

12/05/2022

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, 2021

Epidemiology, Drug Surveillance Unit



THE PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING PROGRAM (PDMP)

The purpose of this report is to describe opioid prescribing patterns in Georgia during 2021. 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 pain management (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/rr/rr7103a1.htm>). 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 partners 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. PDMP data is only accessible to prescribers or dispensers, who can use it to 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 a myriad of 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>
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Note: The data in this report should not be compared to reports prior to 2021 due to changes in data processing.

Georgia PDMP, 2021: Key Findings

Georgia saw improvements in opioid prescribing practices from 2020 to 2021, as evidenced by these PDMP indicators:

- ❖ In 2021, there were 6,624,467 opioid prescriptions dispensed to 1,908,203 patients in Georgia. These prescriptions averaged 18.0 days of opioids dispensed per prescription.
- ❖ From 2020 to 2021, the number of opioid prescriptions statewide decreased by 8%, benzodiazepine prescriptions by 14%, and stimulants by 8%.
- ❖ The number of patients receiving opioid prescriptions did not change from 2020 to 2021. The average number of days dispensed per opioid prescription decreased by 2%.
- ❖ In the first quarter of 2020 (Q1), there were 1,790,484 opioid prescriptions dispensed compared to 1,682,018 prescriptions in the last quarter of 2021 (Q4).
- ❖ From 2020 to 2021, the rate of opioid prescriptions dispensed in Georgia decreased by 4% among persons aged 5-54 years, 4% among those aged 55-64 years, increased by 1% among those aged 65-74 years, increased by 3% among those aged 75-84 years, and decreased by 2% among those aged 85+. Opioid prescriptions decreased by 3% among males and 2% among 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) per day. The percent of patients in Georgia who were receiving an average daily dose of ≥ 90 (MME) of opioids decreased by 6% from Quarter 1 (Q1) 2020 to Q4 2021.
- ❖ Hydrocodone, Oxycodone, and Tramadol were the most-prescribed opioids in Georgia during both 2020 and 2021.
- ❖ The number of registered PDMP users increased by 13.7% from December 2020 to May 2021.
- ❖ Patient queries by prescribers (or their delegates) and dispensers increased from 10.5 million queries in 2020 to 11.7 million queries in 2021.

PDMP Data Indicators

Data Source

All schedule II-V drug prescriptions dispensed and reported to the Georgia Prescription Drug Monitoring Program during 2016–2021.

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:

- 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;
- 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 2021 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.

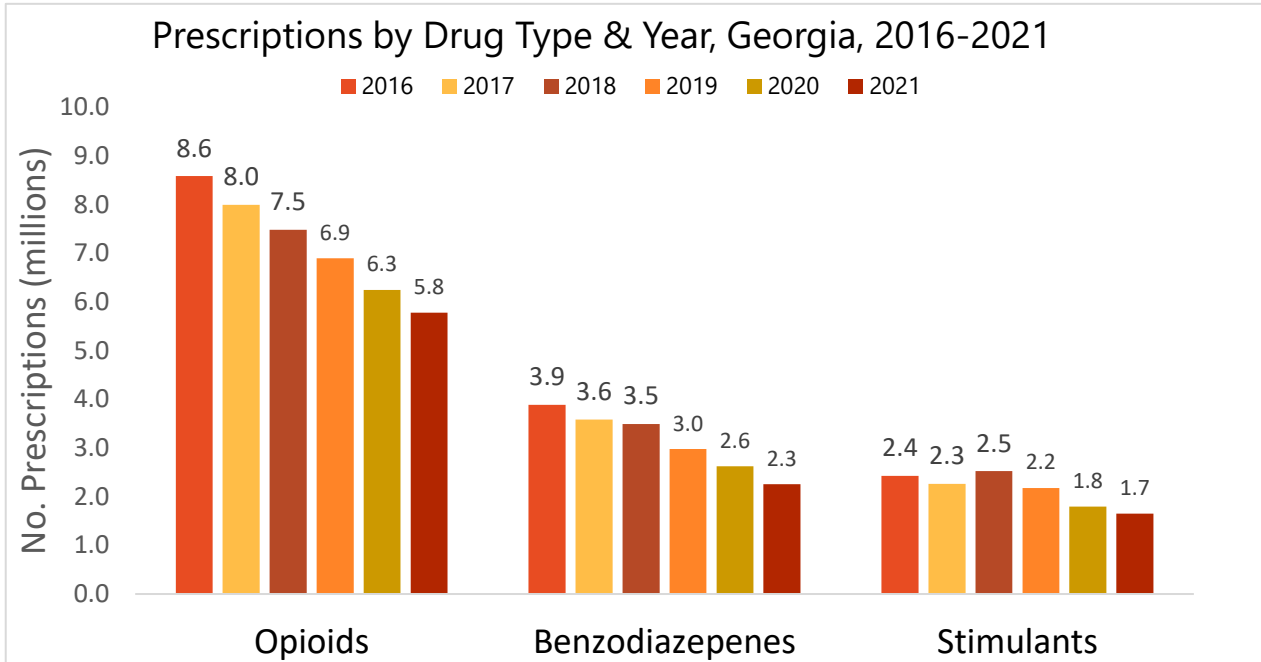
Rate indicates the number of events that occurred among Georgia residents per 1,000 population using 2020 census data as the denominator, and all rates are age-adjusted unless age category is presented.

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

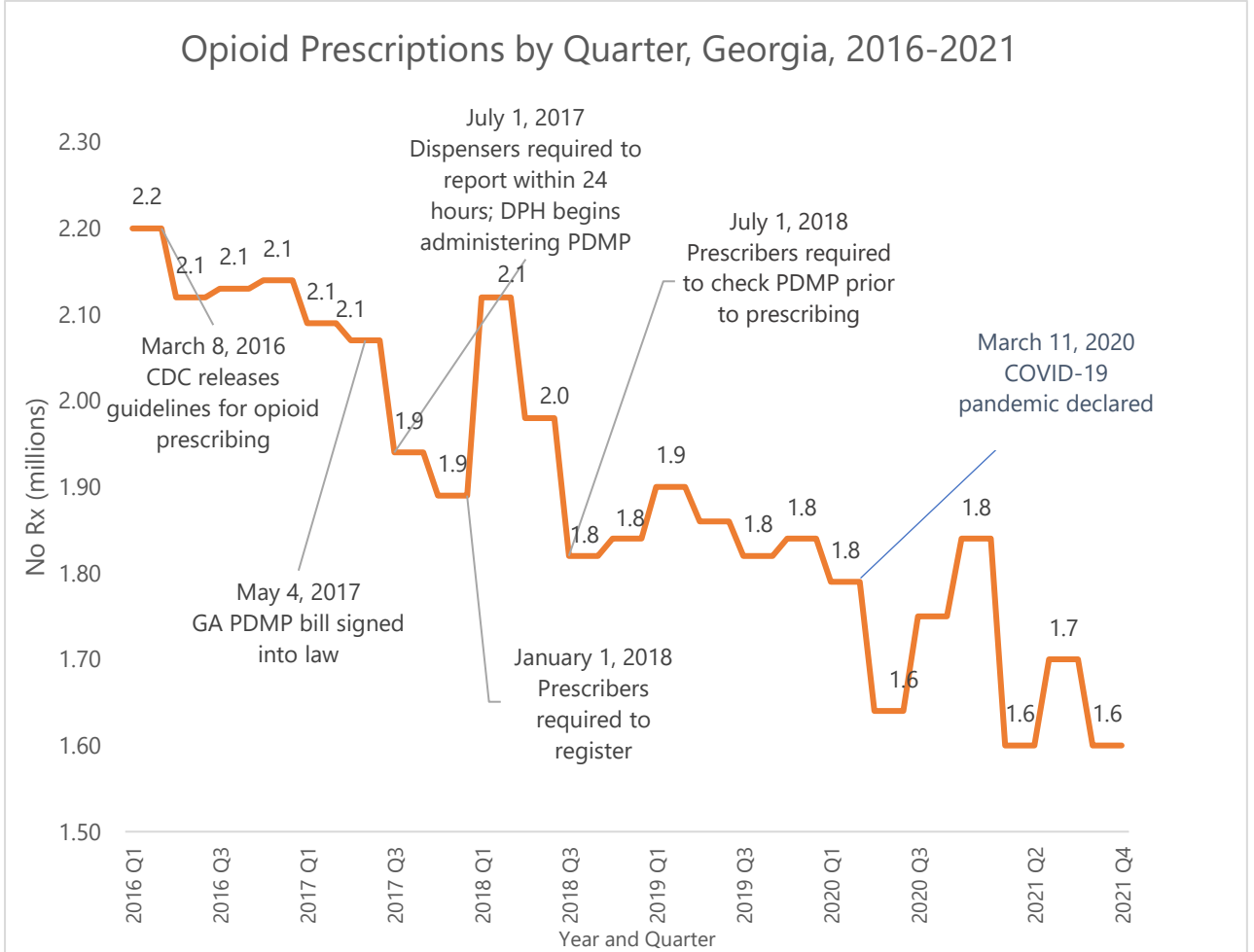
- Opioids: Buprenorphine, Butorphanol, Codeine, Dezocine, Dihydrocodeine, Fentanyl, Fentanyl, Hydrocodone, Hydromorphone, Meperidine, Methadone, Morphine, Nalbuphine, Opiate Agonists, Oxycodone, Oxymorphone, Pentazocine, Tapentadol, Tramadol, and other opioids
- Benzodiazepines: Alprazolam, Chlordiazepoxide, 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

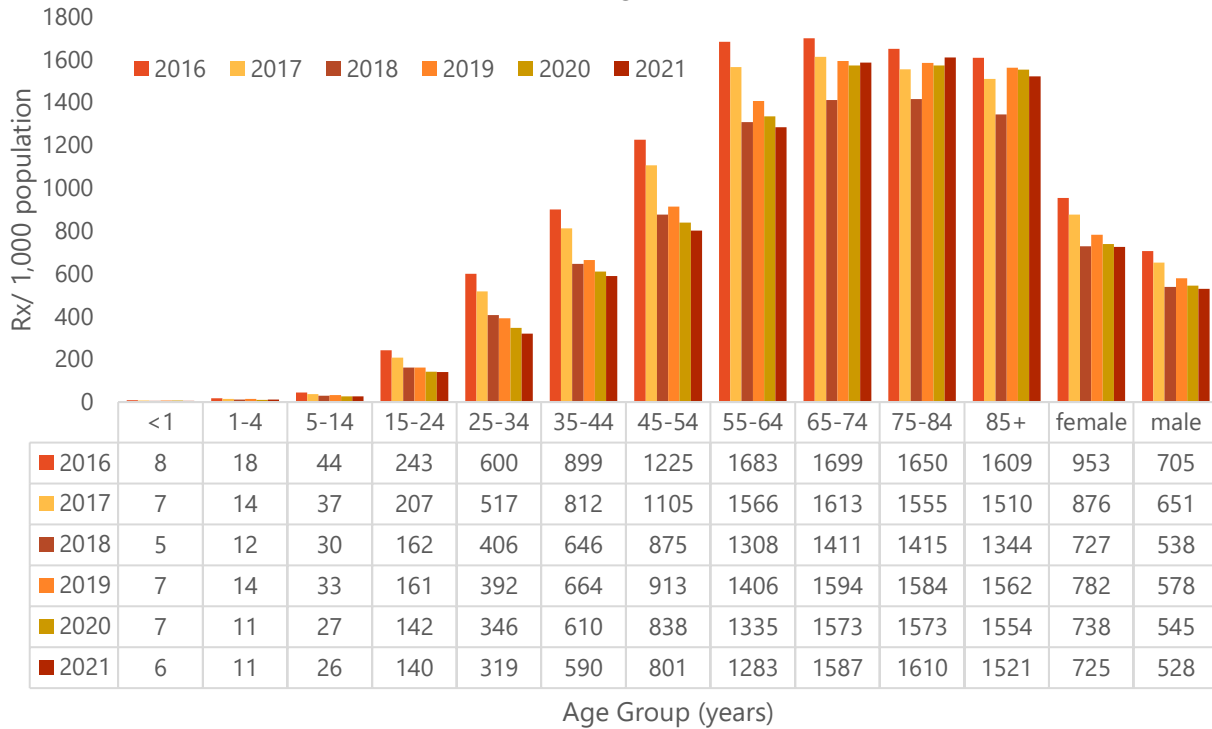


- From 2020 to 2021, the number of opioid prescriptions decreased by 8%, benzodiazepine prescriptions by 14%, and stimulants by 8%.
- Opioids are the most frequently prescribed controlled substance in Georgia, followed by benzodiazepines and stimulants.



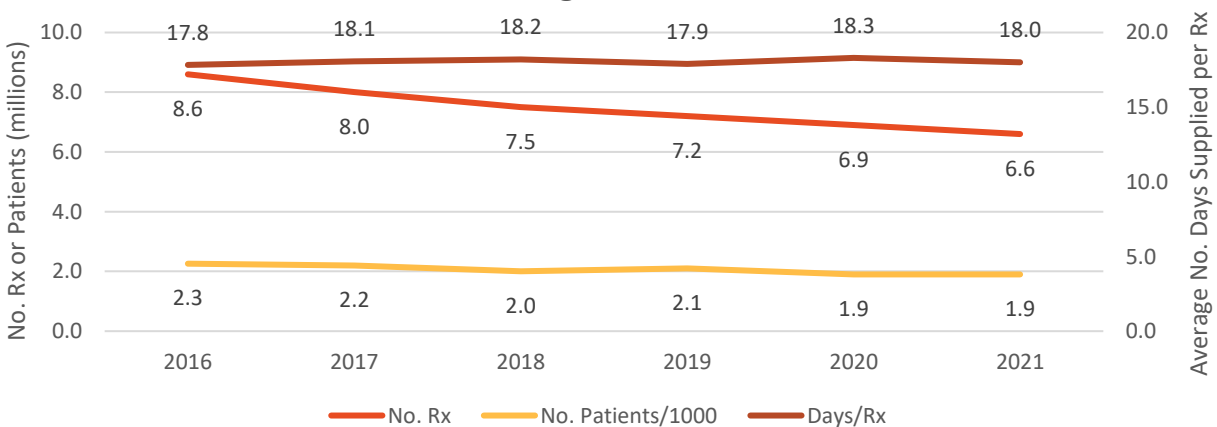
- In the first quarter of 2020, there were 1,790,484 opioid prescriptions dispensed compared to 1,682,018 prescriptions in the last quarter of 2021.

Opioid Prescription Rates, by Age and Sex, Georgia, 2016-2021

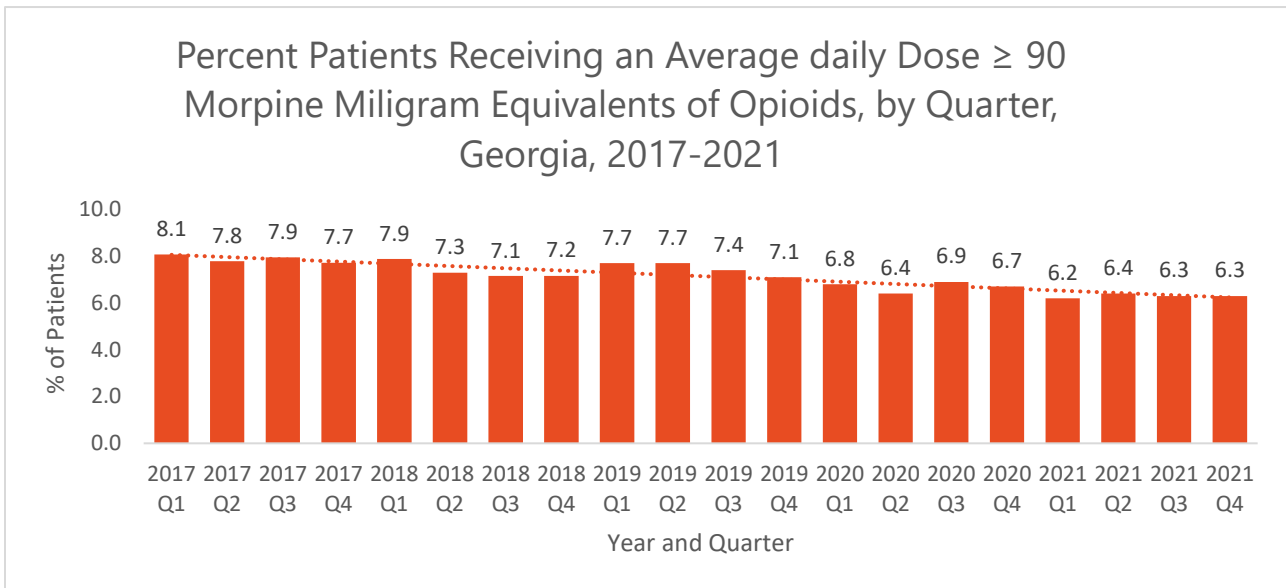


- From 2020 to 2021, the rate of opioid prescriptions dispensed in Georgia decreased by 4% among persons aged 5-54 years, 4% among those aged 55-64 years, increased by 1% among those aged 65-74 years, increased by 3% among those aged 75-84 years, and decreased by 2% among those aged 85+.
- Opioid prescriptions decreased by 3% among males and 2% among females.

Opioid Prescriptions, Patients, and Average Days Supplied per Rx, Georgia, 2016-2021

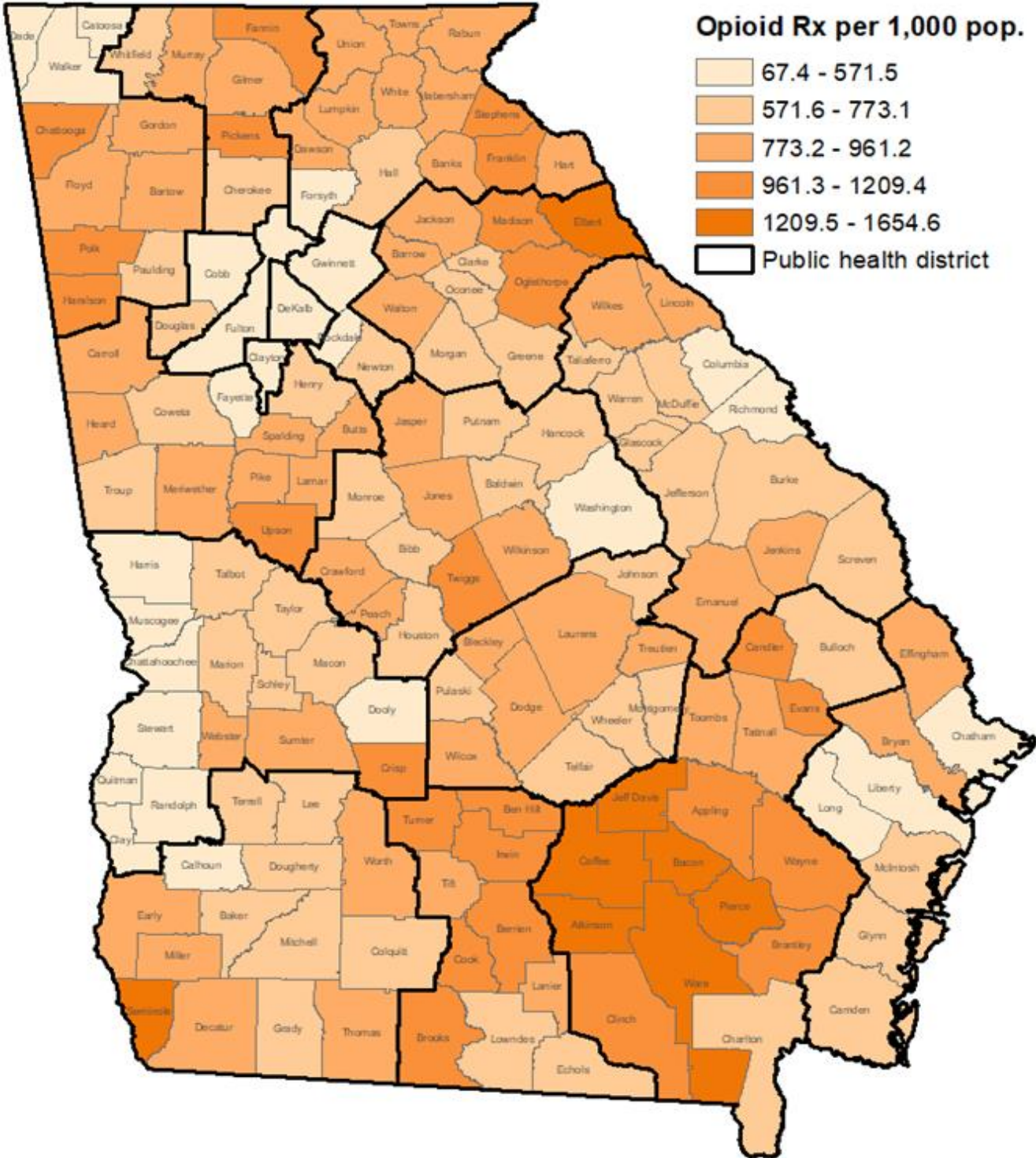


- The number of opioid prescriptions decreased by 4% and no changes seen in patients receiving opioid prescriptions, from 2020 to 2021.
- The average number of days dispensed per opioid prescription decreased by 2%.

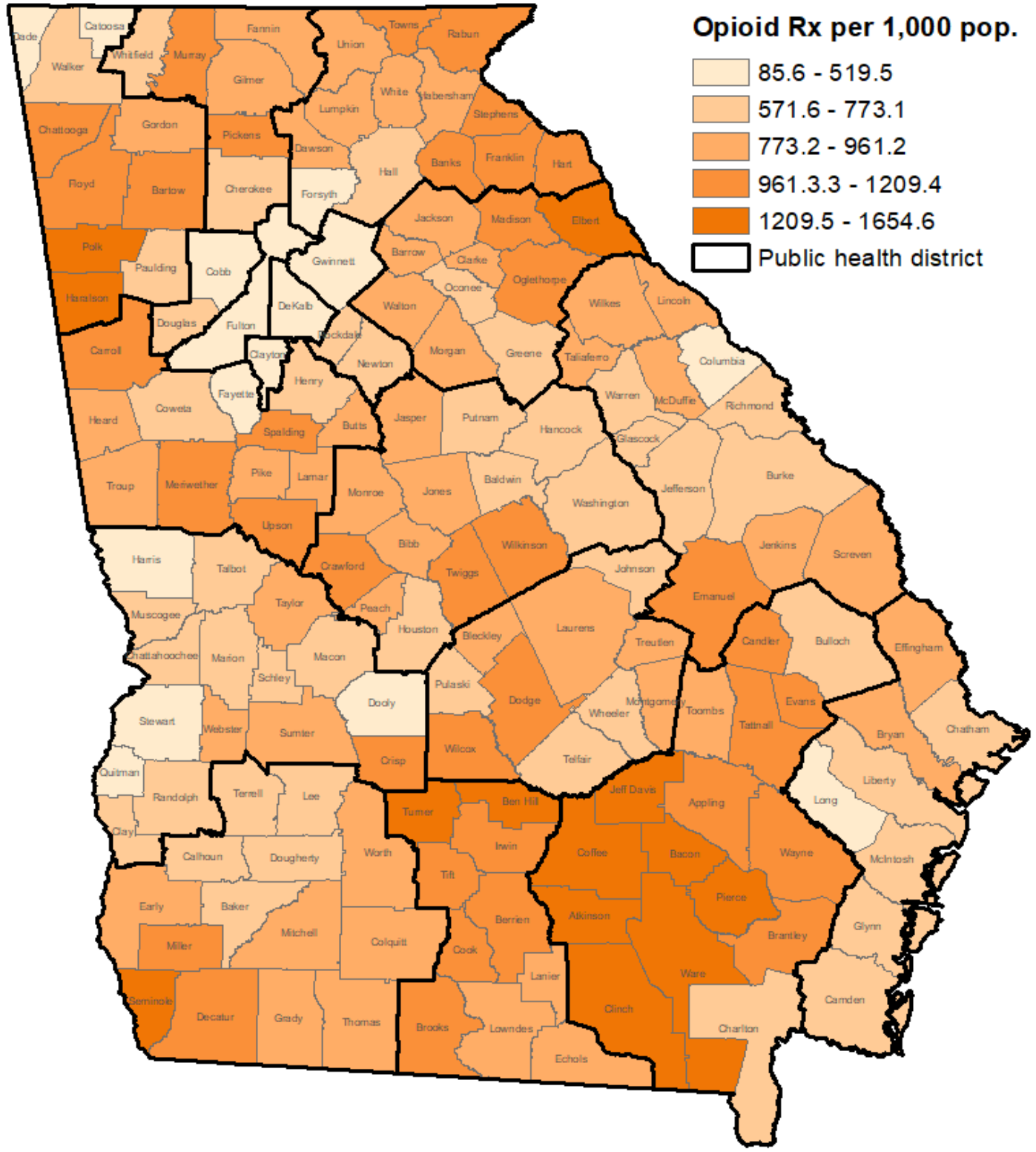


- High opioid dosages are associated with an increased risk of opioid use disorder and overdose.
- The graph above represents the quarterly percent of patients in Georgia who were receiving an average daily dose of \geq 90 (MME) of opioids during 2017-2021.
- The percent of patients in Georgia who were receiving an average daily dose of \geq 90 (MME) of opioids decreased by 6% from Q1 2020 to Q4 2021.

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



Age-Adjusted Opioid Prescription Rate by County, Georgia - 2021



Top Ten Opioids Prescribed, Georgia, 2020–2021

Rank	Opioid drug	No. prescriptions 2020	No. prescription 2021
1	Hydrocodone	2,322,421	2,256,119
2	Oxycodone	1,717,871	1,740,226
3	Tramadol	1,495,536	1,445,006
4	Codeine	507,528	473,779
5	Buprenorphine	328,838	321,426
6	Morphine	260,887	246,195
7	Fentanyl	95,092	84,778
8	Hydromorphone	63,665	60,210
9	Methadone	65,148	57,270
10	Codeine, Bultabital	23,476	21,401

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Registrations and Patient Queries, Georgia, 2020–2021

PDMP user type	No. registered as of 12/31/2020	No. registered as of 12/31/2021	No. patient queries 2020	No. patient queries 2021
Dentist	4,906	5,085	56,497	61,705
Dispensing Physician	39	42	759	2,612
Medical Resident	3,155	3,695	48,709	59,915
Midwife	159	164	4,514	7,295
Nurse Practitioner	7,197	7,840	1,197,243	1,459,237
Optometrist	1,002	1,049	3,700	5,042
Out-of-State Pharmacist	164	177	2,209	1,498
Out-of-State Prescriber	282	275	8,564	7,242
Pharmacist	282	13,536	4,001,188	4,087,125
Pharmacist's Delegate	377	429	50,569	54,074
Physician (MD,DO)	29,034	30,916	4,154,509	4,889,312
Physician Assistant	3,517	3,835	503,405	632,821
Podiatrist	463	554	10,229	12,521
Prescriber Delegate	1,665	1,839	481,806	480,392
Veterans Affairs Prescriber	156	202	7,190	13,739
TOTAL	50,451	69,638	10,531,091	11,774,530

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Indicators, Georgia, 2020–2021
 See Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Data Indicators table for description of indicators below

	2020					2021				
Indicator description	Total	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Total	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec
No. opioid prescriptions	6,251,867	1,585,454	1,523,364	1,610,562	1,532,487	6,743,732	1,669,675	1,708,774	1,683,265	1,682,018
No. stimulant prescriptions	1,795,379	520,162	432,637	422,443	420,137	1,656,746	414,064	406,160	418,422	418,100
No. benzodiazepine prescriptions	2,853,933	702,282	657,931	885,978	607,742	3,192,057	804,775	801,127	800,520	785,635
Opioid Rx/ 1,000 population (age adjusted)	726.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	726.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
No. opioid patients	3,219,308	850,103	740,428	814,667	814,110	3,210,428	791,281	815,268	798,907	804,972
Opioid patients/ 1,000 population	306.0	80.8	70.4	77.4	77.4	305.0	75.2	77.5	75.9	76.5
Days/ opioid prescription	18.3	18.2	18.9	18.1	18.1	17.9	17.9	17.8	18.0	17.9
% Patients receiving avg. daily dose \geq 90 morphine milligram equivalents	6.7	6.8	6.4	6.9	6.7	6.3	6.2	6.4	6.3	6.3

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Indicators by Age and Sex, Georgia, 2021

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	747	7	408	5.9	617	4.0	12.0
1-4 years	5,917	804	7808	11.2	4,888	11.5	9.0
5 -14 years	38,922	447,151	33,073	27.5	28,496	20.2	10.0
15-24 years	207,835	312,905	77,398	143.8	152,023	105.2	6.0
25-34 years	482,624	274,911	241,504	333.0	232,380	157.7	10.0
35-44 years	828,722	266,557	448,840	603.8	274,230	199.8	15.0
45-54 years	1,155,328	197,158	567,128	818.5	306,698	217.3	18.0
55-64 years	1,677,706	110,610	714,739	1,304.9	358,588	278.9	20.0
65-74 years	1,440,719	38,780	617,866	1,608.9	310,465	346.7	21.0
75-84 years	682,358	6,886	341,317	1,631.0	161,827	386.8	20.0
85+ years	225,330	979	141,976	1,536.6	57,163	389.8	19.0
Sex							
Male	2,747,044	835,330	1,065,204	537.0	773,438	151.2	18.0
Female	3,993,426	821,301	2,123,392	738.9	1,111,675	205.7	18.0