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## DRUGS TOLL REACHES 50 DEATHS A WEEK

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A total of 2,640 people died in all drug-related incidents in the UK in 2007, up three per cent compared with the 2,570 who died in the previous year.

The figures, released by the Office for National Statistics, cover all drug-related deaths, including accidental overdoses and suicides, as well as deaths from drug misuse. However, more than 60% of the deaths are attributable to drug misuse, and the number linked to particular drugs is shown below:

	2007	Remarks
Heroin/morphine	829	Up 16% from 713
Methadone (heroin substitute)	325	Up 35% - highest level since 1999
Cocaine	196	Highest since records began to be kept in 1993
Amphetamines (inc. ecstasy)	97	Slightly up on 2006, ecstasy accounting for just under half

A particular concern in these figures is that male deaths from all forms of drug poisoning increased by seven per cent. Four times as many men (1,282) as women (319) died as a result of drug misuse.

A more encouraging statistic is that recorded deaths from overdoses of antidepressants, paracetamol and aspirin were at their lowest level since records began to be kept in 1993.

The government has indicated that it wants to retain the classification of ecstasy as a Class A drug, a stance strongly supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers, However, the government's own Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs is currently considering whether to recommend the downgrading of ecstasy to class B.

*[ONS: Health Statistics Quarterly: Autumn 2008: 28.08.08]*

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*The above was published in The Bulletin [November 2008]*

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