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STUDY ESTIMATES NEARLY 4 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE US INJECTED DRUGS IN 2018

New findings shed light on the growing number of people who inject drugs in the US and highlight increases in the risk of HIV, hepatitis, overdose, and other health risks associated with injection drug use.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA (July 7, 2022) – A new set of publications, led by the [Coalition for Applied Modeling for Prevention](#) (CAMP), estimates the burden of injection drug use (IDU) in the United States. Findings from one study published in [Clinical Infectious Diseases](#) suggest that the number of people who inject drugs in the U.S. has substantially grown in the past decade, estimating that nearly 4 million people injected drugs in 2018 — a five-fold increase from the most recent U.S. [estimate](#) from 2011. Other findings from the CDC-funded CAMP effort indicate a sharp rise in the burden of fatal and non-fatal overdose among people who inject drugs. Results published in [Drug and Alcohol Dependence](#) found that injection-involved overdose deaths more than tripled from 2007 to 2018. In addition, findings pre-published on [medRx](#) estimate there are 40 non-fatal overdose events for each fatal overdose among people who inject drugs.

Findings from these publications emphasize the need for a scaling up of services for people who inject drugs. Lead author of the *CID* publication, [Dr. Heather Bradley](#), explains, “Our estimate of the number of people who inject drugs in the U.S. indicates that services need to be substantially expanded — this includes services to meet harm-reduction needs and efforts to reduce escalating rates of overdose mortality, as well as services to address the spread of infectious diseases.” Dr. Bradley and her team note that expanding services to combat infectious diseases is critical, as increases in injection drug use prevalence threaten the success of U.S. elimination strategies for hepatitis C and HIV.

In addition to the scaling up of services for people who inject drugs, these studies highlight the importance of interventions that aim to prevent injection-involved overdose mortality. “Our team’s findings estimate that in 2018, 40% of overdose deaths were injection-related, suggesting there is a critical need for the design and implementation of targeted public health strategies focused on reducing injection-involved overdoses,” notes [Dr. Eric Hall](#), lead author of the *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* publication.

These findings also provide valuable insight into the impacts of COVID-19 on injection drug use in the U.S. “Understanding pre-pandemic injection-related overdose rates will enable us to quantify changes in rates during the pandemic — a first step toward understanding the driving factors of these changes and identifying needed improvements in the provision of harm-reduction services such as syringe service programs and naloxone distribution, as well as substance use treatment,” emphasizes [Jalissa Shealey](#), lead author of the pre-published analysis on medRx.

About CAMP: The Coalition for Applied Modeling for Prevention (CAMP) is made up of academic researchers with expertise in epidemiology, economic and infectious disease modeling, and health services and policy research who work in partnership with leaders at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to create and advance models that improve public health decision-making at the national, state, and local levels.

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