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The Impact of the Opioid Epidemic in Worcester, Massachusetts

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Risk Factors for Opioid Use in Worcester, Massachusetts



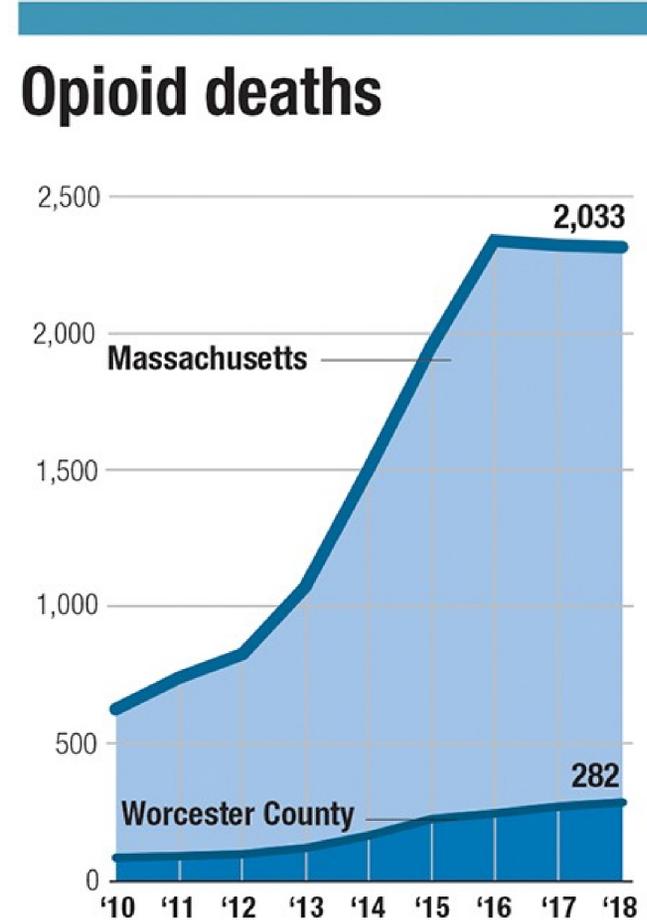
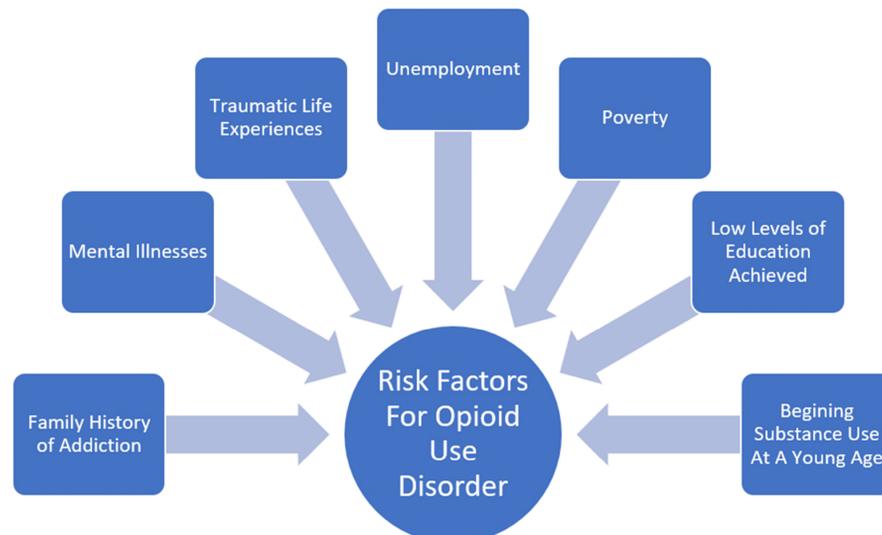
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Mallory Trainor '22, Faculty Advisor: Professor Rosalie Torres Stone, Sociology

Background on Opioid Use

Nationally, about 1% of the population has used heroin in their lifetime (NIH, 2018). Certain factors have been identified as increasing the risk of developing an opioid use disorder. These factors include the prevalence of certain mental illnesses, particularly ADHD, anxiety, and depression (Addiction Center). Certain socioeconomic indicators, such as unemployment and poverty, can also increase vulnerability to opioid use disorders (Massachusetts Health Policy Commission, 2016). Nationally, heroin overdose fatalities began to trend down, but synthetic opioid related fatalities have risen in recent years with the popularization of substances such as fentanyl (NIH, 2018).

Risk Factors for Opioid Use



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Citations

“Worcester - Find Rehab For Drugs And Alcohol - AddictionCenter.” *Addiction Center*, www.addictioncenter.com/rehabs/massachusetts/worcester/.

“Heroin Use in the United States”, *National Institute of Health*, <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/heroin/scope-heroin-use-in-united-states>

Opioid Use Disorder in Massachusetts: An Analysis of Its Impact on the Health Care System, Availability of Pharmacologic Treatment, and Recommendations for Payment and Care Delivery Reform, Massachusetts Health Policy Commission, 2016.

Altekruse, Sean F., et al. “Socioeconomic Risk Factors for Fatal Opioid Overdoses in the United States: Findings from the Mortality Disparities in American Communities Study (MDAC).” *PLOS ONE*, Public Library of Science, [journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0227966](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0227966).

Opioid Use in Worcester

Approximately 5% of Worcester residents have reported heroin use at some point in their lives (Addiction Center). This is the result of socioeconomic factors present within Worcester county that have been identified as increasing risk of developing an opioid use disorder. The 2019 census reported 20% of Worcester residents living below the poverty line, compared to 9.4% statewide. Additionally, 25% of Worcester residents receive federal aid. Worcester also reports a higher level of unemployment than the statewide average. These vulnerabilities are then exasperated by the large supply of opioids in central Massachusetts as a result of a major drug trafficking route that passes through the state. (MHPC, 2016). Opioid related deaths have continued to rise in Worcester County in recent years, indicating that more interventions need to be implemented by the city to address the socioeconomic conditions that create vulnerabilities to substance use.

Risk Factors For Opioid Use in Worcester, MA

