

10/03/2022

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, 2020

Epidemiology, Drug Surveillance Unit



THE PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING PROGRAM (PDMP)

The purpose of this report is to describe opioid prescribing patterns in Georgia during 2020. Prescription data from the Georgia Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) were analyzed by the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) Epidemiology Program Drug Surveillance Unit. Certain prescribing practices are considered high-risk, and may predispose patients to opioid use disorder and overdose, hence contributing to the growing opioid epidemic (for more information about the opioid epidemic in Georgia, see the Georgia opioid overdose surveillance reports available at <https://dph.georgia.gov/drug-surveillance-unit>). These prescribing practices are presented as PDMP indicators in this report; detailed analyses of the PDMP data were conducted to measure the total number of opioid prescriptions, number of patients receiving opioids, drug type, days dispensed, and other indicators of prescribing such as opioid and benzodiazepine prescriptions.

In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released opioid prescribing guidelines for healthcare providers for chronic diseases (<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/guideline.html>). Appropriate prescribing and adhering to these CDC guidelines to prevent problematic prescribing may help improve patient care and safety, and decrease the risk of opioid use disorder and overdose. Data in this report will be used to educate stakeholders and inform prevention efforts across the state.

The PDMP can help prescribers and dispensers of controlled substances identify patients who are at risk of a substance use disorder, who “doctor shop”, or who are prescribed dangerous amounts and/or combinations of controlled substances. It can also help identify inappropriate prescribing practices. The PDMP does not interfere with appropriate, professional prescribing and dispensing; it is intended only to help eliminate duplicative prescribing, overprescribing, and diversion of controlled substances. PDMP data are also used to support and inform Georgia’s overarching statewide opioid and substance use response strategic plan, which spans across myriad agencies and activities.

PDMP Requirements

Since July 1, 2017, dispensers have been required by Georgia law (https://dph.georgia.gov/sites/dph.georgia.gov/files/HB249_law.pdf) to enter prescription information for any Schedule II-V controlled substance within 24 hours of dispensing. Prescribers were required to register into the PDMP system by January 1, 2018. Beginning July 1, 2018, prescribers are required to check the PDMP before prescribing schedule II opioids and cocaine derivatives, or benzodiazepines, with some exceptions (<https://dph.georgia.gov/pdmp>). The PDMP is a tool for prescribers to review a patient’s prescription history to assist with appropriate and safe prescribing of controlled substances.

Only prescribers and dispensers who practice in Georgia are required to use the PDMP. Prescribers and dispensers are allowed to register two delegates (staff without a DEA number) per shift or rotation to check the PDMP and retrieve patient prescription histories.

PDMP Data Sharing

Georgia law (2017 Georgia House Bill 249) allows DPH to share PDMP prescription information with electronic health record systems, and other States, including law enforcement from other states through subpoenas. Law enforcement agencies may need these data when they are conducting investigations into inappropriate prescribing or dispensing of controlled substances.

Georgia Opioid and Substance Misuse Response

For more information:

- County level data and other Georgia drug surveillance reports:
<https://dph.georgia.gov/drug-surveillance-unit>
- Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) Main Opioid Page:
<https://dph.georgia.gov/stopopioidaddiction>
- Georgia drug overdose mortality interactive maps and statistics:
<https://oasis.state.ga.us/PageDirect.aspx?referer=MortalityDrugOverdoses>
- Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) information, GA PDMP Overview, and FAQs:
<https://dph.georgia.gov/pdmp>

Georgia PDMP, 2020: Key Findings

Georgia saw improvements in opioid prescribing practices from 2019 to 2020, as evidenced by these PDMP indicators:

- ❖ In 2020, there were 6,925,603 opioid prescriptions dispensed to 1,870,321 patients in Georgia. These prescriptions averaged 18.3 days of opioids dispensed per prescription.
- ❖ From 2019 to 2020, the number of opioid prescriptions statewide decreased by 9%, benzodiazepine prescriptions by 12%, and stimulants by 18%.
- ❖ The number of patients receiving opioid prescriptions decreased by 10% from 2019 to 2020. The average number of days dispensed per opioid prescription increased by 2%.
- ❖ In the first quarter of 2019 (Q1), there were 1,946,048 opioid prescriptions dispensed compared to 1,786,245 prescriptions in the last quarter of 2020 (Q4).
- ❖ From 2019 to 2020 the rate of opioid prescriptions dispensed decreased by 12% among persons aged 5-54 years, 5% among those aged 55-64 years, 1% among those aged 65-74 years, 1% among those aged 75-84 years, and 1% among those aged 85+. Opioid prescriptions decreased 6% among both males and females.
- ❖ High opioid dosages are associated with an increased risk of opioid use disorder and overdose; the 2016 CDC opioid prescribing guidelines recommended that daily opioid dosages should not exceed 90 morphine milligram equivalents (MME). The percent of patients in Georgia who were receiving an average daily dose of ≥ 90 (MME) of opioids decreased by 13.7% from Quarter 1 (Q1) 2019 to Q4 2020.
- ❖ Short-Acting Hydrocodone, Oxycodone, and Tramadol were the most-prescribed opioids in Georgia during both 2019 and 2020.
- ❖ The number of registered PDMP users increased by 12.5% from December 2019 to May 2020.
- ❖ Patient queries by prescribers (or their delegates) and dispensers increased from 9.0 million queries in 2019 to 10.5 million queries in 2020.



PDMP Data Indicators

Data Source

All schedule II-V drug prescriptions dispensed and reported to the Georgia Prescription Drug Monitoring Program during 2016–2020

PDMP Indicator Description

Opioid analgesic prescriptions

Opioid analgesic-controlled substance prescriptions dispensed and reported to the PDMP. Drugs administered to patients by substance abuse treatment programs are usually excluded from PDMP files and therefore are not captured by this indicator. Additional exclusion criteria include: (1) drugs not typically used in outpatient settings or otherwise not critical for calculating dosages in morphine milligram equivalents (MME), such as cough and cold formulations including elixirs, and combination products containing antitussives, decongestants, antihistamines, and expectorants; (2) all buprenorphine products. Rate is calculated per 1,000 population (Georgia residents).

Rate is age-adjusted except when age categories are presented.

County level prescription rates are age adjusted.

Opioid prescription patients

The number of individual patients receiving an opioid analgesic controlled substance prescription that was dispensed and reported to the PDMP. Rate is calculated per 1,000 population (Georgia residents).

Rate is age-adjusted except when age categories are presented.

Days per opioid prescriptions

The average number of days of opioid analgesics supplied per prescription.

Patients receiving avg. daily dose \geq 90 morphine milligram equivalents

% of patients with an average of \geq 90 MME of opioid analgesic drugs prescribed per day.

- Numerator: the number of patients with an average of \geq 90 MME of opioid analgesic drugs prescribed per day
- Denominator: state residents who received an opioid analgesic prescription
Average MME per day is calculated from total number of MMEs from all-drugs prescribed per day, inclusive of overlapping prescriptions of either the same and/ or differing drugs, divided by the total number of prescription days

Other Definitions or Limitations

Not all out of state pharmacies report to the Georgia PDMP, therefore some prescriptions obtained in another state, or by mail, could be missing from these data.

Some 2020 prescription data were missing sex and age (<2% missing), therefore the race and age data represents only prescriptions for which sex and age were completed.

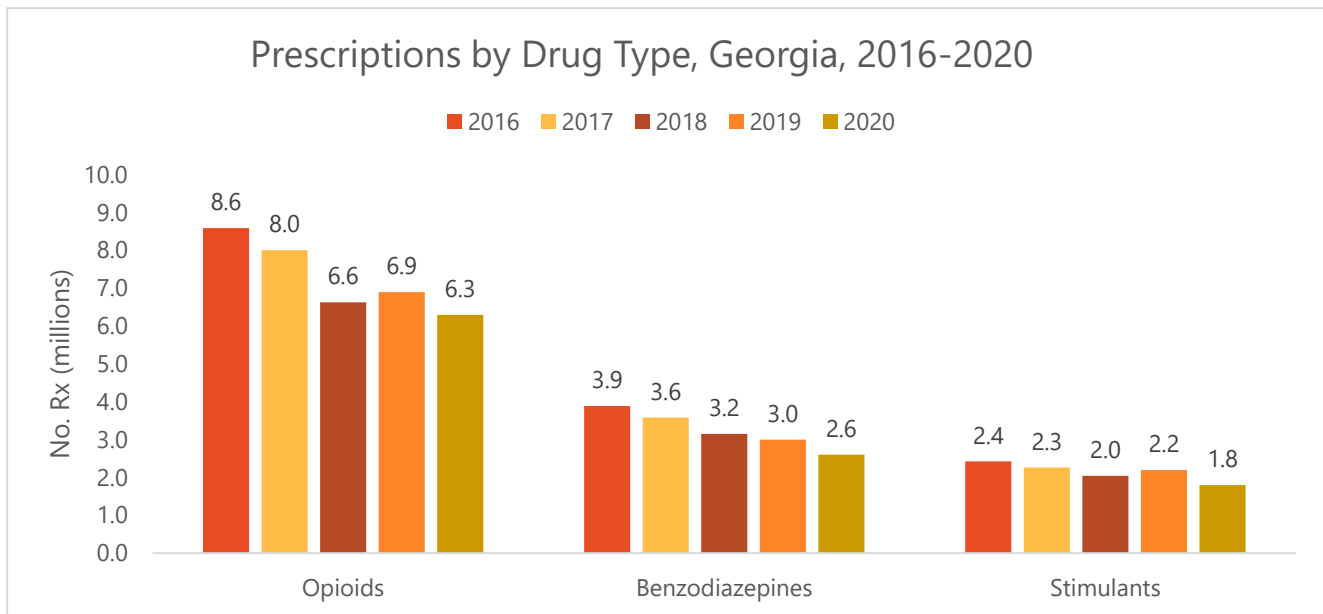
Rate indicates the number events that occurred among Georgia residents per 1,000 population using 2018 census data as the denominator, and all rates are age-adjusted unless age category is presented.

We report on three categories of controlled substances in this report, these categories include:

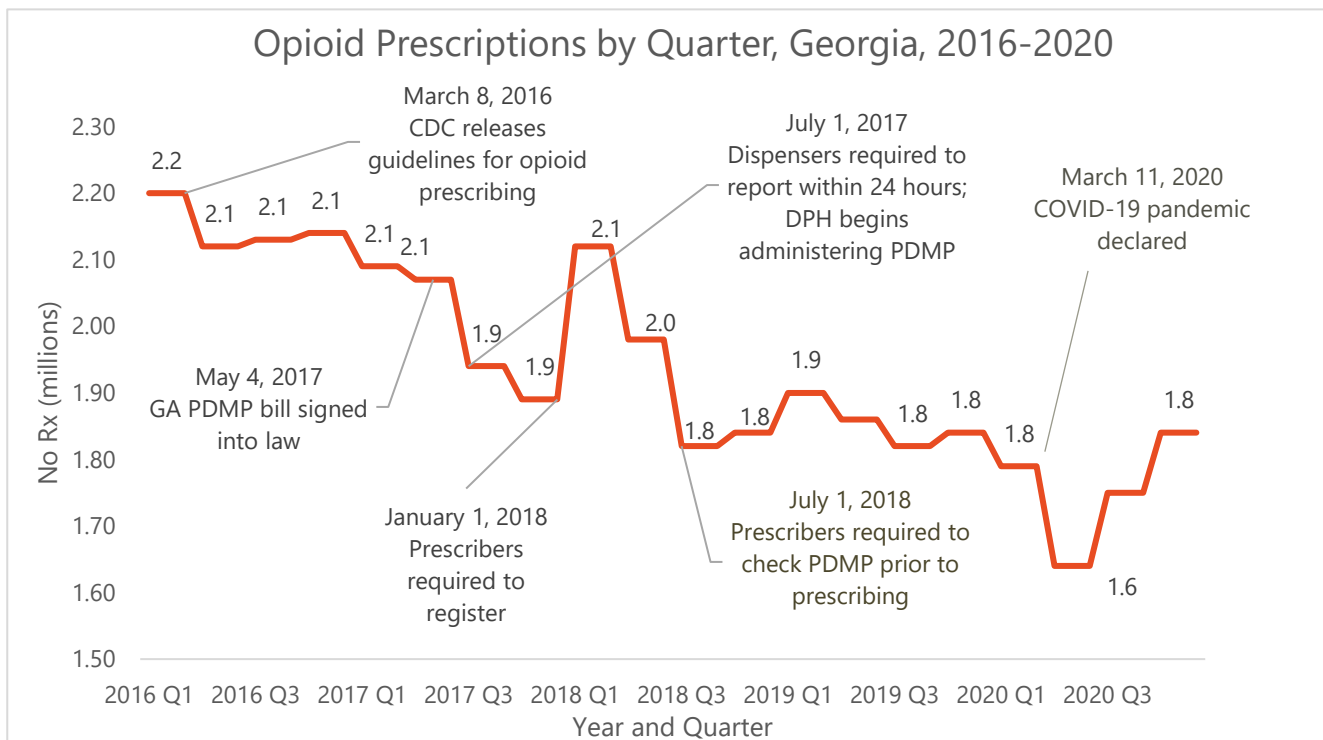
- Opioids: Buprenorphine, Butorphanol, Codeine, Dezocine, Dihydrocodeine, Fentanyl, Fentanyl, Hydrocodone, Hydromorphone, Meperidine, Methadone, Morphine, Nalbuphine, Opiate Agonists, Oxycodone, Oxymorphone, Pentazocine, Tapentadol, Tramadol, and other opioids
- Benzodiazepines: Alprazolam, Chlordiazepoxide, Clonazepam, Clorazepate, Diazepam, Estazolam, Flurazepam, Lorazepam, Oxazepam, Temazepam, Triazolam, and other benzodiazepines

Stimulants: Amphetamine, Benzphetamine, Desoxyephedrine, Dexmethylphenidate, Dextroamphetamine, Lisdexamfetamine, Methylphenidate, and other stimulants.

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Data Indicators

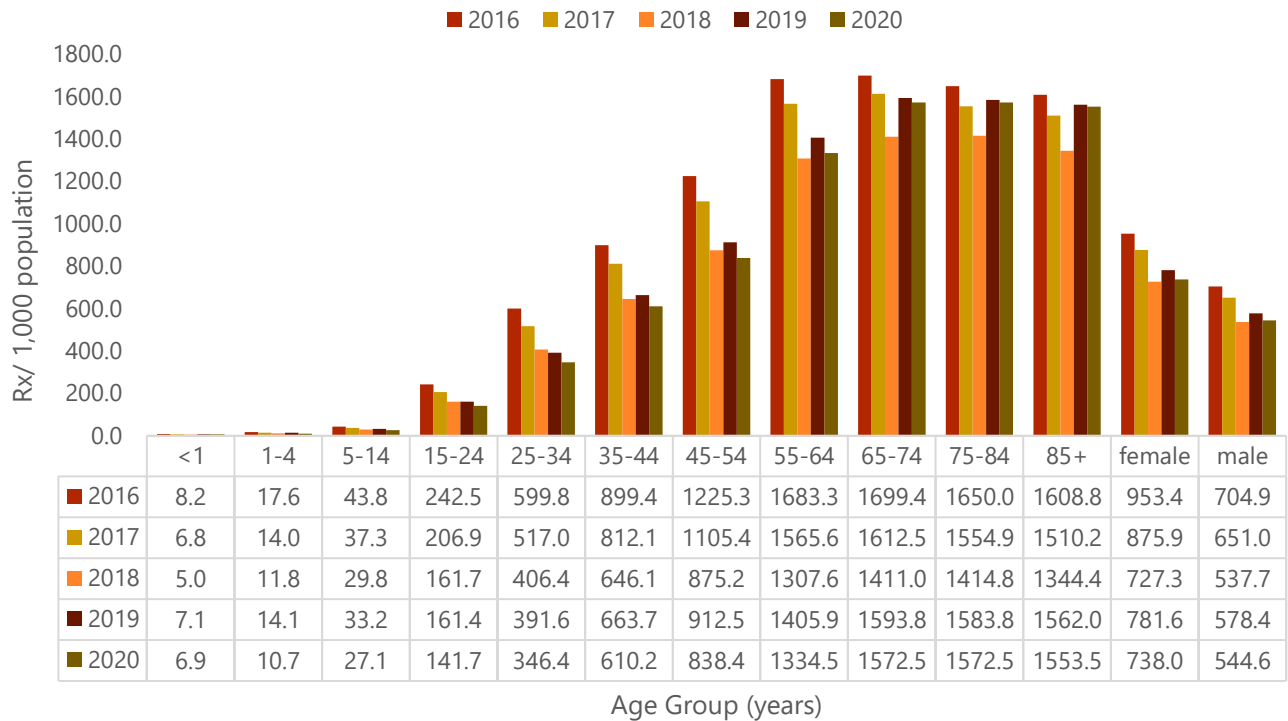


- Opioids are the most frequently prescribed controlled substance in Georgia, followed by benzodiazepines.
- From 2019 to 2020, the number of opioid prescriptions decreased by 9%, benzodiazepine prescriptions by 12%, and stimulants by 18%.



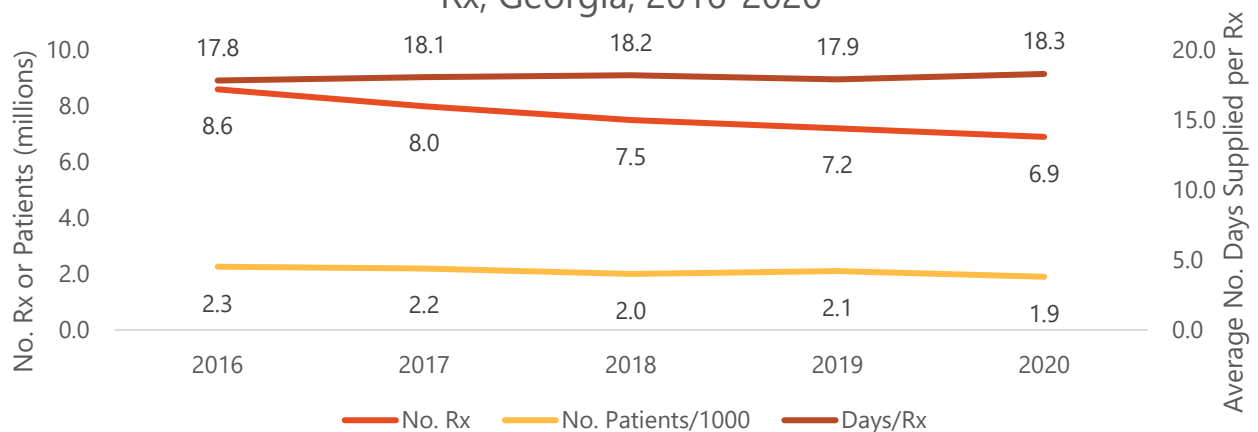
- In the first quarter of 2019, there were 1,896,713 opioid prescriptions dispensed compared to 1,945,362 prescriptions in the last quarter of 2020.

Opioid Prescription Rates, by Age and Sex, Georgia, 2016-2020



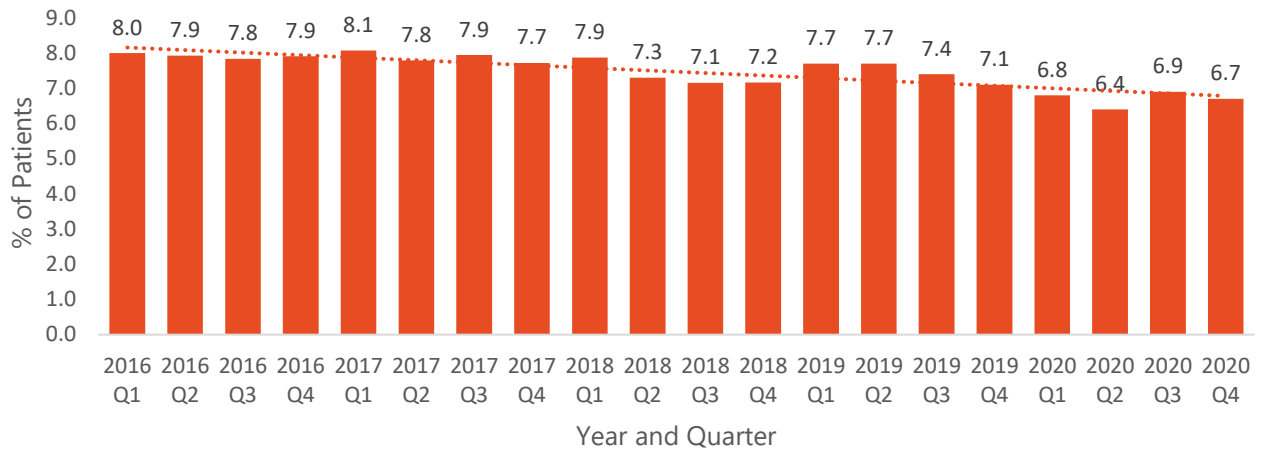
- From 2019 to 2020, the rate of opioid prescriptions dispensed in Georgia decreased by 12% among persons aged 5-54 years, 5% among those aged 55-64 years, 1% among those aged 65-74 years, 1% among those aged 75-84 years, and 1% among those aged 85+.
- Opioid prescriptions decreased 6% among both males and females.

Opioid Prescriptions, Patients, and Average Days Supplied per Rx, Georgia, 2016-2020



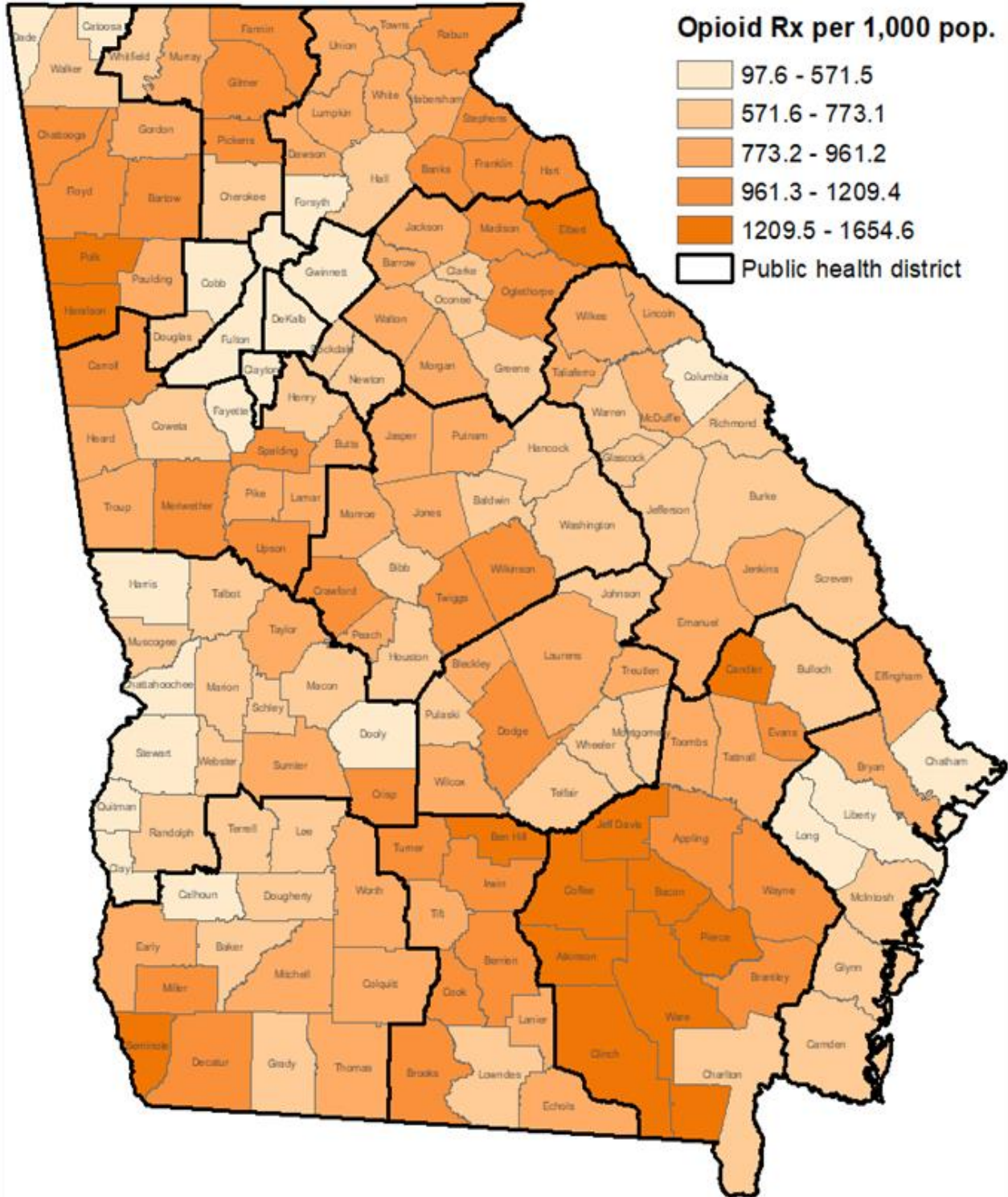
- The number of opioid prescriptions and patients receiving opioid prescriptions decreased by 9% and 10%, respectively, from 2019 to 2020.
- The average number of days dispensed per opioid prescription increased by 2%.

Percent Patients Receiving an Average Daily Dose ≥ 90 Morphine Miligram Equivalents of Opioids, by Quarter, Georgia, 2016-2020

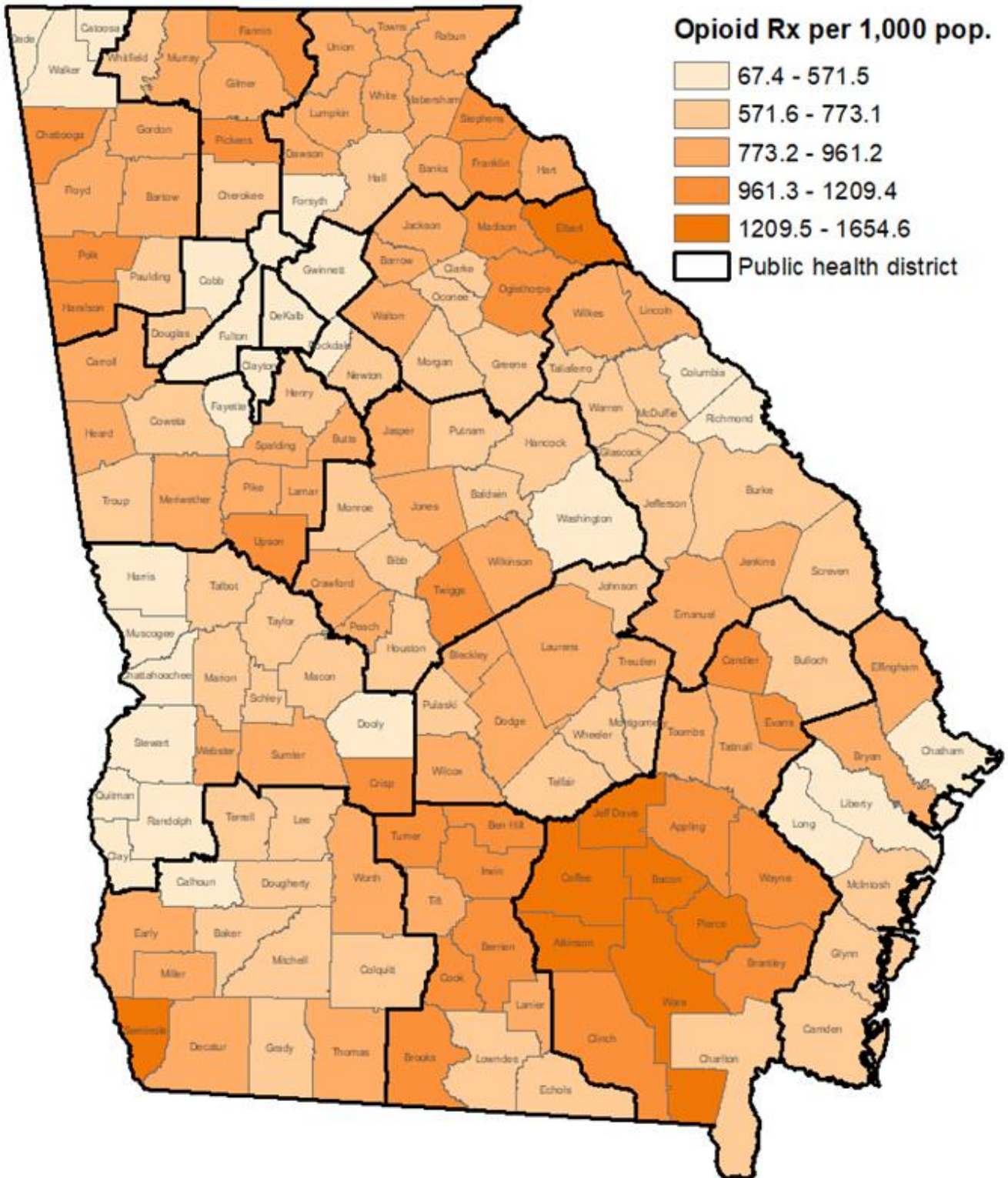


- High opioid dosages are associated with an increased risk of opioid use disorder and overdose.
- The 2016 CDC Opioid Prescribing Guidelines recommended that daily opioid dosages should not exceed 90 morphine milligram equivalents (MME).
- The graph above represents the quarterly percent of patients in Georgia who were receiving an average daily dose of 90 (MME) of opioids during 2016-2020.
- The percent of patients in Georgia who were receiving an average daily dose of 90 (MME) of opioids decreased by 13% from Q1 2019 to Q4 2020.

Age-Adjusted Opioid Prescription Rate by County, Georgia - 2019



Age-Adjusted Opioid Prescription Rate by County, Georgia - 2020



Top Ten Opioids Prescribed, Georgia, 2019–2020

Rank	Opioid drug	No. prescriptions 2019	No. prescription 2020
1	Hydrocodone	2,395,539	2,161,64
2	Oxycodone	1,664,550	1,490,319
3	Tramadol	1,545,906	1,457,583
4	Codeine	402,845	351,153
5	Buprenorphine	268,732	219,944
6	Morphine	175,396	159,344
7	Fentanyl	106,358	91,953
8	Methadone	68,764	61,037
9	Oxycodone	72,384	63,223
10	Morphine	86,992	87,522

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Registrations and Patient Queries, Georgia, 2019–2020

PDMP user type	No. registered as of 12/31/2019	No. registered as of 12/31/2020	No. patient queries 2019	No. patient queries 2020
Dentist	4,804	4,906	68,296	56,497
Dispensing Physician	38	39	956	759
Medical Resident	2,619	3,155	31,309	48,709
Midwife	140	159	1,324	4,514
Nurse Practitioner	6,416	7,197	862,643	1,197,243
Optometrist	966	1,002	3,732	3,700
Out-of-State Pharmacist	142	164	4,460	2,209
Out-of-State Prescriber	190	282	6,674	8,564
Pharmacist	11,877	282	3,404,914	4,001,188
Pharmacist's Delegate	330	377	51,081	50,569
Physician (MD, DO)	27,059	29,034	3,657,990	4,154,509
Physician Assistant	3,209	3,517	396,128	503,405
Podiatrist	440	463	9,312	10,229
Prescriber Delegate	1,451	1,665	542,430	481,806
Veterans Affairs Prescriber	106	156	4,232	7,190
TOTAL	59,787	50,451	9,045,481	10,531,091

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Indicators, Georgia, 2019–2020

See Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Data Indicators table for description of indicators below

	2019					2020				
Indicator description	Total	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Total	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec
No. opioid prescriptions	6,899,412	1,763,003	1,756,751	1,710,762	1,668,896	6,251,867	1,585,454	1,523,364	1,610,562	1,532,487
No. stimulant prescriptions	2,179,301	601,541	555,320	524,873	497,567	1,795,379	520,162	432,637	422,443	420,137
No. benzodiazepine prescriptions	2,979,620	782,361	776,638	737,419	683,202	2,853,933	702,282	657,931	885,978	607,742
Opioid Rx/ 1,000 population (age adjusted)	757.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	726.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
No. opioid patients	3,526,947	915,145	880,836	853,030	877,936	3,219,308	850,103	740,428	814,667	814,110
Opioid patients/ 1,000 population	335.3	87.0	83.7	81.1	83.5	306.0	80.8	70.4	77.4	77.4
Days/ opioid prescription	18.0	17.8	17.9	18.0	18.1	18.3	18.2	18.9	18.1	18.1
% Patients receiving avg. daily dose \geq 90 morphine milligram equivalents	7.5	7.7	7.7	7.4	7.1	6.7	6.8	6.4	6.9	6.7

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Indicators by Age and Sex, Georgia, 2020

See Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Data Indicators table for description of indicators below

Indicator							
	No. opioid Rx	No. stimulant Rx	No. benzo. Rx	Opioid Rx/ 1,000 population	No. opioid patients	Opioid patients/ 1,000 population	Avg days/ opioid Rx
Age Group							
<1 year	870	6	517	6.9	1,212	6.5	8.9
1-4 years	5,652	882	7,778	10.7	5,073	9.6	7.9
5 -14 years	38,350	507,543	33,542	27.1	32,326	22.9	9.7
15-24 years	204,694	330,789	87,388	141.7	163,457	113.1	5.9
25-34 years	510,321	283,592	273,811	346.4	256,295	173.9	10.6
35-44 years	837,576	267,382	473,945	610.2	286,240	208.5	15.2
45-54 years	1,183,291	201,950	663,711	838.4	331,648	234.9	18.2
55-64 years	1,715,750	116,465	832,763	1,334.5	378,679	294.5	20.5
65-74 years	1,408,039	41,784	642,606	1,572.5	309,183	345.2	20.8
75-84 years	649,907	6,894	338,322	1,553.5	151,197	361.4	20.4
85+ years	226,572	1,101	142,768	1,545.2	51,864	353.7	19.1
Sex							
Male	2,785,882	930,499	1,141,282	544.6	769,808	150.5	18.2
Female	3,988,339	873,195	2,237,245	738	1,098,045	203.2	18.0

DPH Epidemiology, Drug Surveillance Unit
<https://dph.georgia.gov/drug-overdose-surveillance-unit>