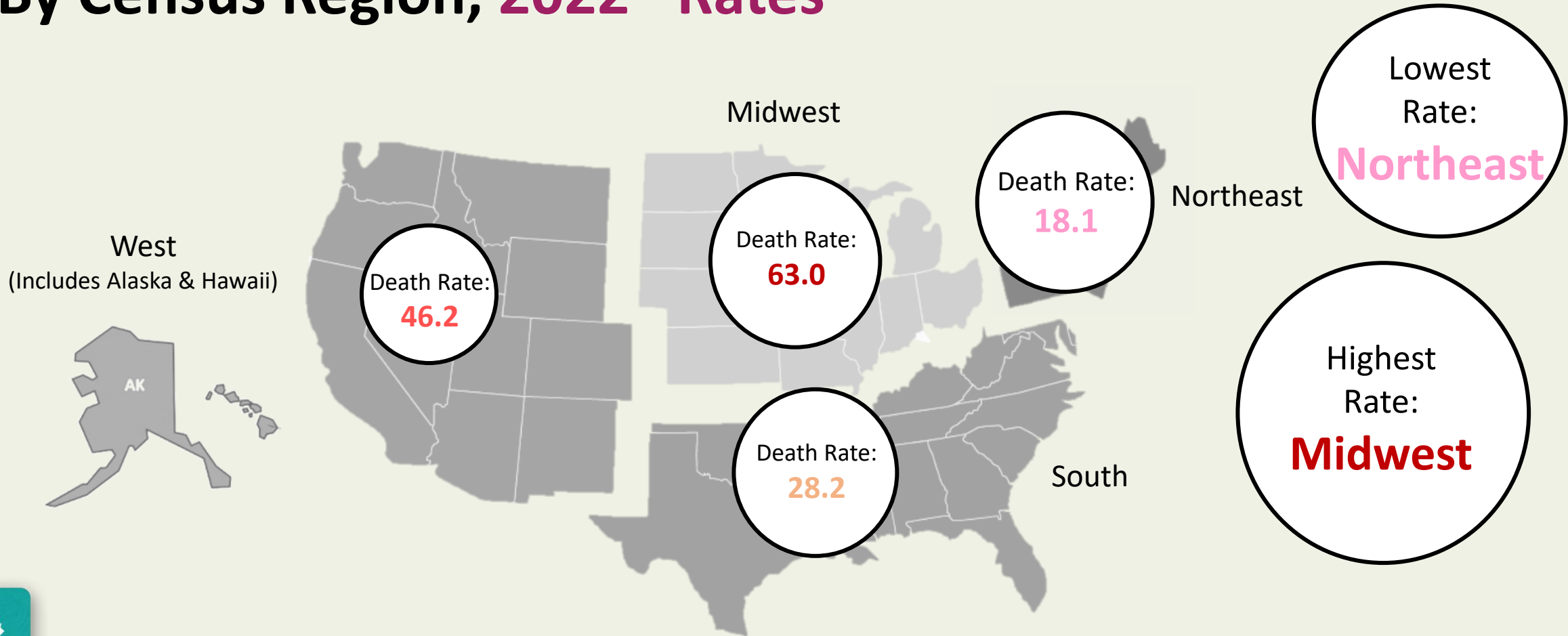


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# National AI/AN Drug Overdose Deaths: By Census Region, 2022\* Rates



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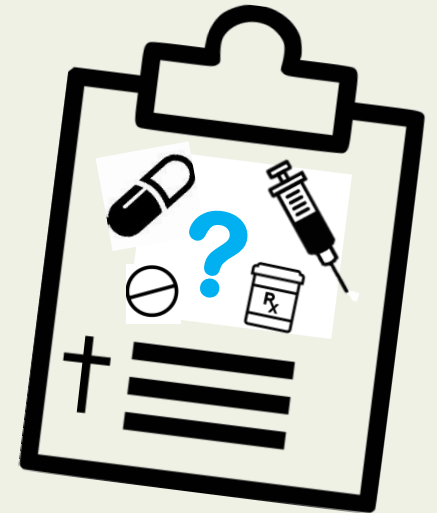
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# Opioid and Overdose Epidemiology Data Challenges

- Racial misclassification
  - Many AI/AN are not classified as AI/AN in state data systems  
= **underrepresentation** of burden on AI/AN
- Limited access to behavioral health/treatment data
  - Hard to know how many people have SUD in the community or are being treated for SUD
- Difficulty obtaining tribe-specific data
  - Can only provide state or county data
- Inconsistency in overdose cause of death reporting
  - What drug(s) actually involved?
    - “Unspecified Narcotic”



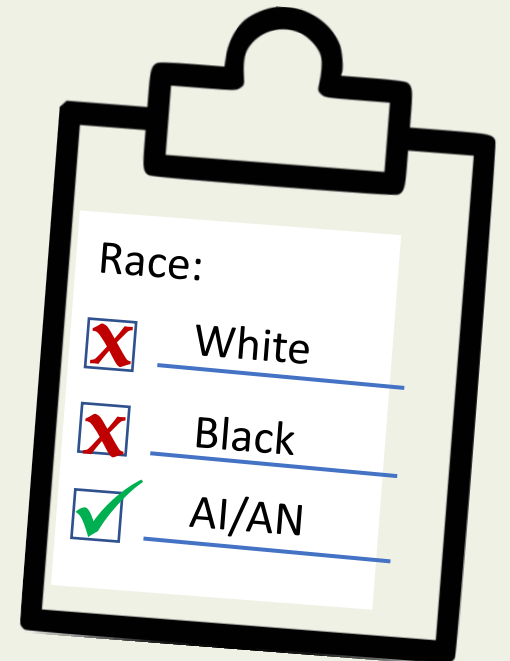
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# What is racial misclassification?

- Racial misclassification is an incorrect recording of a person's race in a data or surveillance system

Examples:

- A person who is American Indian is coded as “white” on their death certificate
- A person who is American Indian and Black is recorded as only “Black” on their hospital visit record
- A person who is American Indian is recorded as “Hispanic White” at their doctor’s office



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# Why does misclassification matter?

Misclassified AI/AN are not counted in AI/AN health reports, disease rates, or public health surveillance

Leads to an **underrepresentation** of AI/AN and:

- Inaccurate AI/AN health data
- Artificially lowered disease burden
- Too few AI/AN to calculate stable disease rates and trends
- Incomplete health data for public health decision-making



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# Take Away Messages

- Deaths from drug overdoses are increasing over time
  - Steep increase since start of COVID-19 pandemic (2020)
- Most overdose deaths involve opioids, synthetic opioids (specifically fentanyl) are most common
- Deaths involving stimulants (mostly methamphetamine) are increasing
- Male AI/AN have higher rates of overdose compared to female AI/AN, but lower rates of overdose compared to the US male average (except for stimulant-related deaths, about the same as US average)
- Female AI/AN have higher stimulant-related overdose deaths compared to the US female average
- The Midwest region has the highest rate of AI/AN overdose deaths, followed by the West
  - This differs from the US average where the West and Midwest have the lowest rates
- National and state statistics may significantly underestimate AI/AN statistics



# Thank You!

## Questions?

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