

# Russian Drug Overdose Deaths Surge During Pandemic – Open Media

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**Yevgeny Leonov / TASS**

Drug overdose deaths in Russia have nearly doubled in two years amid the coronavirus pandemic, the Open Media news website [reported](#) Monday, citing the state anti-drug authority.

A total of 7,400 Russians died from drug overdoses in 2020 compared with 6,300 in 2019, Open Media cited the State Anti-Drug Committee as saying in a report. Last year's drug overdose deaths also nearly doubled from the over 4,000 deaths in 2018.

**Related article:** [Drug Dealer Dressed as Deliveryman Detained in Moscow](#)

Citing data published by Russia's state statistics agency, Open Media said all drug-related deaths surged by 60% from 4,569 in 2019 to 7,316 in 2020.

The outlet reported that Russia's anti-drug authority linked the increase in drug overdose

deaths to the proliferation of Russian-made synthetic drugs of questionable quality amid tighter import controls on foreign-made substances during the Covid-19 outbreak.

“There has been an increase in the production of synthetic drugs inside the country and their distribution using the internet,” the anti-drug committee was quoted as saying.

“There was a decrease in the smuggling of drugs of foreign origin into Russia due to increased international control over the movement of goods and cargo,” it added.

Open Media said a 16% drop in criminal drug smuggling cases opened and a 42% increase in drug-manufacturing cases last year bore out the assumption.

Expert Alexei Lakhov also highlighted deteriorating emotional states among persons addicted to drugs — as well as the combined effect of Covid-19 and opioids on the respiratory system — as additional explanations for the surge in drug overdose deaths.

Some 27% of Russian and Belarusian university students reported increased use of cannabis and 17% of psychostimulants in the early stages of the pandemic, according to a non-representative survey [cited](#) by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

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