



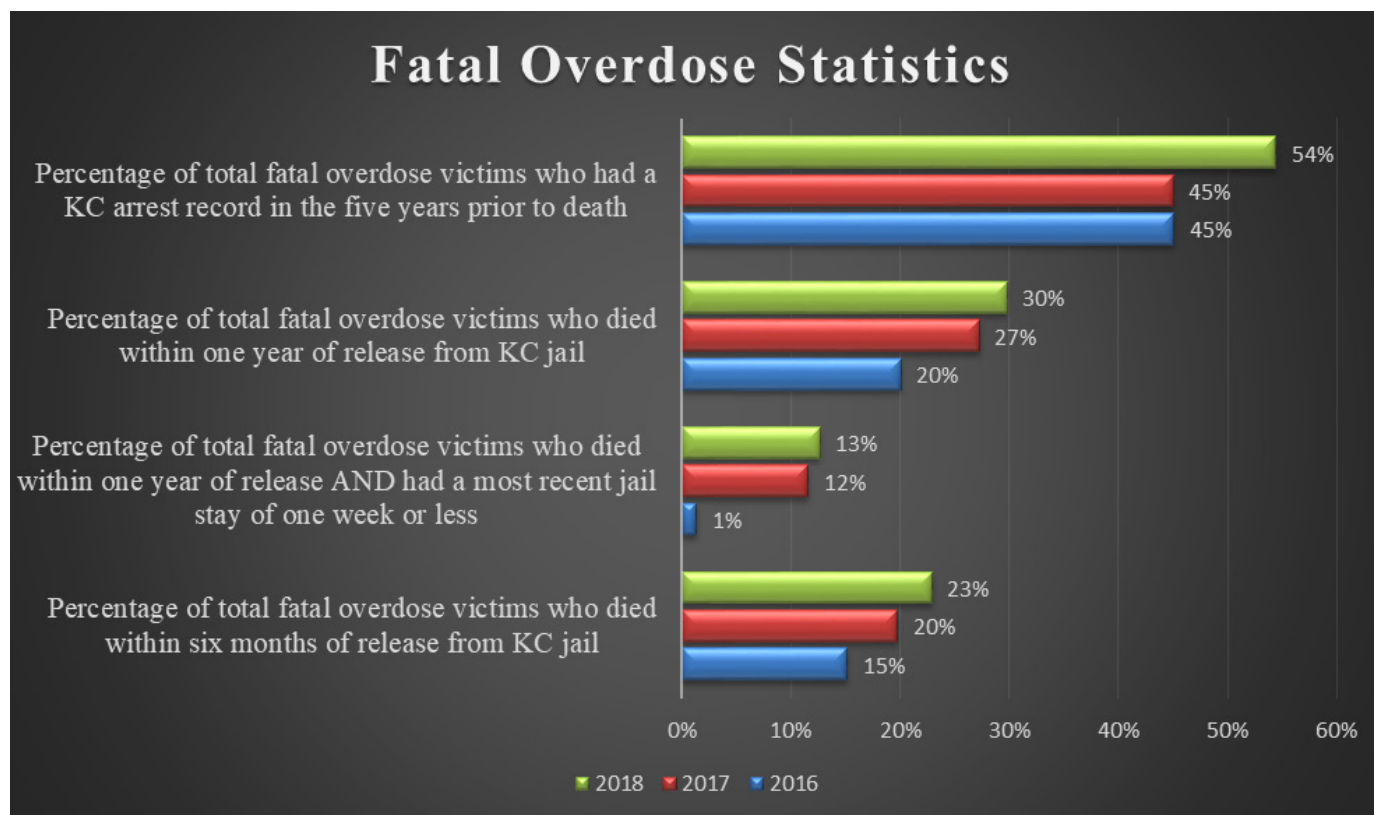


## Fatal Overdose Victims and the Criminal Justice System - 2018 Report -

In 2018, 325 people died in Knox County due to a drug overdose. The number of overdoses countywide has increased by 3.2% from 2017 to 2018, significantly less than the 41% increase from 2016 to 2017. Lethal drugs like Fentanyl continue to be the most frequently found drug in drug-related deaths. The Knox County Regional Forensic Center's most recent Drug Related Death Report indicates that the top four drugs found through autopsies in Knox County include (1) Fentanyl & Analogues, (2) Methamphetamine, (3) Heroin, and (4) Cocaine. For the full report, visit the Knox County Regional Forensic Center's website.<sup>1</sup>

The total number of fatal overdose cases reviewed by the District Attorney General's Office and the Drug Related Death Task Force in 2018 is 294. This number excludes fatal overdose cases if the cause of death is alcohol intoxication or suicide, or if the incident originated from outside of Knox County.

The following data details contact between local law enforcement and individuals who fatally overdosed in Knox County (KC). The table below includes 2016, 2017, and 2018 statistics.



Note: The algorithm for calculating the fatal overdose statistics was revised for the 2018 report. This caused the yearly statistics from previous reports to slightly fluctuate.



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As shown, more than half of people who fatally overdosed had an arrest record in the five years prior to their death, representing a 9% increase from 2017 to 2018. Additional analyzed data from fatal overdoses in 2016, 2017, and 2018 revealed that not only did the number of fatal overdoses increase in Knox County, the proportion of those who were recently released from jail also continued to increase.

In 2018, 30 percent of those who died were released from jail sometime in the year before their death. In 2017 and 2018, nearly half of those individuals had a most recent jail stay of seven days or less, indicating that many people who fatally overdose and are involved in the criminal justice system have short-term jail stays.

The high number of people who fatally overdosed and have recent interactions with law enforcement suggests an opportunity for intervention. Intervening through or within the justice system is a proven, cost-effective method of reducing recidivism rates and increasing recovery rates for individuals with substance use disorders, and as this report continues to suggest, it can save lives.<sup>2</sup>

To find the Knox County District Attorney General's Office previous reports, visit [knoxcounty.org/dag](http://knoxcounty.org/dag).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Knox County Regional Forensic Center, 2018 Drug Related Death Statistics.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Fazel, Yoon, and Hayes; 2017 (likelihood of SUDs in incarcerated people). Brinkley-Rubenstein et al., 2018 (opportunities to receive treatment). Binswanger et al., 2007 (national data about post-release vulnerability).

<sup>3</sup> [Knox County District Attorney General's Office, Suspected Overdose Death Statistics.](#)