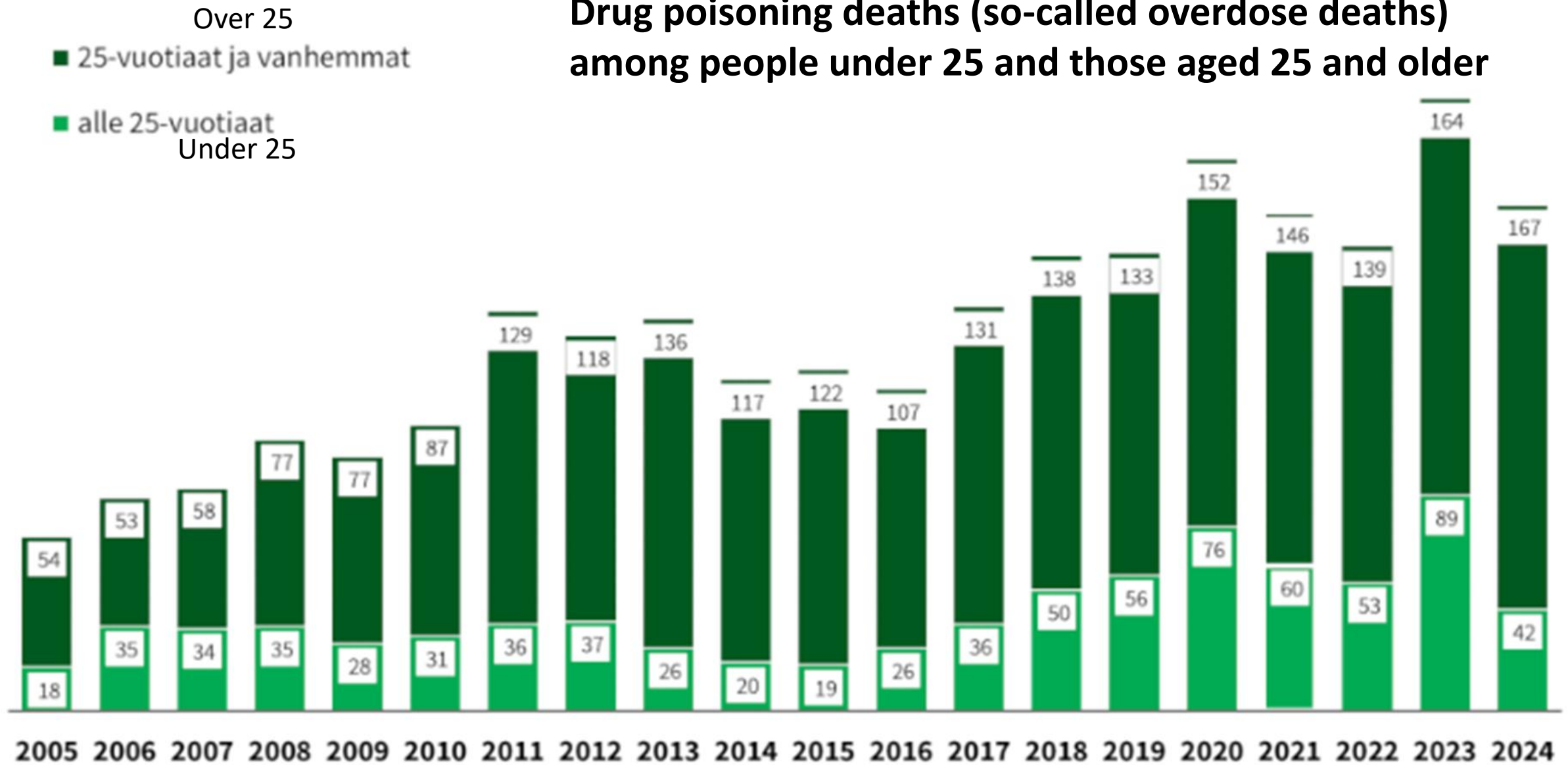


Training on drug-related death prevention and first aid for people who use substances



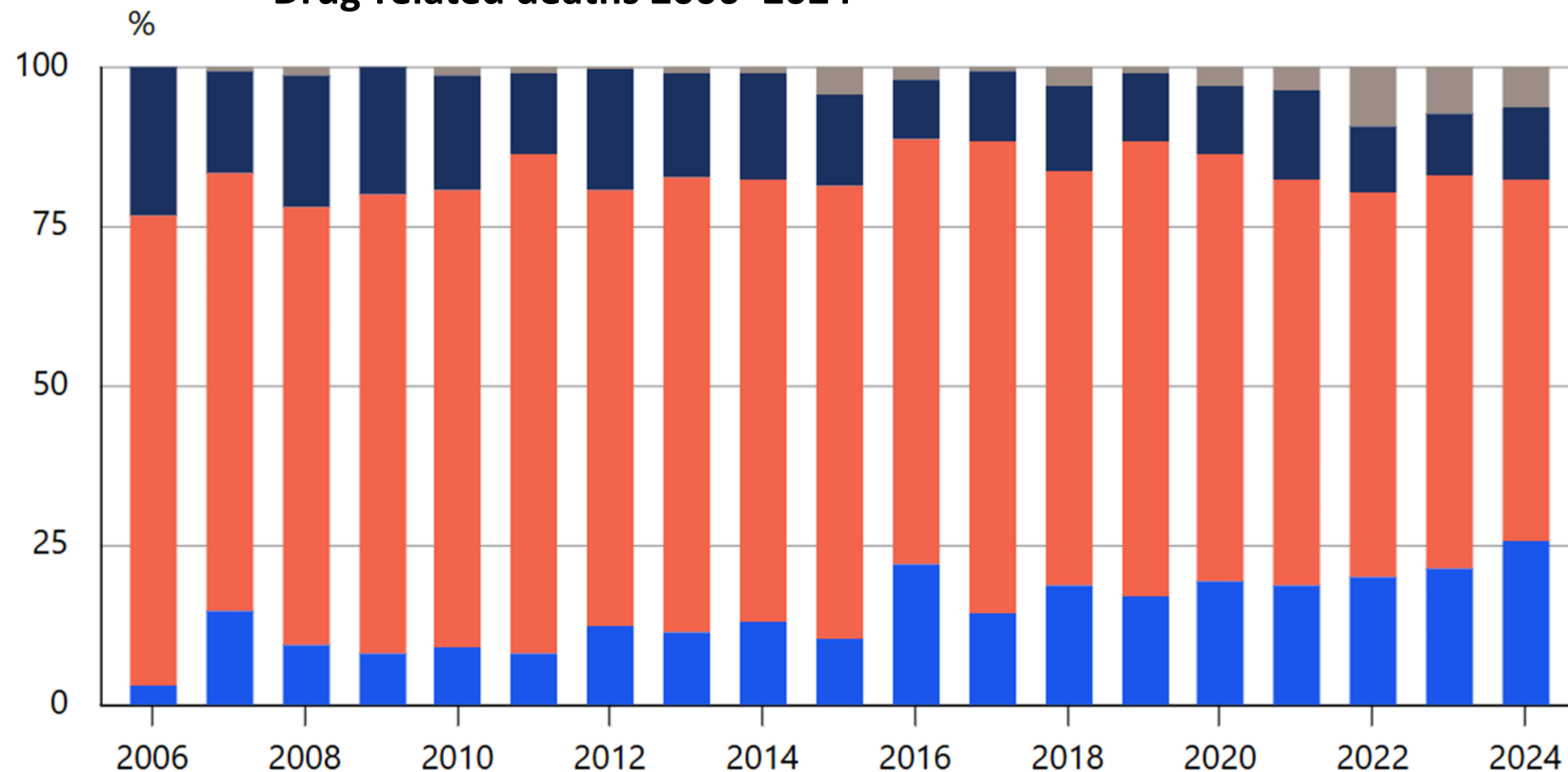
Drug poisoning deaths (so-called overdose deaths) among people under 25 and those aged 25 and older



Huumausainekuolemat 2006–2024 (EUDA:n määritelmä)



Drug-related deaths 2006–2024



- Tahallisuus epäselvä
- Itsemurha
- Tapaturmaiset myrkytykset
- Huumeiden pitkäaikaiskäyttö

Intent unclear
Suicide
Accidental poisoning
Consequences of long term drug use

How to Prevent Drug-Related Deaths?

THL, Otkes....

Red Cross

Outcome

- Recognizing signs of overdose
- Lowering the threshold for calling for help
- Providing first aid
- Strengthening cooperation between the police, municipalities, wellbeing services counties, and the third sector
- Promoting information flow and targeted communication campaigns

- Protection of life and health
- Supports people in vulnerable situations
- Substance abuse work since 2000
- Leading first aid organization
- Skilled, trained volunteers with the right attitude
- Neutral and trusted actor

- **Training / guidance sessions for people who use substances**
 - Prevention of drug-related deaths
 - Reducing barriers to calling for help
 - First aid
- Trained volunteer educators
- Information and campaigns

Training Locations:

- Substance use treatment units
- Housing units
- Drop-in / meeting places
- Child welfare institutions
- Prisons

Implementation:

- 1–2 hour guidance session
- Ready-made training materials

Cooperation:

- Free from drugs Association
- Criminal Sanctions
- Agency“Clients” /
commissioning organizations

Implementation of the Training

**Approximately
1,150 people
who use
substances have
been trained**

Instructors

- **Volunteer instructors
trained by the Finnish**
 - Red Cross Volunteers in
substance use work or
experts by experience
who are familiar with the
field
 - First aid group members
or others with good first
aid skills
 - Flexible, non-judgmental,
with strong interaction
skills

Instructor Training:

- 3-hour webinar and a 7-
hour in-person training
day



Most common situations

- In Finland, fatal substance poisonings most often occur while the person is sleeping, especially after using opioid-based substances and benzodiazepines.
- Using multiple substances at the same time, including alcohol, significantly increases the risk.
- The cause is typically respiratory depression, which can occur even several hours after substance use → always check on a friend who has fallen asleep after using substances.
- Choking on vomit is a common cause of alcohol-related death.

Knowledge, preparedness, and basic first aid skills can save lives

- By anticipating risks, it would be possible to identify high-risk situations and prevent deaths.
- With appropriate responses—calling for additional help in a timely manner and providing first aid—unnecessary deaths could be prevented.
- The training combines drug-related death prevention and first aid skills.

So that lives aren't shattered...

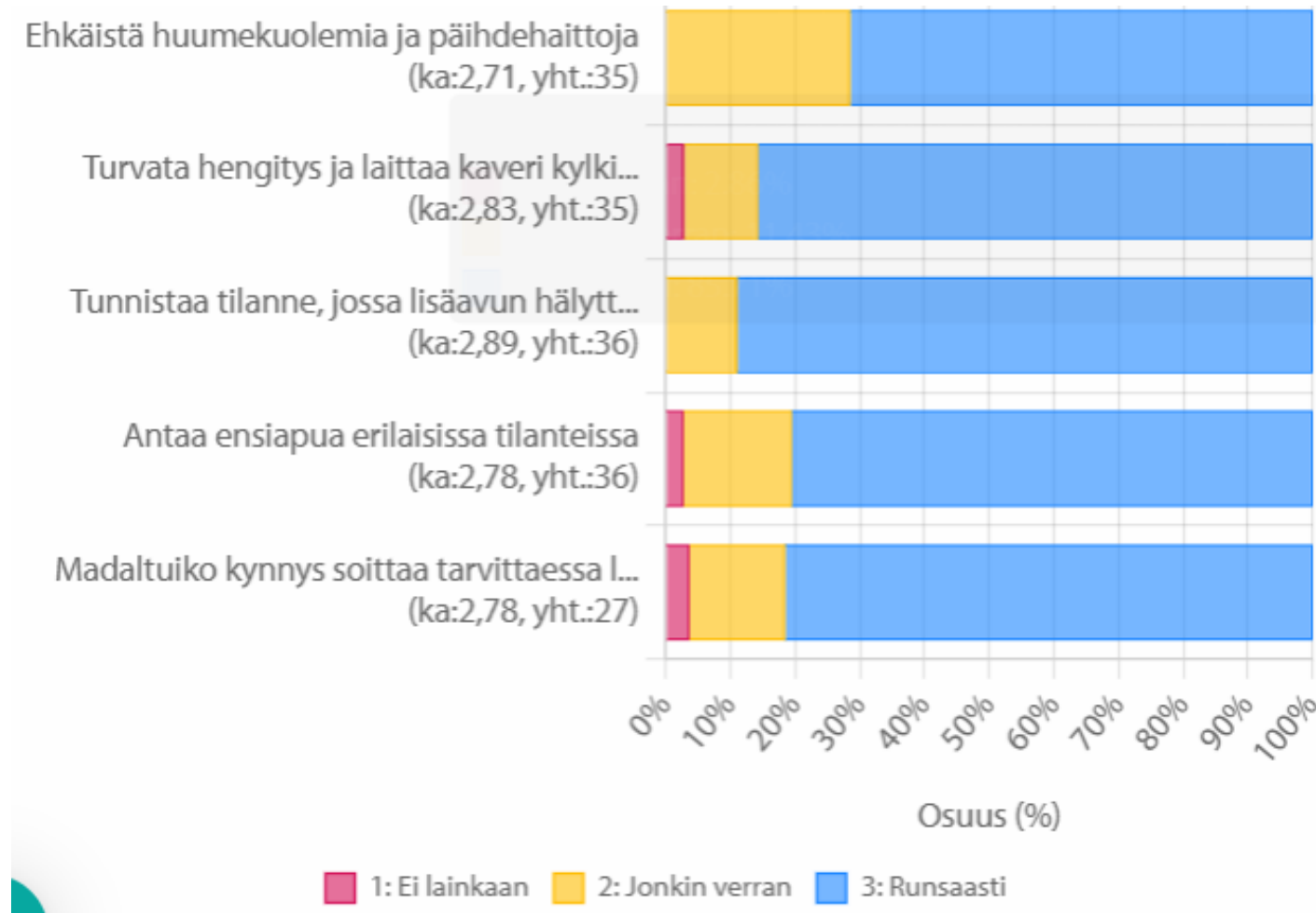




Training Content:

- Information and discussion on drug poisoning deaths and their prevention
- Acting in emergency and overdose situations, sequence of actions
- Calling for additional help
- First aid for an unconscious person, practicing the recovery position
- CPR
- Hypothermia
- Controlling bleeding with improvised materials, injection wounds, blood poisoning
- If time allows: seizures, nosebleeds, burns
- Collecting feedback, giving a certificate

Feedback from the trainings:



- Prevent drug-related deaths and harms
- Ensure breathing and place a person in the recovery position
- Recognize situations where additional help is needed
- Provide first aid in different situations
- Has the threshold for calling for help decreased when needed?

“I hope that when I need help myself one day, someone will help me too.”

Objective: to prevent overdose deaths and other substance-related harms, and to strengthen a sense of community and helping skills

- Death during sleep → anticipate the situation, try to wake the person and monitor, recovery position, supported
- Delay in calling for help → recognize a life-threatening situation, motivate calling for help and remove barriers
- Acting in the situation, first aid → recovery position, CPR, naloxone
- Me as a helper → bleeding control with improvised materials, first aid for seizures, hypothermia, etc. + feedback and certificate

Finnish Red Cross 

SUBSTANCE POISONING?

Call 112



You'll get instructions and extra help if needed.

By calling for help, you can save someone's life.

Read more:
[redcross.fi/
intoxicants-and-first-aid](https://redcross.fi/intoxicants-and-first-aid)



Finnish Red Cross 

Is your friend overdosing?

- More tired than normal
- Pale
- Abnormal breathing

Can they open their eyes? 

Do they wake up when you sit them up? 

If your friend does not react, save them!

1 CALL 112 and wait on the line! Tell the operator about the possible overdose.	
2 ARE THEY BREATHING? Raise their chin. If they vomit, turn their head to the side.	
3 Does not breathe: Start CPR 30 chest compressions (2 rescue breaths)	Does breathe: Place them in the recovery position
	

Avoid overdoses: Do not use alone, avoid mixed use. Always use clean equipment. Remember that tolerance can drop in just 24 hours!

Read more:
[redcross.fi/
intoxicants-and-first-aid](https://redcross.fi/intoxicants-and-first-aid)



Collaboration with wellbeing services counties

- There are 21 wellbeing services counties in Finland.
11 of them participated in spring 2026.
At least 6 will run campaigns in the autumn.
 - Posters and social media communication in treatment units
 - Digital displays across wellbeing services regions, shopping centers and educational institutions
 - Example: 2,000 stickers in trains and buses in Southern Finland and In Eastern Finland training event for approx. 300 participants
 - Visibility on social media across multiple channels
 - Finnish Red Cross training on preventing drug-related deaths and first aid in various units





More information:

Project Overview:

[Training on drug-related death prevention and first aid for people who use substances - Finnish Red Cross](#)

First aid instructions related to substance use:

[First aid situations caused by intoxicants – how to help - Finnish Red Cross](#)

Recovery position video in a substance use context:

[Prevention of drug-related deaths: how to provide first aid](#)

[Förhindra rusmedelsrelaterade dödsfall: första hjälpen](#)

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**Making an impact
together!
Thank you!**

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