People dispensed morphine for 6 weeks or more, rate per 1,000

Te Tāhū Hauora
Health Quality & Safety Commission

Source: /measure/people-dispensed-morphine-6-weeks-or-more-rate-1000

Description

This indicator shows the number and rate per 1,000 of the PHO-enrolled population who had morphine dispensed to them by a community pharmacy for six weeks or more, between 2019 and 2023.

Rationale

The IHI classes opioids as one of four groups of medicines (along with anticoagulants, insulin and sedatives) that can cause harm to patients, even when used as intended. Except in some circumstances, morphine is intended for short-term use only, with use for six weeks or more raising questions of appropriateness.

Measure set

Opioids domain

Health areas and conditions

Medications

Measure type

Count
Other

Numerator

PHO-enrolled population who were dispensed morphine for 6–12 weeks following first dispensing in a year.

Numerator detail

To ensure that continuous use was captured, we included morphine that was dispensed within 6 to 12 weeks in the same calendar year. This means the year is truncated at mid-November; so the first time a strong opioid was dispensed after mid-November is not included.

Medication: 1830 Morphine hydrochloride; 1831 Morphine sulphate; 2383 Morphine tartrate

Denominator

PHO-enrolled population during the calendar year.

Data sources
Pharmaceutical Collection (PHARMS)
Primary Health Organisation (PHO) Enrolment Collection

Disaggregation

District analysis: By year (2019 –2023), age group (0–24, 25–64; 65–79 and 80 and over), gender (female, male), ethnic group (M?ori, Pacific peoples, Asian and European/Other) and Health New Zealand district of domicile.

PHO analysis: By year (2023), age group, gender, ethnic group, Primary Health Organisation (PHO) most recently enrolled with (for the relevant year), PHO group (small, medium, medium-large and large).

Notes

People who were excluded from the analysis were:

- individuals with missing demographics– that is, those with no recorded value for one or more of the National Health Index (NHI) fields used to derive the demographic variables of interest (age, gender, ethnicity and district of domicile). For instance, a person with no recorded ethnicity in 2023 is excluded from all indicators for that calendar year. This approach ensures a consistent denominator throughout the analyses.
- those who weren’t enrolled in a PHO in the calendar year.

Data is not presented where the number of people in the numerator was less than 10. This is to preserve confidentiality.

Age group is assigned using 30 June of each calendar year as the cutoff point. For example, a person turning 65 years old on 30 June 2023 will be assigned to the 65–79 years age group for 2023, while a person turning 65 on 1 July 2023 will be assigned the 25–64 group for the same year..

Unlike other atlases, the Opioid Atlas includes individuals who died during the calendar year in all indicators. This is because opioid use is higher among older adults and those in the final stages of life, due to chronic conditions, pain management, and palliative care needs. Including them ensures a complete and accurate picture of opioid exposure.

See technical document for details

Responsible organisation(s)
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Measure methodology last updated
November 2025

Reference period
2019-2023