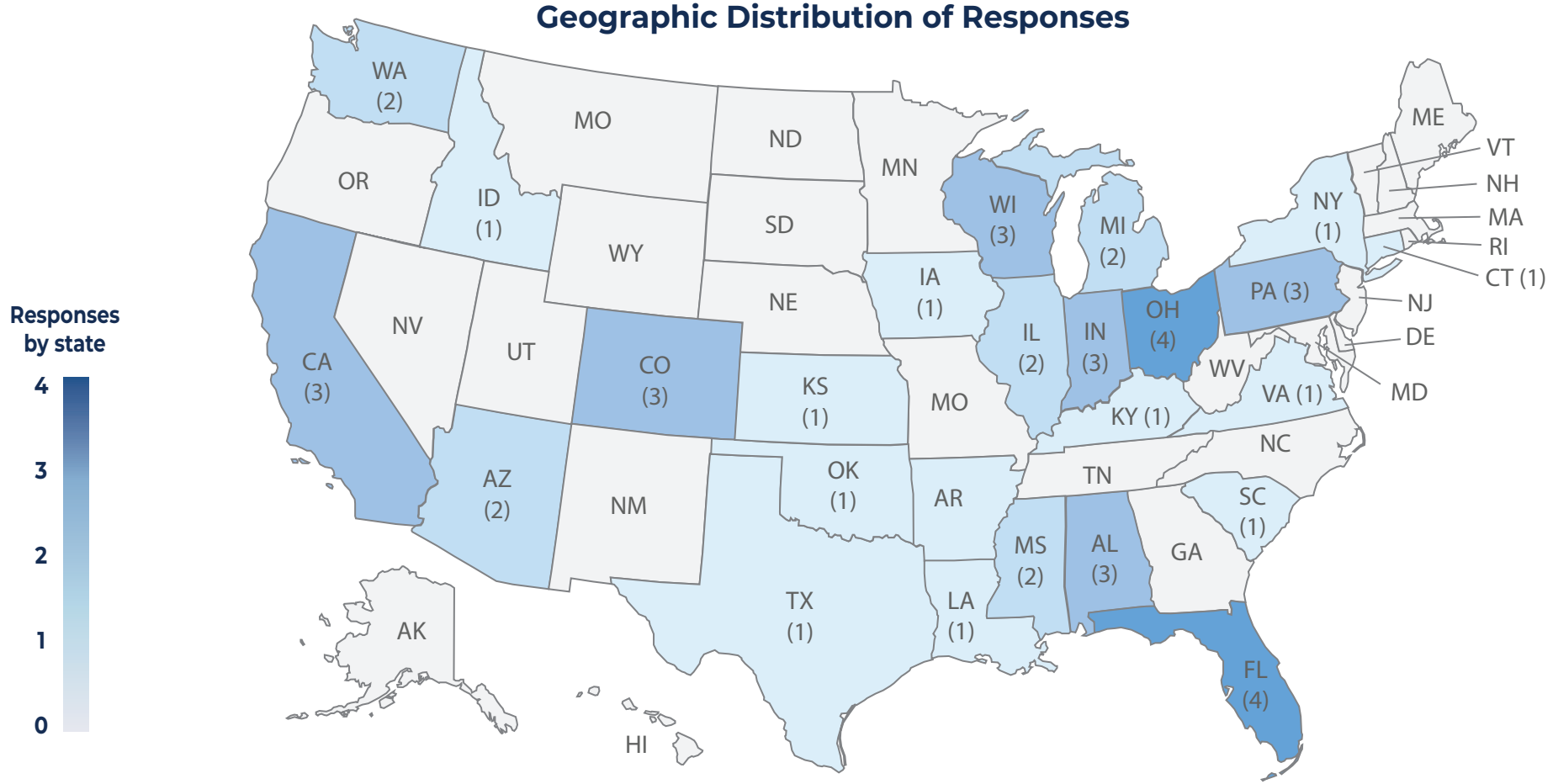
Medicolegal Death Investigators Network
Summer 2026 Quarterly Report

Published in NDEWS Weekly Briefing Issue 304

Topic: Observed shifts in overdose deaths over the past 6 months.
In the Summer 2026 quarterly survey,
47 people responded anonymously from 24 states.

Geographic Distribution of Responses



NDEWS is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse to the University of Florida (MPI: Cottler (contact), Co-Is: Goldberger, Nixon, Striley), NYU Langone Health (MPI: Palamar), and Florida Atlantic University (Co-I: Barenholtz).
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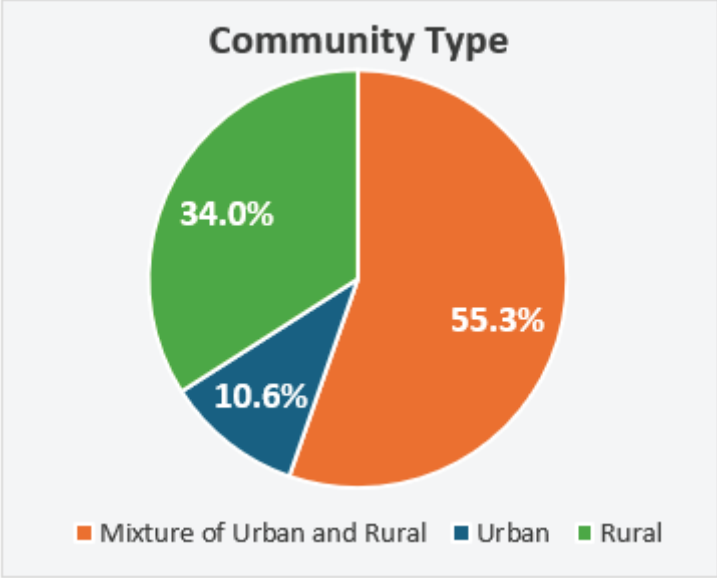

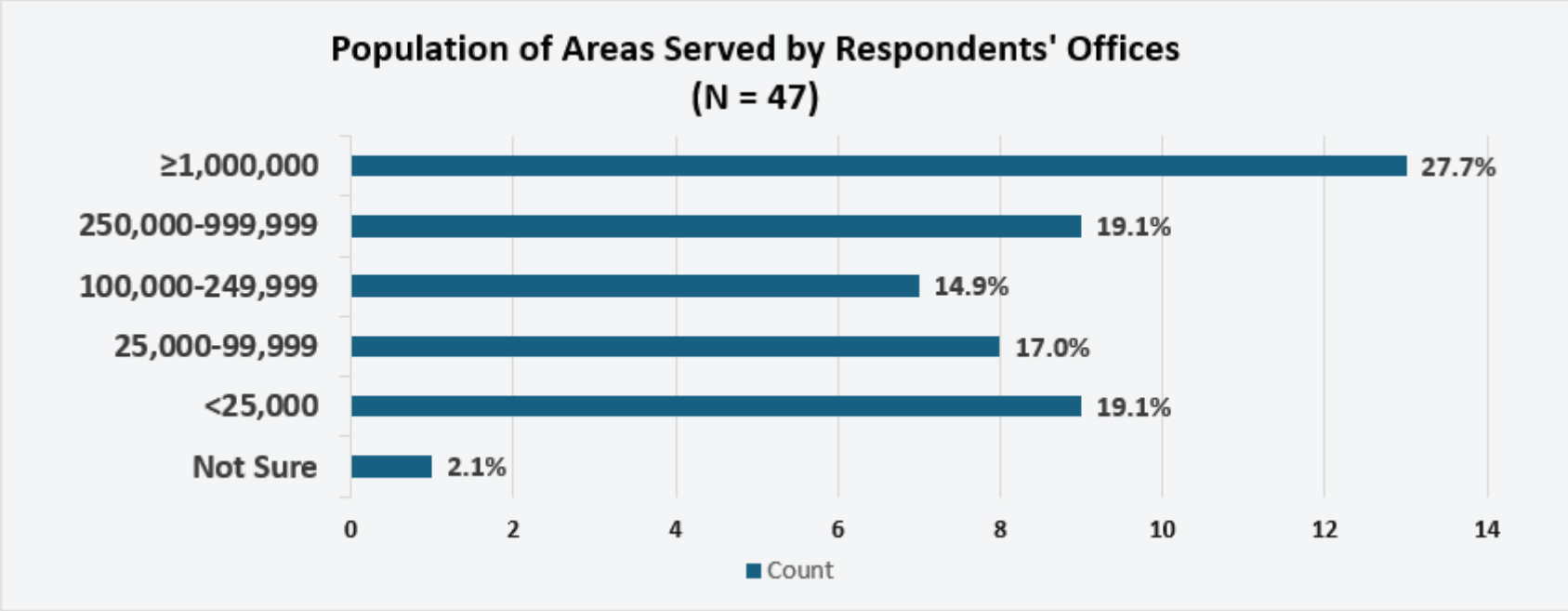

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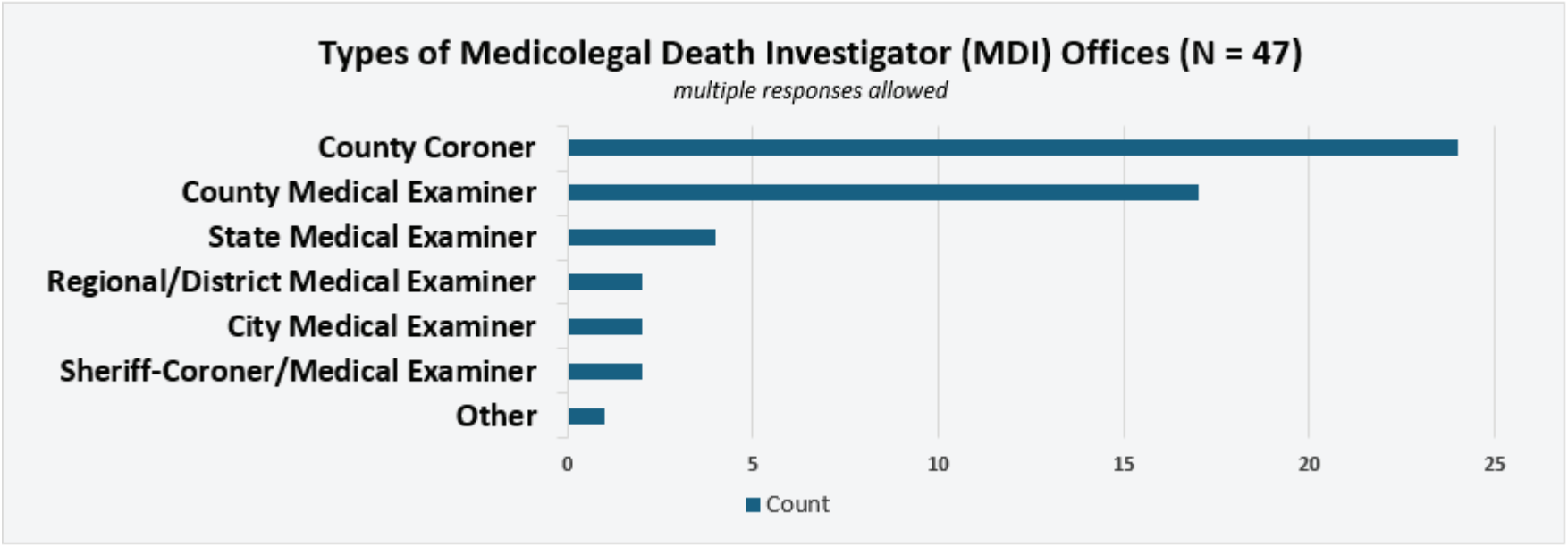

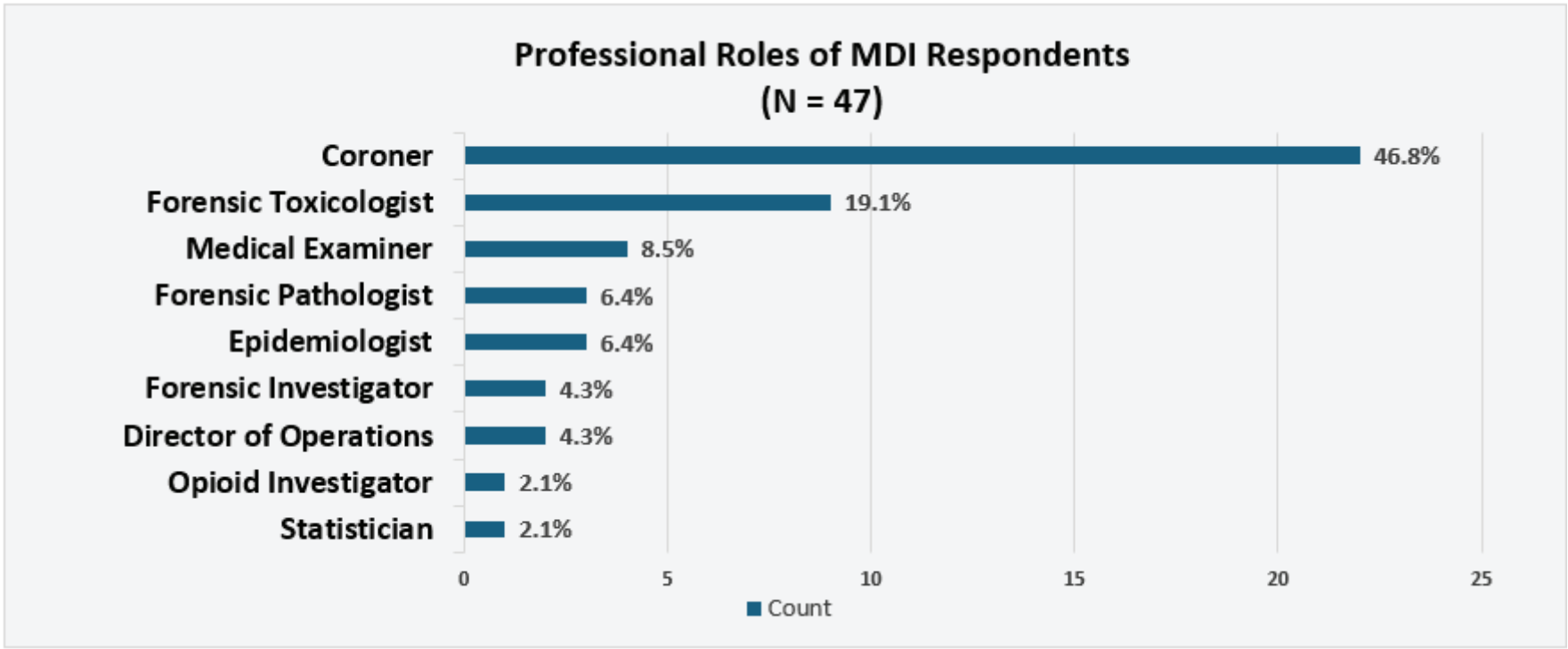

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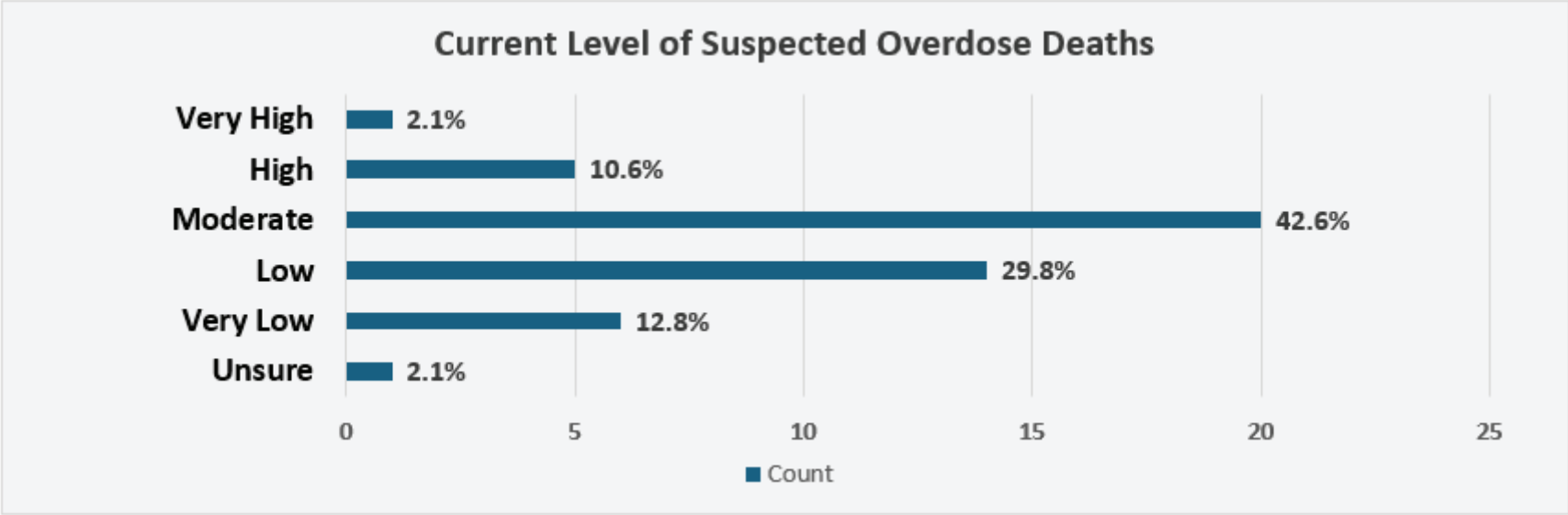

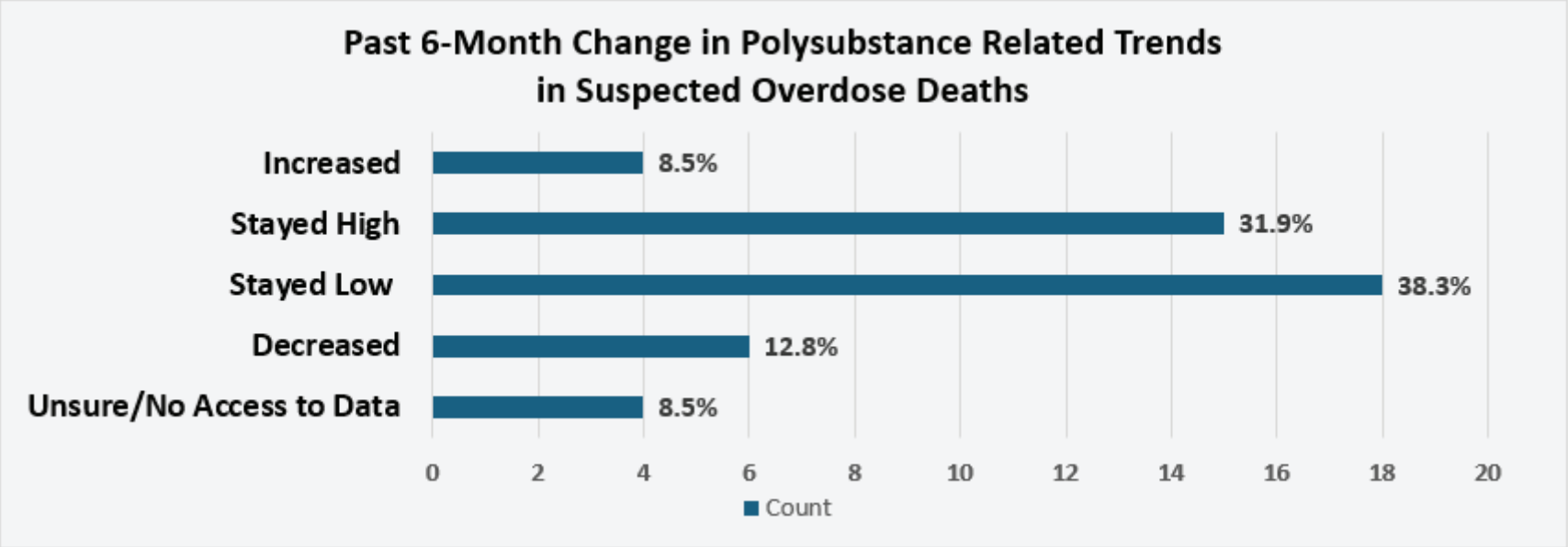

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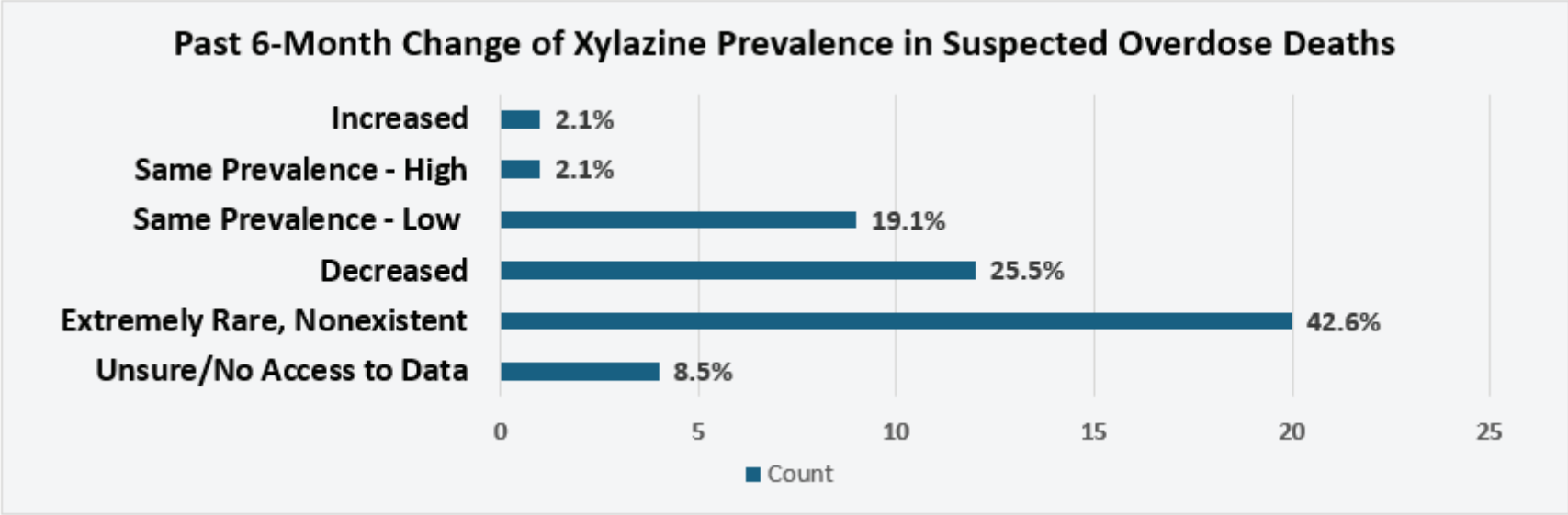

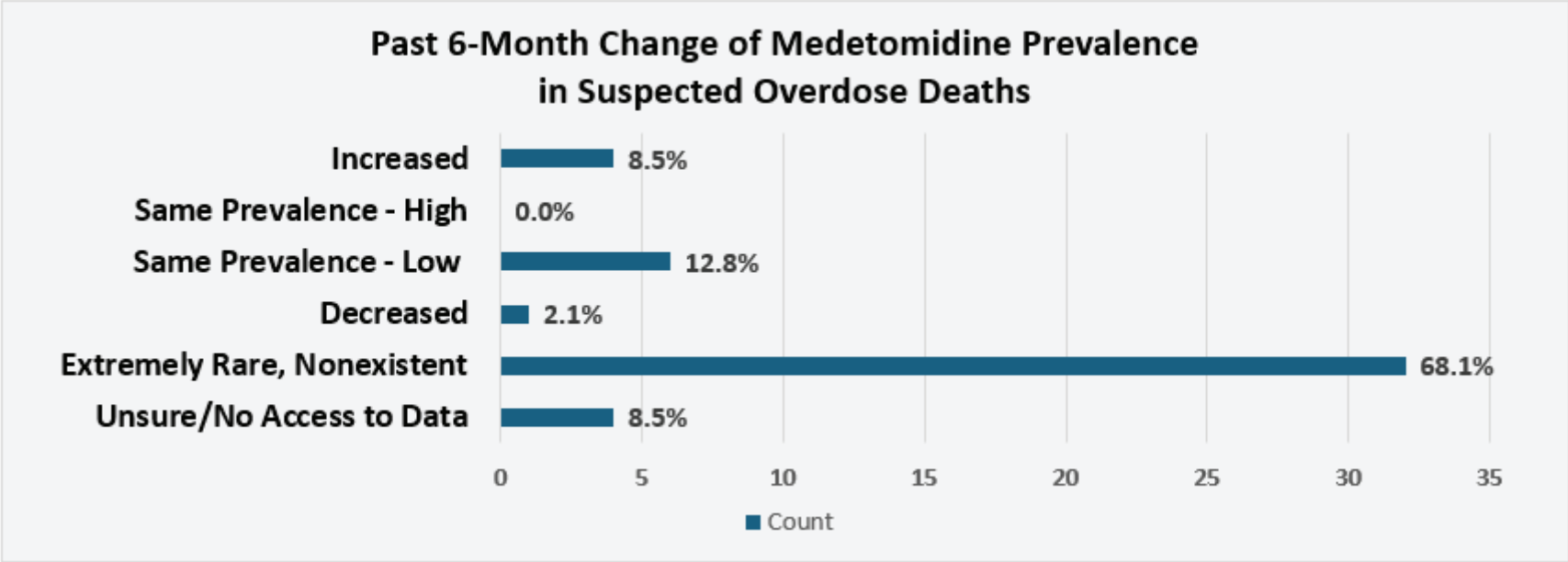

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Region	Topic: Past 6-month prevalence of orphines in decedents
WEST	**CA:** One death was reported from cychlorphine (N-propionitrile chlorphine) in April 2026.
	10 out of 11 respondents had nothing to report on orphines.
MIDWEST	**IL:** 10 cases of the emerging drug N-propionitrile chlorphine (cychlorphine).
	OH: Few cases with orphines.
	OK: Lab detected cychlorphine in 2 cases - December 2025 and February 2026.
	13 out of 16 respondents had nothing to report on orphines.
SOUTH	**TX:** A single case was reported.
	14 out of 15 respondents had nothing to report on orphines.
NORTHEAST	All 5 respondents had nothing to report on orphines.

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Additional Observations

West Region

Arizona: See the Pinal County Annual Report for full overdose trend details — https://www.pinal.gov/1173/Annual-Reports

California: There are anecdotal reports of “cleaner” overdose sites — less paraphernalia and materials around the decendent.

Colorado: Methamphetamine continues to be the most problematic drug.

Washington: Methamphetamine continues to be the most prevalent substance, paired with fentanyl in polysubstance overdoses. There has been an increase in White, female overdoses in the past 6 months.

Midwest Region

Indiana: 3 cases were positive for methamphetamine out of 4 cases with drugs listed as contributing factors. Gabapentin is a common factor in deaths.

Kansas: There have been cases of kratom and related derivatives.

Ohio: Fatal overdose deaths have increased in the last 6 months after a steady decline since 2022. There have been less than 10 cases each year for xylazine, and less than 5 cases each year for medetomidine. Mitragynine-related compounds had been recently restricted in Ohio, excluding the natural form. There have been less than 5 cases a year but more than medetomidine.

Wisconsin:
Respondent #1 reported a decrease in illicit drug overdose deaths over the past 6 months and no change in prescribed polypharmacy overdose deaths.
Respondent #2 shared anecdotal observations (instead of counts) due to a case backlog of close to a year. The main opioids detected were fentanyl and heroin. Cocaine is common and methamphetamine is rare. Trends seen on the coasts are observed in our region after about 2-6 months, likely due to distribution. One observed trend is sinusoidal rate changes in intoxications, possibly due to paycheck distribution periods. Another are spikes every several weeks, usually either cocaine or fentanyl.

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Additional Observations

South Region

Alabama: Fentanyl cases are low. Methamphetamine has returned as the primary cause of overdose deaths.

Florida:
Respondent #1 reported synthetic cannabinoids are highly prevalent in correctional institutions and there has been a higher rate of mitragynine-related deaths.
Respondent #2 shared that there was an increase in mitragynine-related alkaloids.
Respondent #3 reported an increase of mitragynine-related compounds in their casework, including mitragynine itself, 7-hydroxymitragynine, dihydro-7-OH-mitragynine, and pseudoindoxyl mitragynine. They have identified 7Stax contains primarily dihydro-7-OH-mitragynine. They also noted synthetic cathinones - isoPV8, N-sec-butyl butylone, MDPiHP.

Mississippi: Drug trends are mostly methamphetamine, hydrocodone and fentanyl with an increasing trend of kratom.

Oklahoma: There was an increase in prevalence of mitragynine alkaloids (mitragynine pseudoindoxyl, dihydro-7-OH-mitragynine) with approximately 20 deaths in 2026 listing one or more of these alkaloids in the cause of death.

Texas: Reported an increase in mitragynine.

Northeast Region

Connecticut: Found overall overdose deaths are decreasing.

New York: Found overdose deaths in teenagers from Benadryl.

Pennsylvania: Found instances of carfentanil have been observed in the last few weeks.