

The Fentanyl Crisis and Its Uncanny Rise: An Analysis and Proposed Solutions

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Introduction

The irreversible damage that an addiction to Opioids causes is truly one that can end a person's life in a heartbeat. Many opioids in the United States can create an unhealthy addiction, but one of those opioids is the deadliest of them all. The synthetic opioid Fentanyl was created in 1959 by Dr. Paul Janssen as a surgical analgesic to relieve pain symptoms. The drug is 50-100 times more powerful than Morphine, and little was it understood that this one drug alone would be the ultimate cause of decades upon decades of addiction and unrelenting suffering.

When thinking back to these individuals who are affected by this drug, they come from many walks of life. Some of them are on the street, some of them remain addicted, but some come from the population of people whom you might never expect to even come close to the drug. These are individuals like adolescents, who have never touched a drug in their life, and all of a sudden they take one pill, and their entire life is gone. All the dreams and aspirations they had, all the endeavors they were shooting towards, all of that is now completely gone.

One such story is the story of sixteen-year-old Ethan Dukes who passed in 2019. Ethan was an adolescent who was a clean kid, his mother claimed she would always have conversations with him about staying away from drugs and doing the right thing. On one occasion Ethan took a hydrocodone pill for medical reasons and due to the fentanyl it was laced with, he did not wake up the next morning. His mother Shari describes going to wake up his lifeless son, his cold, limp, and pale body just laying in the bed. She stated, "They said he was going to be in a body bag and that they would be bringing him down and I would probably go to another room. I said, I brought him into this world I'm going to be with him when he goes out" (Maricopa County, AZ). She goes on to say, "All I could see was all the empty slots. And I kept thinking, by the end of the

day there's going to be more parents doing this exact same thing. And that makes no sense to me" (Maricopa County, AZ). Shari Dukes is not alone. Many parents across the country have lost their children to the growing Fentanyl Crisis. The US Drug Enforcement Agency's National Forensic Laboratory Information System reported a greater than 300% increase in fentanyl abuse cases from 4,697 in 2014 to 14,440 in 2015 (Jannetto et. All, 2019). On top of this, there are many efforts the U.S. government is attempting to implement, such as bi-partisan legislation like the Unity Agenda as well as DHS backed initiatives like Operation Blue Lotus that will stop the spread of Fentanyl at the U.S.'s southwestern border. But are these efforts unequivocally enough to stop the crisis? What about at its roots? Is the issue of Fentanyl itself tackled from the ground up, or are these governmental efforts simply a complementary way of partially addressing an already growing and concerning crisis?

Do teens like Ethan Dukes have a recourse? Or will millions of teens across America suffer the same fate as him, through not knowing the contents of a drug they choose to put in their body? What about the homeless population across the east coast and pockets of central America that is hooked on Fentanyl and cannot turn their back on the streets they run? Do they have the ability to change their life and turn things around? The question I will address in this thesis is what the U.S. government is doing specifically to help these groups of people. Yes, there is legislation currently in place, but is it truly enough? As the reader, I want you to ask yourself this question. What will it take to put an end to the Fentanyl Crisis in the United States? It is a complicated question, I know, but with my help, I am sure one will find an answer.

Through the research I have done on this topic, I firmly believe that the U.S. government is not doing enough to tackle the Fentanyl crisis within the United States. While the Biden

Administration has made quite an effort to stop the production, smuggling, and abuse of Fentanyl, it is truly not enough to solve the issue at its core. Teens, adolescents, and Homeless individuals across the entire country are caught in a Fentanyl epidemic that is tearing apart the country from the inside out. Fentanyl is being mass-produced in countries like Mexico, China, India, and even in some countries the U.S. considers to be its ally. Not only this, but that very same Fentanyl is either being shipped or smuggled into the United States, and because of how widespread these illegal operations are it goes right under the U.S. government's radar.

On top of this, Fentanyl can easily be accessed from social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and even the dark web. Many individuals sell narcotics on these platforms, some sell Fentanyl pills themselves while others sell drugs that are laced with Fentanyl. To give some perspective, Fentanyl is 50-100 times more powerful than Morphine, and what it does is it shuts off your body's pain receptors. If taken at a higher dose, it can affect your ability to make decisions and things that will put your life in jeopardy can still kill you but you will not feel any pain. Things like this have happened before, Fentanyl addicts have taken the drug and while high walk into an oncoming train thinking they will not feel anything. Well, they do not end up feeling anything but end up passing away as a result. The pre-frontal cortex and amygdala get heavily affected and do not do their job while on fentanyl (DEA). Also, Fentanyl is easily accessed in real life too. Drug dealers in their usual spots within the Downtown streets of bustling cities now sell Fentanyl and have been selling the drug for years. It has not become a common staple of the drug market regardless of its potent and lethal qualities (DEA).

Try and understand where this sentiment is coming from. It seems as if so much is being done, but to no avail. What is the price of signing all these bi-partisan deals and backing

Department of Homeland Security Initiatives to stop the drug, when millions of Americans are still experiencing pain and suffering without any recourse. Did Ethan Dukes, and all the adolescents that passed on with him, did they die in vain? My research and my writing will answer that very question, as I shall analyze the issue itself not by erroneously stating superficial solutions but by analyzing the issue from its core. Only through doing will one be able to realize, that the Fentanyl crisis in the United States is not truly what it is made out to be. Yes, there are multiple different populations of lives at stake and governmental efforts are put into place, but the crux of the issue lies on one cold truth. Will the U.S. eradicate Fentanyl from the entire country? If so, then how long will it take? How long will the millions of Americans across the country have to continue to suffer? Let us now jump right into President Biden's most recent State of the Union Address and what he claimed he would do in order to combat the spread of Fentanyl.

Literature Review

On March 7th, 2024, Americans all across the country eagerly watched as President Biden gave his State of the Union Address ([whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)). He mentioned many issues, many policies, and many ways of moving forward as a country. He also denoted the different efforts that have been put into place in order to help our allies overseas in the wars and conflicts they are currently undergoing. But one of the main things President Biden mentioned, the issue that is currently ripping apart our country from the inside out, was the Fentanyl crisis. What exactly did President Biden say he would do, and what efforts are being made right now to fully combat the lethal spread of Fentanyl across the United States? Biden mentioned he would sign a bipartisan bill that would tackle border security but also combat the spread of Fentanyl into the country

with the use of more drug detection machines, while also passing the Unity Agenda to strengthen penalties on Fentanyl trafficking ([whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)). In the fiscal year of 2024 alone, the Department of Homeland Security has made over 2,000 Fentanyl related arrests and seized over 13,000 pounds of Fentanyl from entering the United States (Department of Homeland Security, 2024). This targeted approach is building off of the DHS's efforts last year of stopping 43,000 pounds of fentanyl from entering our streets along with 5,600 fentanyl-related arrests and the seizure of 3,600 pill presses that manufacture fentanyl (Department of Homeland Security, 2024). The DHS is backing Biden's bi-partisan Unity Agenda, as it realizes that synthetic opioids like Fentanyl are at the forefront of the critical issues that plague this nation.

The drug Fentanyl itself is characterized as an Opioid, along with many other drugs of the same nature such as Morphine, Heroin, Methadone, Oxycodone and many others. But what most do not know is that the use of opium itself can be dated back to the third millennium BC. In the year 3000 B.C. native populations who hunt and gathered relied on the use of Opium for its pain relief qualities (Janetto, et al. 2019). Since that time Opioids themselves have been popularized throughout the 1800s, and into the 21st century. That being said, there is a very thin line that comes with the use and abuse of Fentanyl itself. Fentanyl is a drug that can be prescribed but is also mass-produced illegally. Going back to the roots of Opium in 3000 BC, like Morphine, it is a drug that is used to relieve pain. But there is a distinct designation that must be made. Fentanyl is also given to those who are in chronic pain but whose bodies are tolerant to other drugs. The NIH defines tolerance as when one would take higher and/or more frequent amounts of the drug to get the desired effects. (National Institute on Drug Abuse). By proxy, Fentanyl is a drug that is lethally addictive, yet it is still administered by hospitals to patients who need it. Would it not be

safe to say that hospitals also play a role in causing fentanyl addictions to happen? The NIH itself even claims that Fentanyl that is prescribed or administered by a Doctor can even lead to a “dependence.” Patients will experience withdrawal symptoms when they stop using Fentanyl, and this dependence will cause them to go back to using Fentanyl because they become addicted (National Institute of Drug Abuse). Substance use addiction towards Fentanyl is not uncommon, to say the very least. Many addicts face severe side effects that put them at the risk of losing their lives, these side effects include muscle and bone pain, sleep issues, diarrhea and vomiting, cold flashes, goose bumps, uncontrollable leg movements, and unstable cravings. But why are Americans seeing a vast increase in the amount of production, deaths, and mental illnesses related to Fentanyl to this very day? Where does the answer lie?

To go on even further, Operation Blue Lotus was launched in 2023 in order to crack down on the illegal production and smuggling of Fentanyl into the United States from our Southwestern Border. Many other coordinated surge efforts in order to combat the spread, such as Operation Four Horsemen, CBP’s Operation Artemis, and Operation Rolling Wave, have also been initiated in order further combat the spread as well as the illegal production and smuggling of fentanyl into the United States (Department of Homeland Security). But the crux of this incomprehensible issue is the fact there are so many things being done to combat the spread of this one, single drug, yet somehow there seems to be absolutely no recourse. Not only is the drug fentanyl itself lethal in its own way, but it has analogs, or strains of itself, that are even more potent than fentanyl itself (Jannetto et. All, 2019). Starting from the year 2013, a maximal surge in fentanyl overdose deaths was caused by heroin laced with illicitly produced fentanyl and fentanyl analogs which were sold as heroin. The US Drug Enforcement Agency's National

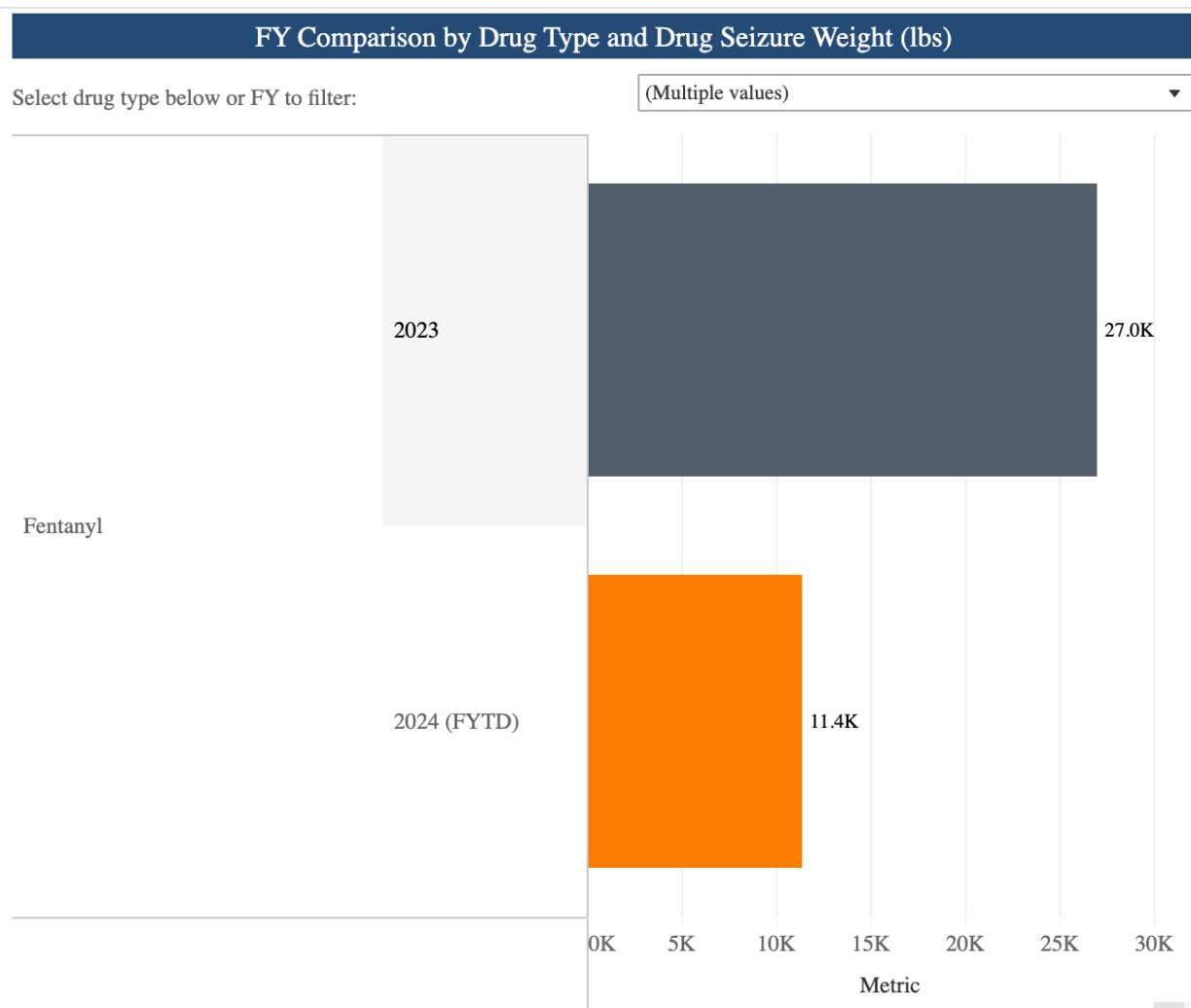
Forensic Laboratory Information System reported a greater than 300% increase in fentanyl abuse cases from 4,697 in 2014 to 14,440 in 2015. Beginning in 2015, the CDC reported 9,580 deaths caused by synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl, a 72% increase from 2014. On top of this, fentanyl analogs like Carfentanil, Butrylfentanyl, Acetylfentanyl, along 4 others, are also as or even more deadly than Fentanyl itself (Jannetto et. all, 2019). My question to the reader is, what is the solution to this issue that's running rampant before our very own eyes?

Of course, the government is stepping in with Bi-partisan legislation, like the Unity Agenda, that is cracking down on fentanyl. But what good is this really doing? A simple trip to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Harlem, Dallas, or Tampa, would easily tell a person that this issue is not going away. Homeless people all across the country, as well as individuals who developed a dependence on Fentanyl due to it being originally given for medical reasons, are addicted. The drug is much too powerful and much too potent, and these people live their lives every single day not knowing if they will even wake up in the morning. These are the people that live the unspoken lives of those affected by Fentanyl, and it is a truly harrowing sight to see. What exactly is the government doing to help these people specifically? How are they stopping the spread of Fentanyl within our own country and how are they stopping it from entering our country? These are the questions I will unequivocally answer in my research. With this thesis, I will come to a conclusion as to what the current status of the Fentanyl Crisis in the United States is, and what the current administration is doing to stop the spread of this exceedingly lethal drug onto our streets.

Methodology

The hypothesis I will attempt to prove through my research is the fact that the U.S. government is doing enough in order to stop the supply side growing Fentanyl crisis within the country, but is not doing enough to stop the demand side of the three groups of Americans that are affected by the issue. As stated previously, efforts are being made in the right direction, but the current administration is not doing enough to holistically help those who are on the street due to Fentanyl and the families of those who have suffered from deaths due to the drug as well.

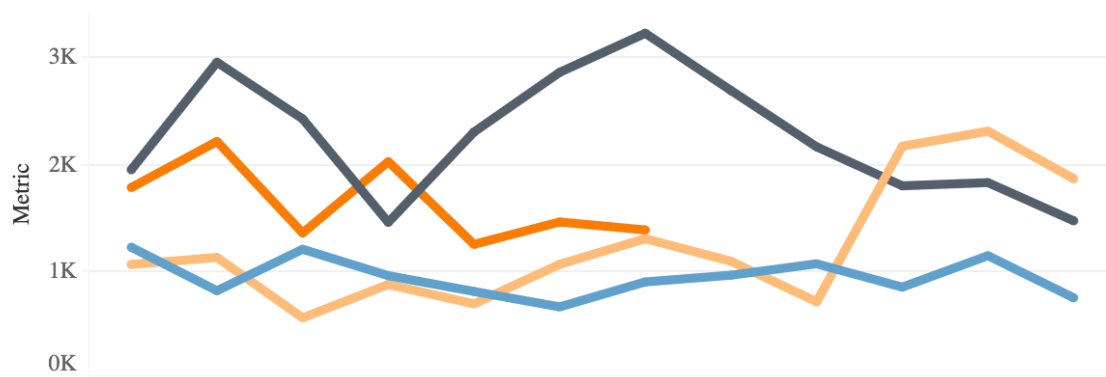
In this section, I will analyze the Unity Agenda and the HALT Fentanyl Act and get a sense of what exactly these two Bi-Partisan bills have done to stop the crisis. In addition to this, I will also analyze post-mortem statistics that show the number of people who have passed due to the Fentanyl crisis and how much the abuse of the drug has increased throughout the past decade.



In doing so, I will paint a picture as to whether the efforts to stop, or even quell, the Fentanyl crisis in the United States are truly enough. Are people still facing the adverse effects of the drug? Or are the Biden Administration's Bi-Partisan bills helping solve the crisis, along with the number of pieces of statewide legislation that has been passed as well? Let's begin with the Unity Agenda.

Biden's Unity Agenda was put into place in 2022. The Agenda itself was a multi-faceted plan that would tackle the Opioid Epidemic, and the mental health crisis, hold Big Tech accountable, as well as meet our obligations to our country's veterans ([whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)). With that said, the Opioid Epidemic is not the only thing that is being addressed with this bi-partisan agenda. The effects of the Unity Agenda have been said to stop more Fentanyl at the ports of entry at our Southern Border than that has been stopped over the past five years ([whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)). Currently, according to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, a total of 11.2K pounds of Fentanyl has been seized in the year 2021, 14.7K pounds has been seized in the year 2022, 27.0K pounds has been seized in the year 2023, and up until April a total of 11.4K pounds of Fentanyl has been seized in the unfinished year of 2024 (U.S. Customs and Border Protection). In this unfinished year alone, 2024, 11.4K total pounds of Fentanyl has been seized, and there is a chance that the figure may increase all the way upwards of 20K pounds. But with that said, there is a very small likelihood that the figure will ever get up to where it was during the finished year of 2023.

FY Drug Seizure Weight (lbs) by Month



	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	Total
2024 (FYTD)	1.8K	2.2K	1.3K	2.0K	1.2K	1.4K	1.4K						11.4K
2023	1.9K	2.9K	2.4K	1.4K	2.3K	2.9K	3.2K	2.7K	2.2K	1.8K	1.8K	1.5K	27.0K
2022	1.1K	1.1K	549	862	680	1.1K	1.3K	1.1K	700	2.2K	2.3K	1.9K	14.7K
2021	1.2K	804	1.2K	945	797	652	886	950	1.1K	837	1.1K	737	11.2K

FY Comparison by Drug Type and Drug Seizure Weight (lbs)

CBP Data on Fentanyl Seizures

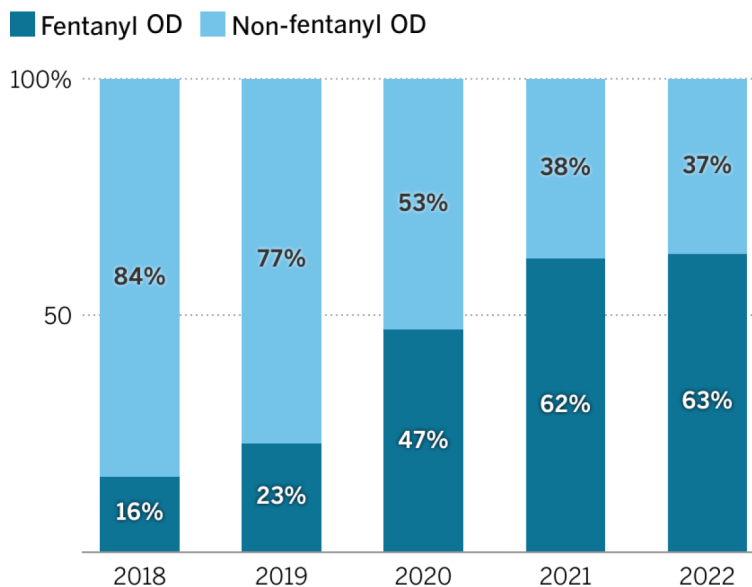
CBP Data on Fentanyl Seizures

With all of the total Fentanyl seizures at the Southern Border, it seems as if the U.S. government is doing its job in terms of taking control of the Fentanyl that is being smuggled across the border. But even with all those precautionary measures put into place by the Unity Agenda, one cannot help but wonder why this is still a problem in the U.S. If the Fentanyl is being seized, exactly how much of it is going unnoticed? And how much of it is affecting the lives of individuals within the United States?

Beginning in 2022, the city of San Diego, California, has become an epicenter of Fentanyl with all the ports of entry that are within that city. There are a total of five land ports of

entry in San Diego, those being San Ysidro, Otay Mesa, Tecate, Andrade, and Calexico ([justice.gov](https://www.justice.gov)). According to data that was released by the San Diego County's Medical Examiners Office, the amount of fentanyl-related overdose deaths have increased by a total of 2,375% in San Diego County alone ([justice.gov](https://www.justice.gov)). This increase had slowly risen from 33% in 2016 to 817% in 2021, the total is also said to possibly increase as the San Diego Medical Examiner's Office determines the causes of death ([justice.gov](https://www.justice.gov)). According to Customs and Border Patrol, the total seizures of fentanyl in San Diego are up by a total of 323% in the last three years, starting from 1,599 pounds in the fiscal year of 2019 to 6,767 pounds in the fiscal year 2021 ([justice.gov](https://www.justice.gov)). In Imperial County, San Diego the total seizures of Fentanyl have increased to 272% from the fiscal year 2019 to the fiscal year 2022, and the total weight of the seizures has gone up from 40 pounds to a total of 149 pounds, and this was before the fiscal year 2022 had finished ([justice.gov](https://www.justice.gov)).

Fentanyl OD deaths vs. all other OD deaths



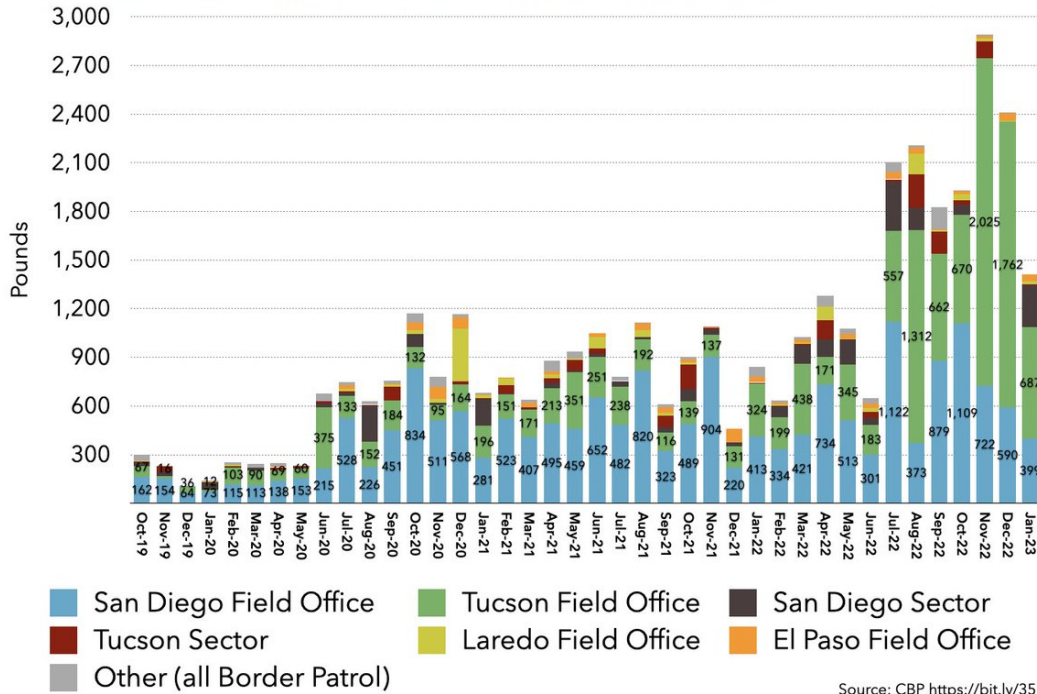
Source: County of San Diego

Michelle Guerrero / The San Diego Union-Tribune

Monthly U.S.-Mexico Border Fentanyl Seizures

January 2023: Tucson POEs 49%, San Diego POEs 28%, San Diego USBP 18%, El Paso POEs 3%, All Others <2%

Since October 2019: San Diego POEs 48%, Tucson POEs 35%, San Diego USBP 6%, Tucson USBP 3.4%, All Others <3%



Source: CBP <https://bit.ly/351AJBi>

San Diego Union Tribune, Fentanyl OD Deaths up until 2022

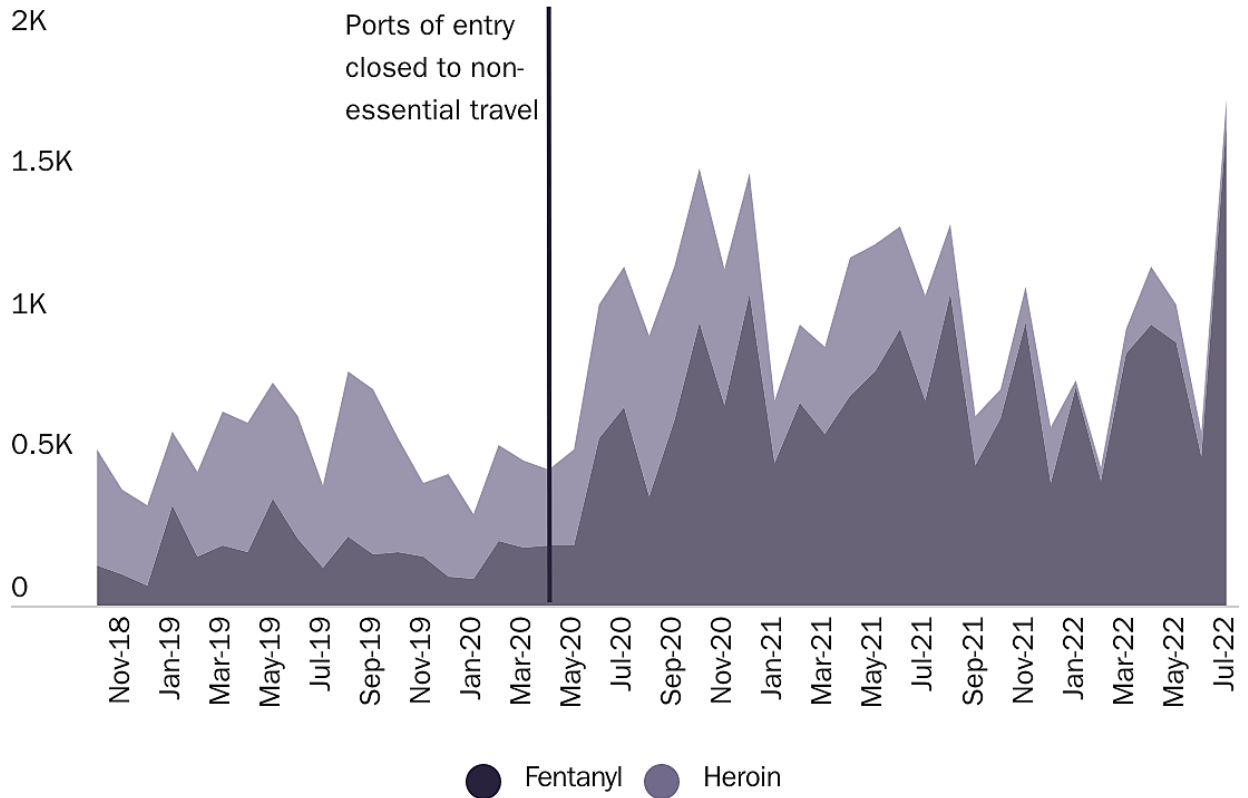
Fentanyl Seizures at San Diego in 2023, WOLA

All of these figures are from one city alone. If this is the nature of the struggles that CBP, Medical Examiners, and Field Offices have to go through in one city alone, imagine how much other cities with ports of entry have to struggle in order to make sure the fentanyl crisis does not grow any larger within the United States. San Diego is the perfect example of one city that is truly affected by the indiscriminately dangerous effects of fentanyl. Yes, with the implementation of the Unity Agenda in 2022, fentanyl seizures have gone up, but as the seizures go up the fentanyl-related overdose deaths also go up. It is a relationship one would think would adversely affect the other, seizures go up, and deaths go down. But unfortunately, especially in cities like San Diego, fentanyl-related overdose deaths have increased by a total of 2,375%. So one can easily see, how though the drug itself is being seized at the border and its ports of entry, there is just way too much of it that is being smuggled into the United States. Individuals are still getting

their hands on it, and it is making a lethally dangerous impact on the individuals within our country. Yes, the Unity Agenda is helping seize Fentanyl at the border and at the ports of entry, but the question to ask oneself is, is the fentanyl being seized all there is? Or is there more? With the ruthless production and smuggling of the drug itself, it is clear that fentanyl has its own foothold within the U.S. and eradicating it from the country will take more than just a Bi-Partisan agenda that will increase the amount of drug seizures at the border and at ports of entry. As the crisis grows larger, different bills have been passed in order to quell the growing crisis, one of these bills was the HALT Fentanyl Act which was passed in 2023.

Figure 4
Fentanyl smuggling became more prevalent after most legal travel was banned

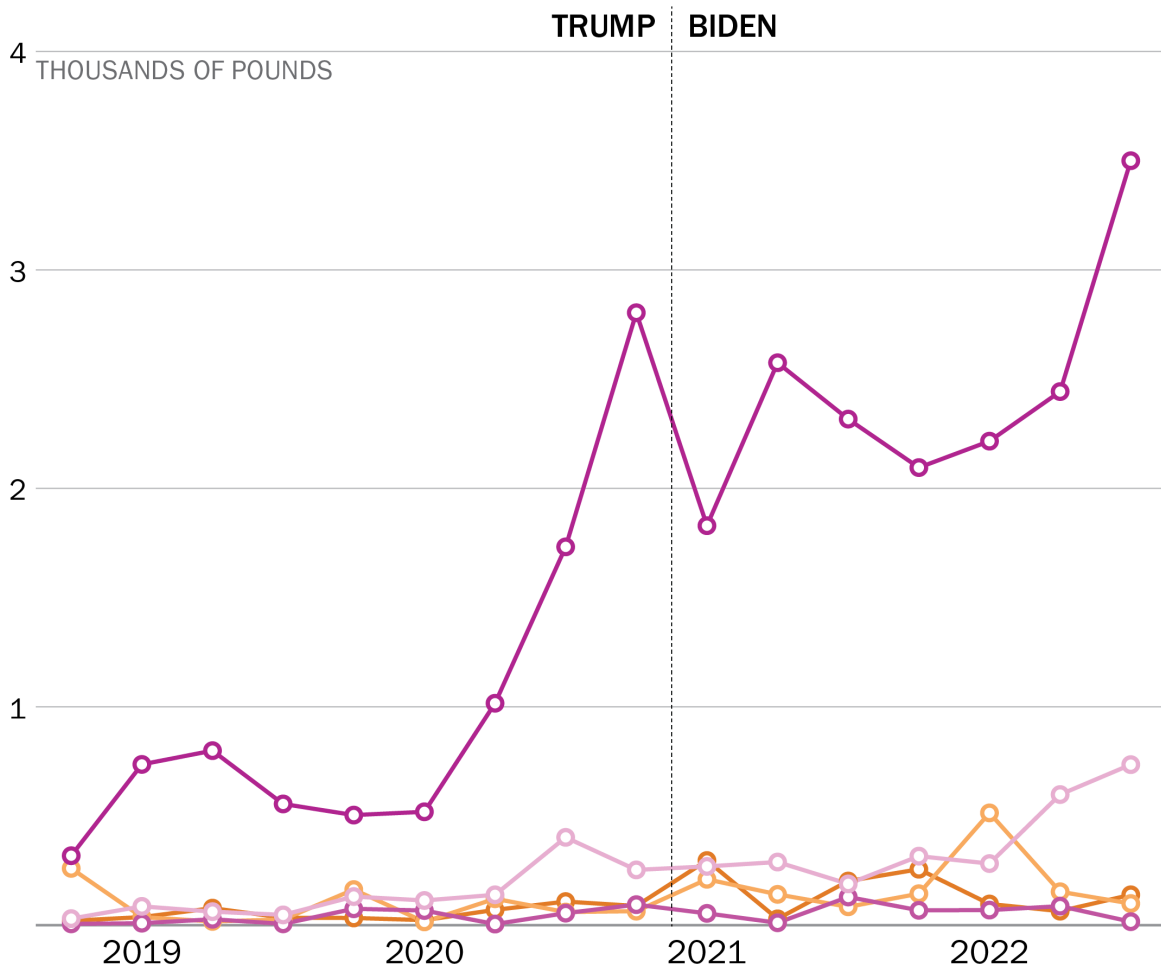
Heroin and fentanyl seizures (lbs) at southwest ports of entry, October 2018-July 2022



Sources: Customs and Border Protection, "Drug Seizure Statistics," 2022.

Fentanyl seizures, by quarter

U.S.-Mexico border ○ At border crossing ○ By Border Patrol ○ By air and marine
 Elsewhere in U.S. ○ By Border Patrol or Field Operations ○ By air and marine



Source: Customs and Border Protection

THE WASHINGTON POST

CBP, Fentanyl Seizures Every Quarter up until FY 2022

What the HALT Fentanyl Act did was that it permanently placed fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances as a class into Schedule 1 of the Controlled Substances Act. Under the Controlled Substances Act, when a drug is placed under Schedule 1 it is classified as having high abuse potential with no accepted medical use (NIH). Under this Schedule Classification, the drug

may not be prescribed, dispensed, or administered (NIH). But even with that Schedule 1 classification, one must ask themselves, what overall benefit does that add? What the HALT Fentanyl Act does is add a classification to fentanyl itself in which it is given irredeemable and illegal qualities, but even then how is this classification of the drug enabling it to stop being consumed, used, and abused? The truth of the matter is that though Fentanyl is given this classification under the Act itself that is not preventing individuals from within the United States from using and abusing it. At the end of the day, the Schedule 1 classification is nothing short of a simple title or designation that tells government lawmakers that fentanyl is “bad” and should be avoided. Here again, we can see how Bi-partisan bills such as the HALT Fentanyl Act do help the crisis itself but do not go a step further and attempt to eliminate the foothold the drug has on the United States or stop the consumption, usage, and abuse of the drug within the United States itself.

Table I. Schedules of Controlled Substances within the CSA.³⁴

Schedule	Definitions	Examples
Schedule I	No accepted medical use with a lack of accepted safety and high abuse potential; medications within this schedule may not be prescribed, dispensed, or administered for medical use	Heroin, peyote, ecstasy, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD)
Schedule II	High abuse potential with severe psychological or physical dependence; however, these medications have an accepted medical use and may be prescribed, dispensed, or administered	Morphine, codeine, hydromorphone, methadone, oxycodone, fentanyl, methylphenidate, amphetamine, pentobarbital, combination products with < 15 mg of hydrocodone per dosage unit (eg, Vicodin)
Schedule III	Abuse potential less than Schedules I or II but more than Schedule IV medications; abuse may lead to moderate or low physical dependence or high psychological dependence	Products with < 90 mg of codeine per dosage unit (eg, Tylenol with codeine), dronabinol, anabolic steroids, ketamine
Schedule IV	Abuse potential less than Schedule III but more than Schedule V medications	Propoxyphene, various benzodiazepines, sibutramine
Schedule V	Medications with the least potential for abuse among the controlled substances	Robitussin AC, Phenergan with codeine, pregabalin

Schedule Classifications of the Controlled Substances Act

With the introduction of Bi-Partisan Agendas such as the Unity Agenda and the HALT Fentanyl Act, efforts have been made in order to get a handle on the crisis itself. The Unity Agenda has allowed for more fentanyl seizures to be made in 2023-2024 than has ever been made previously, while the HALT Fentanyl is placing Fentanyl that is being seized under a Schedule 1 classification deeming the drug as indiscriminately dangerous.

With that said, the question remains, why does the drug itself still have such a strong influence within the United States. Yes, seizures are increasing and the CBP and DHS are seizing more and more fentanyl to this very day. As far as that is true, I believe that this is just the very beginning. An analogy I like to use is one of an old, molded log. One that of which if you turn over, it will be ridden with mold, insects, decay, and horridness. The Fentanyl crisis in the United States is much like that log, and as a nation, the United States is only just beginning to turn it over and witness the decay that the log has been enduring so far. The truth of the matter is Fentanyl has already established itself within the United States, and it has a strong foothold here.

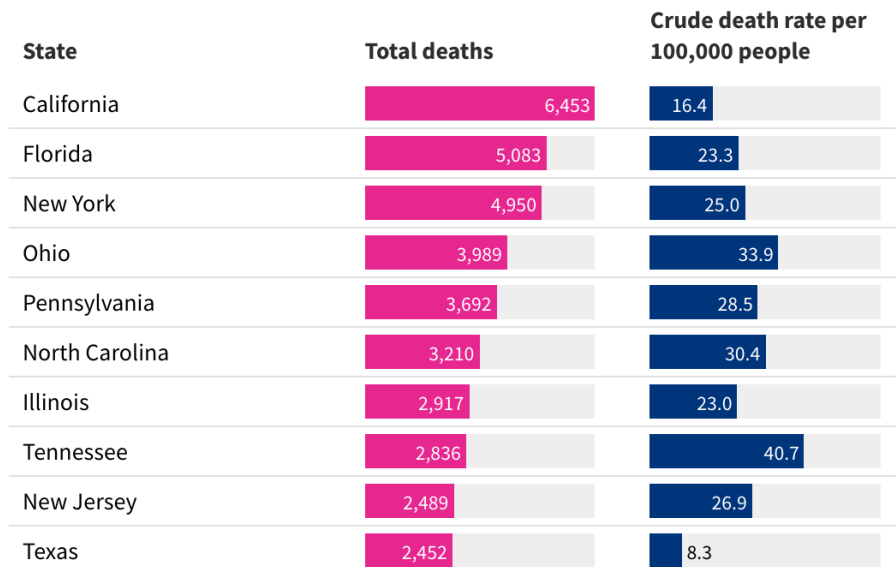
The data speaks for itself here, fentanyl-related overdose deaths have increased by 2,375% in one county alone, San Diego. More and more people are dying across the country, while counterintuitively fentanyl seizures are going up. It truly does not make any sense, as the data has an inverse relationship, how can deaths related to fentanyl increase while seizures also increase? This goes back to the very same argument I will maintain throughout this thesis, which is that there is an indescribable amount of Fentanyl that is already within the United States and that is currently being smuggled into the country that CBP and DHS cannot fully control. Each and every day literal pounds of fentanyl are being smuggled into the U.S. and operatives are only

seizing a mere fraction of that drug while it continues to enter the United States and a stronger foothold of the drug itself is being established in the country. The rapid destructive influence of the drug itself has only just begun, if government lawmakers do not get a handle on this issue and do it fast enough it will rip apart the country from the inside out.

Already we see millions of people on the street across the country who have been negatively affected by this drug in places like Arizona, California, Washington State, and Wyoming (NPR). It will not take long to add to this growing population not just in these places but in many others as well. It's important to be critical of the efforts put into place right now and to ask oneself whether what is being done right now is truly enough to eradicate fentanyl's

Explore data on fentanyl deaths by state.

Synthetic opioid overdose deaths (mostly fentanyl) by state of residence, 2022



Additional 41 rows not shown.

Click column headers to sort

Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)



lethally dangerous

influence from

America. Yes, there

are efforts currently in

place like the Unity

Agenda and the HALT

Fentanyl Act as well

as many other smaller

Bi-Partisan state-wide

pieces of legislation.

On top of this, there

are Department of

Homeland Security operations that are currently put into place such as Operation Blue Lotus and

Four Horsemen that is said to stop Fentanyl at the Southern Border. But even with all of these efforts in place fentanyl-overdose related deaths have gone up by nearly 2,500% in one county alone. People are dropping like flies left and right due to this drug, and the question remains what will it take to stop this crisis?

It will take an approach that will rid the country from the inside out of this drug in order to finally solve the dormant problem. What that will be, many do not know, though government lawmakers do have some proposed solutions. I will talk about the findings of my data in the next section as well as these proposed solutions that government lawmakers have to stop the Fentanyl Crisis in its tracks.

Research Findings

For the past three years, in the United States, approximately 70,000 individuals have passed due to a Fentanyl overdose. The number of people who died due to a fentanyl overdose in the fiscal year 2022 was 76,226 people while the number of people who died to the same cause in 2023 was 74,702. These numbers are vast increases from what the fentanyl-related overdose death toll was in 2018-2020, and it only goes to show that the issue is getting progressively worse.

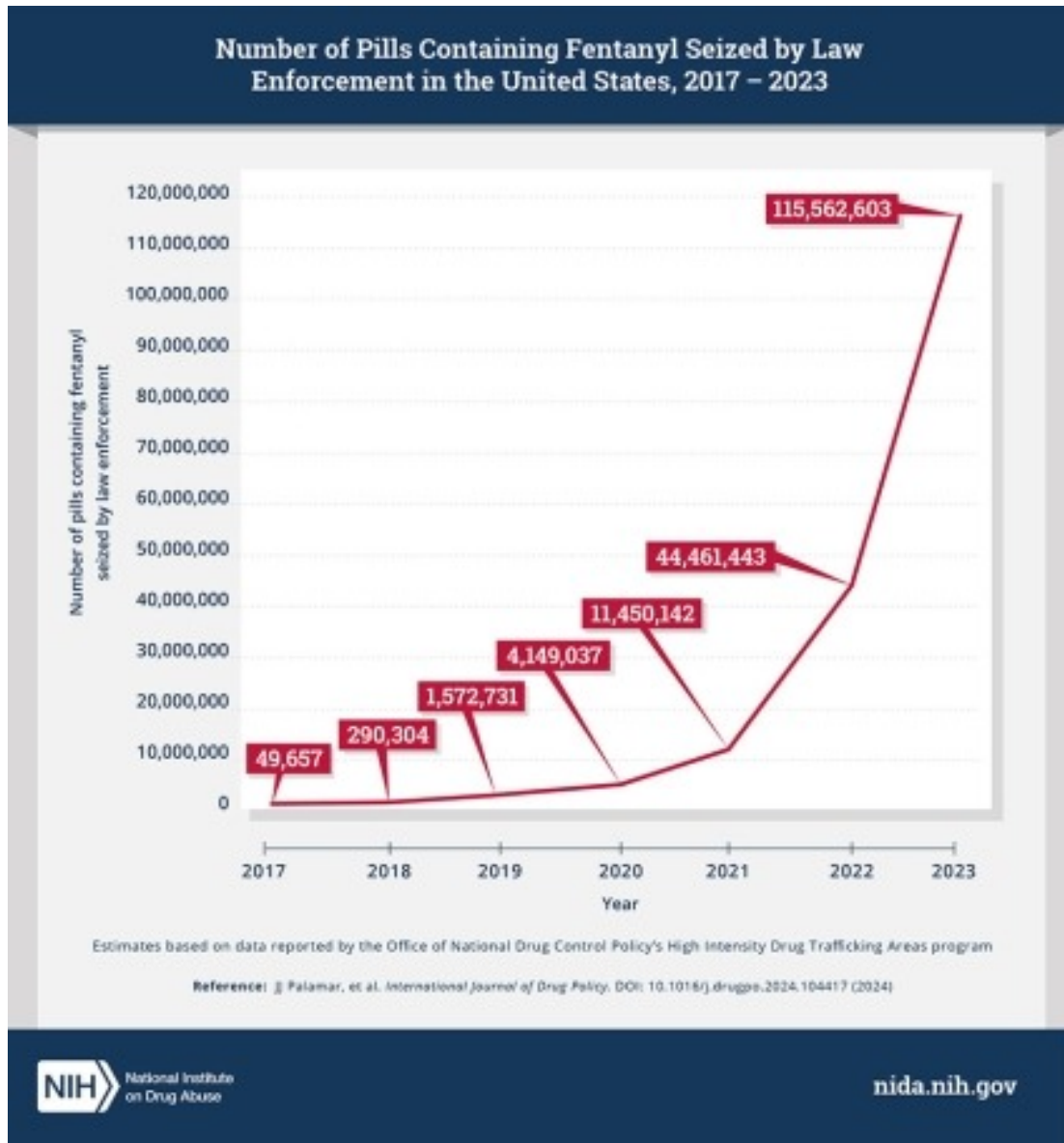
According to recent CDC data, the three states that have the most fentanyl-related overdose deaths in the year 2022 are California, Florida, and New York. In 2023 California had a total of 6,453 fentanyl-related overdose deaths, Florida had a total of 5,083 fentanyl-related overdose deaths, while New York had a total of 4,950 fentanyl-related overdose deaths. These

numbers continue to increase year by year, and even as fentanyl seizures go up the death tolls do not stop increasing.

USA Facts, CDC Data

The foothold Fentanyl has within the United States is simply too immense. It is evidently clear that the drug is indiscriminately dangerous and will make anyone who consumes it perish. But the true issue lies within the millions of Americans across the country whose lives have been torn apart due to this one singular drug. Think back to Ethan's mom, Shari Dukes. Think back to those who were once given fentanyl for pain relief and now cannot get off the drug. Think back to those who are currently homeless and run the streets while addicted to this drug. See, the

country is already torn, it is deeply affected by the after-effects of this drug and it will take a lot



just to undo the damage.

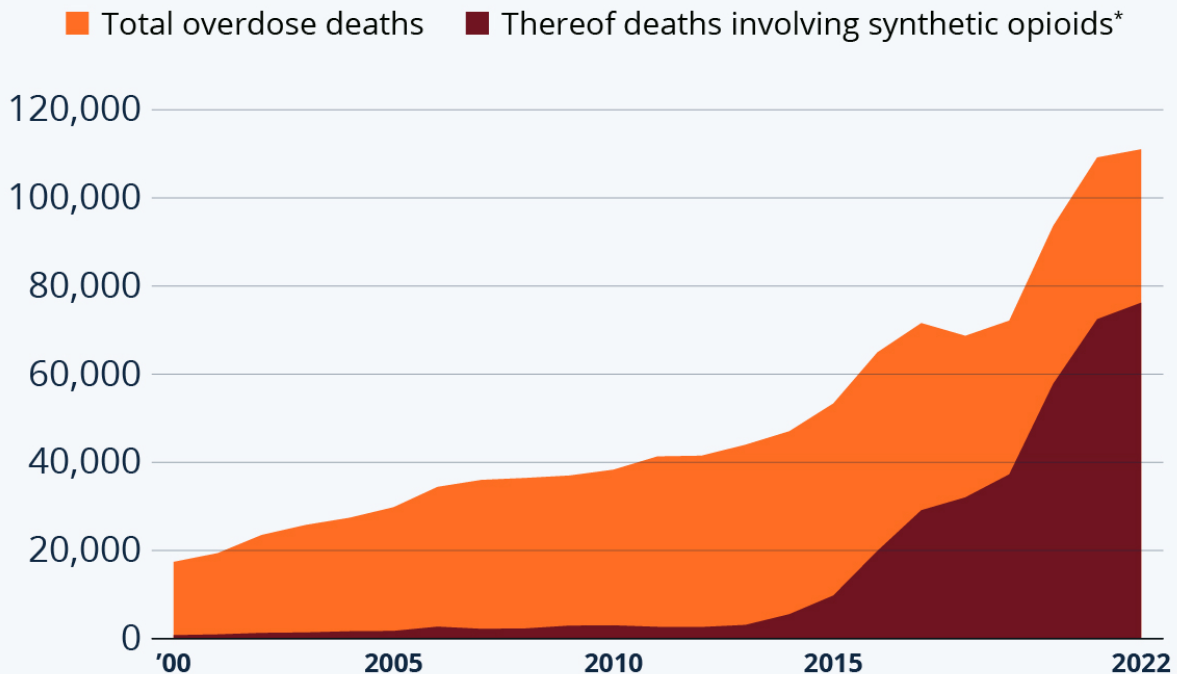
National Institute on Drug Abuse, Fentanyl Seizures 2017-2023

CDC, Fentanyl Overdose Deaths up until FY 2022

One of the most interesting metrics that have been measured throughout this crisis is the inverse relationship between the increase in the number of seizures year to year as the fentanyl-related overdose deaths also continue to increase. The Unity Agenda, other Bi-partisan state-wide

Fentanyl Fuels Surge in U.S. Drug Overdose Deaths

Estimated number of drug overdose deaths in the U.S.



* Mostly fentanyl, excl. methadone

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

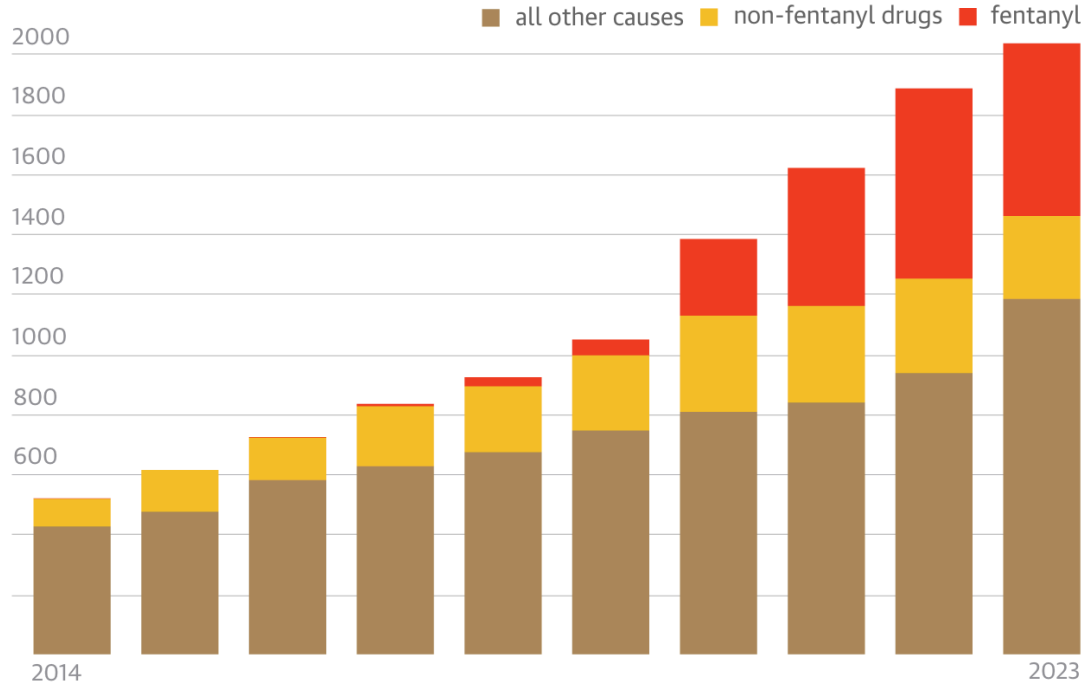


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bills that have passed, such as the HALT Fentanyl Act, the END Fentanyl Act, as well as the Department of Homeland Security operations that have been initiated in order to combat the spread of Fentanyl have helped in securing our Southern Border from the spread of Fentanyl as well as protecting our ports of entry. But this one action alone is never enough to stop the growing amount of fentanyl overdose deaths that have been steadily increasing year to year.

Deaths of unhoused Angelenos increased nearly 300% in 10 years

Drugs have become more common as the primary cause of death in the last decade. Fentanyl was among the primary causes of death for a third of all deaths in 2023.



Guardian analysis of LA county medical examiner data

The U.S. government must be transparent with themselves and realize that firefighting will not fully solve the problem, Fentanyl has already done a widely immense amount of damage to American society. The havoc the drug itself has wreaked on America is irrevocable, over the past four years alone, more people have died due to Fentanyl related overdoses than ever before (CDC). Now let us address the supposed elephant in the room, that being the countless Americans across the country who have been adversely affected by the drug, who have loved ones who passed due to it, or who are on the street because of the drug.

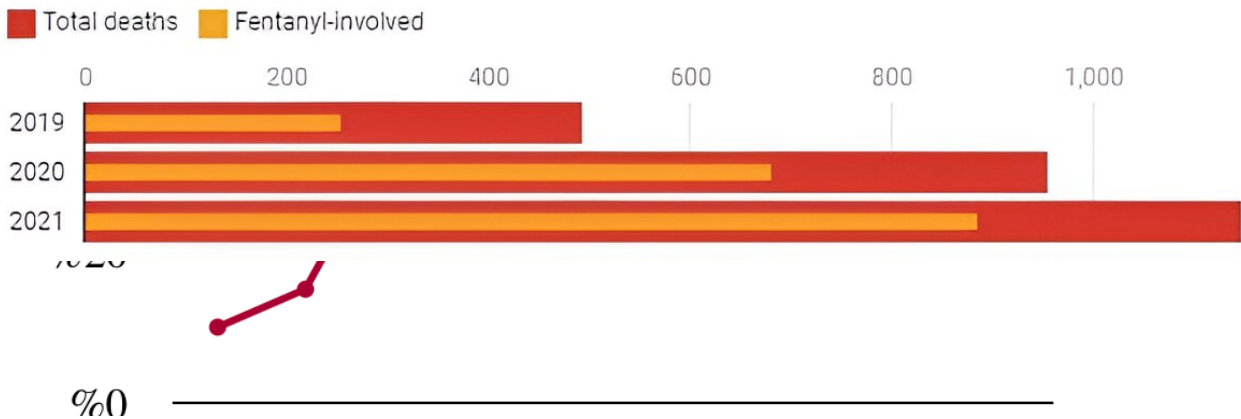
Maine Drug Data Hub, Fentanyl Drug Deaths Within the Homeless Population in Maine, Up Until 2022

Maine Drug Data Hub, Percent of the Homeless Population in Maine who died due to Fentanyl or its Analogs, up until 2022

Percent of Maine Drug Deaths Due to Fentanyl or its Analogs

Fentanyl increasingly involved in US adolescent deaths from drug overdoses

The number of Americans age 10-19 who are dying from a drug overdose that involves fentanyl is growing. While in 2019, only 253 of these deaths were recorded, there were 884 in 2021.



Opioids are behind the vast majority of adolescent overdose deaths in US

From July 2019 through December 2021, 2,231 adolescents ages 10 to 19 died of an overdose. Percentages don't add to 100 because some categories overlap, and in many overdose deaths multiple drugs are involved.

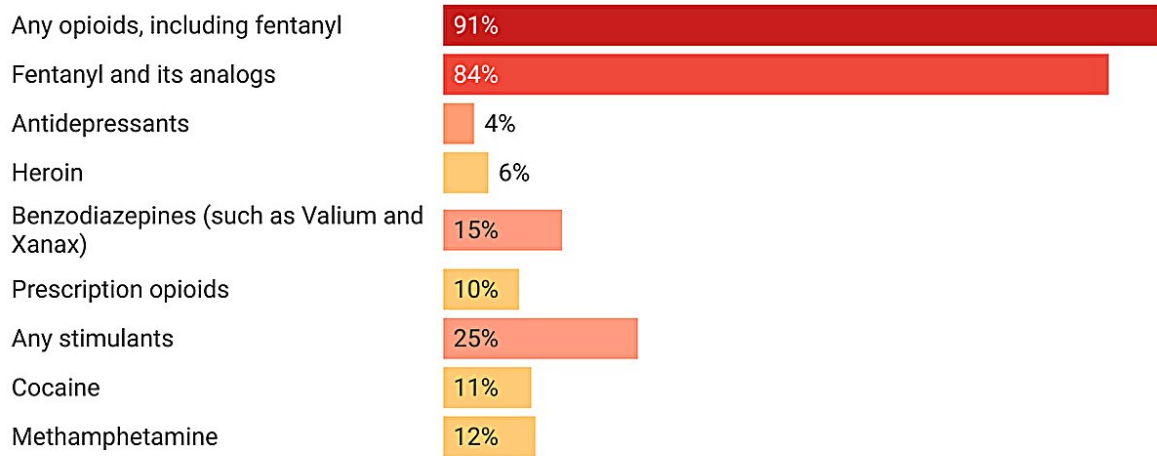


Chart: The Conversation/CC-BY-ND • Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention • Created with Datawrapper

LA County Medical Examiner, Fentanyl Related Overdose Deaths in the Homeless Population in Los Angeles up until 2023

It is evidently clear that Fentanyl overdoses are a critical problem within the homeless populations across the United States. Here one can see data from Maine and Los Angeles, two areas of the United States that are on completely different sides of the country, facing similar problems within their homeless population. Fentanyl and its analogs are deeply entrenched within the homeless populations across the United States, and it is truly a horrific sight to see as more and more of these homeless individuals pass away due to the drug. The issue here is, it is as if they have accepted their fate. They know they are addicted to the drug, and continue to take it knowing they may or may not wake up the next morning. Some of them go through life without ever being in touch with their actions and being in a constant state of “high,” others are more lucid and aware of their actions while micro-dosing fentanyl until they feel its effects.

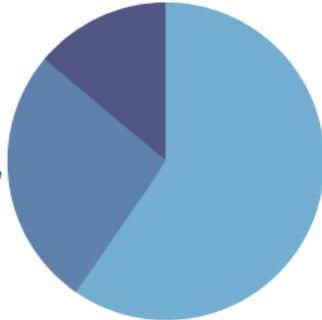
Individuals like the homeless who were once on Fentanyl for pain relief and are now completely hooked on the drug, have no other choice but to keep taking the drug due to their unhealthy addiction. The United States has a total homeless population of 653,104 people in the year 2023 in the entire country. A little over a quarter of that entire homeless population is affected by Fentanyl and is addicted (CDC).

security.org, Homelessness Over the Years in the United States

2000 - Total Fentanyl Deaths by Cause

Undetermined/Other
13.9%

Suicide
26.5%

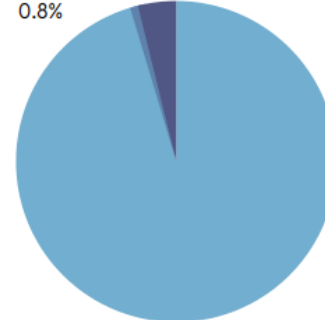


2021 - Total Fentanyl Deaths by Cause

Undetermined/Other
3.8%

Suicide
0.8%

Unintentional Deaths
59.6%



Unintentional Deaths
95.4%

Almost all synthetic opioid (fentanyl) deaths in 2021 were unintentional. The only age group for which a significant share of these deaths were determined to be suicides were Americans ages 75 to 84. Just over 16 percent of synthetic opioid (fentanyl) deaths in this age group were caused by suicide - according to the CDC.

surity.org

*The numbers were taken by breaking down synthetic opioid (fentanyl) deaths by underlying cause (suicide, unintentional, undetermined, homicide, other) - as determined by the CDC Wonder database at the time of analysis (Oct. 2022). **The numbers gathered for calendar year 2021 were considered provisional by the CDC at the time of analysis.

On top of the homeless population that is addicted to Fentanyl, there are also individuals who are on the drug due to continued medical reasons as well as families who have lost their loved ones to the drug as well. Here are some figures on adolescents who have passed due to taking Fentanyl.

NC Newslines, Causes of Deaths in Adolescents

On top of this, Fentanyl has become the leading cause of death for adolescents across the United States. Individuals as young as ten-years old are mistakenly taking pills that ultimately end up ending their life. Unfortunately, this has become a very common occurrence amongst

young teens and adolescents who think taking a pill will help their bodies relieve pain or alleviate stress but in reality the two grams of more of fentanyl within that pill ends up shutting down their system and killing them. Here is some more data on Fentanyl overdose deaths amongst adolescents in the United States.

CDC, Total Fentanyl Deaths in Individuals aged 10-19 Years Old

CDC, Amount of Deaths in the 10-19 Age Range who have Died due to Fentanyl

Based on these figures, it is truly evident that Fentanyl is one of the leading causes of death for adolescents. More and more young teens and adolescents are dying from this drug. On top of this the homeless and the families that have loved ones who have passed due to Fentanyl are only two of three groups that are deeply affected by the Fentanyl crisis within the United States. Individuals who were placed on the drug for medical reasons and now who cannot come off the drug due to the development of dependence are also the final group of people who are affected by the Fentanyl crisis in the United States.

The third group of those affected by Fentanyl within the United States are people of any age who have been placed on a minuscule dose of the drug in order to relieve pain. The drug is administered to this person a few times until doctors and healthcare professionals feel as if the treatment is over. Once that person's micro-doses of Fentanyl actually stop, it becomes clear that they need the drug in order to give them that same feeling that they once got while on the drug. This is what is known as a dependence on the drug, and it is a very common phenomenon for those who were once administered Fentanyl for pain relief but then were taken off the drug after

treatment was over. Now once these individuals have a dependence, they need more and more of the drug. They cannot come off it, and soon enough they become people that are addicted to the drug.

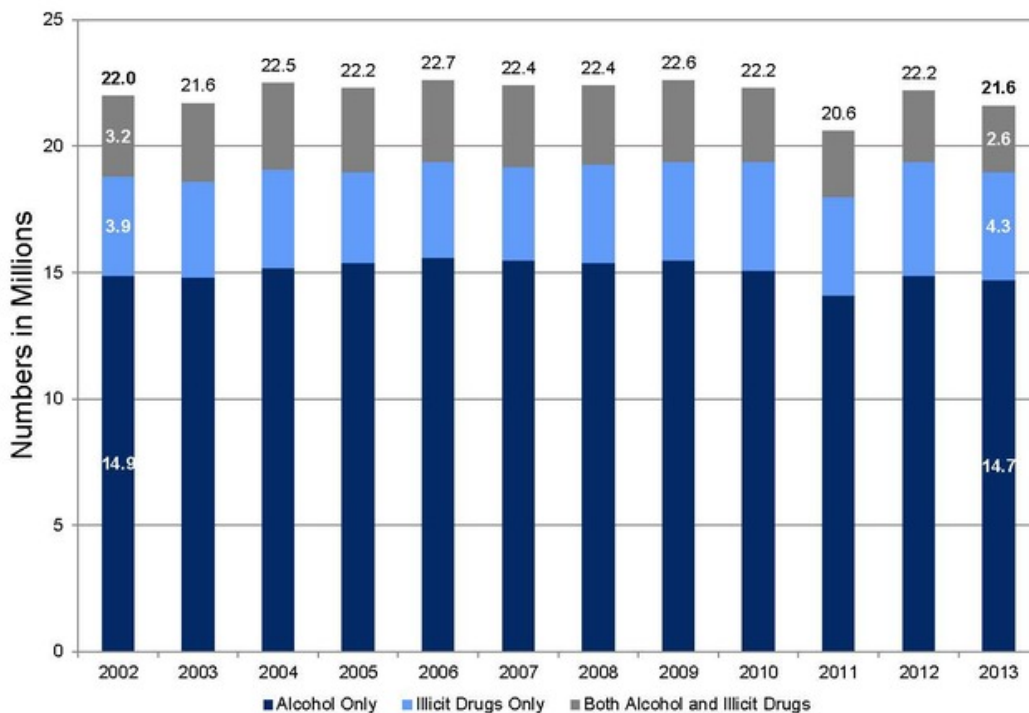
One of these common stories of individuals who were prescribed pain medications but then became hooked on Fentanyl due to withdrawals is Ronny Morales's story. He got into a brutal car accident and he had third-degree burns and sustained injuries to his back, the hospital gave him Percocet as a pain medication to help ease his pain while they tended to his injuries. Ronny stated, "And then they cut off the prescription, so I went into Physical Withdrawal. And Physical Withdrawal, I like to kind of say it's similar to the flu times 1,000,000. Like it's physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing. So then I started buying pills off of the streets, and eventually, I just found Fentanyl...It steals your soul" (Maricopa County). Due to his Fentanyl addiction, Ronny lost his dream job, he lost his apartment, and he ran out of money. The moment of awakening for him was when his mother caught him stealing from her purse to buy Fentanyl. Ronny said they were speaking and her mother was crying asking him why he kept doing this, he claims he was driving home and spoke to his higher power and realized that he could change. He sought out the 12 12-step programs and Recovery Homes and got better. Now Ronny states he's on the other side helping those who are experiencing the same issues that he faced in life (Maricopa County).

Ronny is just one of many who are in the third group of Fentanyl affected individuals who were given pain relief medication or even Fentanyl itself, but then faced immense Physical Withdrawals and went back to feeding that addiction to pain relief medication like Fentanyl. Ronny realized his situation and changed for the better, but the reality of the situation is that

people do not have the privilege to change. They are so overly addicted to Fentanyl, and rely it on it so much that the drug now becomes an integral part of their life. See people do not have the realization that Ronny had, and they cannot because they do not know any better. After they have been given the drug as per a medical procedure and once the prescription is cut off, the Physical Withdrawals are so immense that they have no other choice but to turn back to the drug. Ronny is just one of many who saw the other side and was able to make light of his situation. But there are thousands of individuals across the country who do not have the best judgment like Ronny did. A lot of the time going back to Fentanyl is all that they know, as the Physical Withdrawals are just too much for them to bear.



SUBSTANCE DEPENDENCE AND/OR ABUSE TRENDS OVER AGES 12+



Alvarez and Marsal, Substance Dependence Data of those over 12 Years of Age

As one can clearly see Fentanyl is creating a rift within American society which is in turn allowing for addiction to grow and deaths to be on the rise. Through my research, I have found that Biden's Unity Agenda as well as other pieces of legislation aimed at stopping the crisis are only complementary in ending the U.S. fentanyl crisis as a whole. What has become more clear to me as I did my research, one true finding that I have realized, is the fact that Fentanyl itself is affecting the lives of millions in America already. Rather than try and firefight and attempt to quell an issue that has already done damage, as the Biden Administration is doing now, this crisis is already affecting countless lives across America and those individuals have absolutely no recourse. A supplementary finding that I have come to conduct, that of which is connected to the previous one, is that the millions of Americans who have been affected by this drug can be categorized into three distinct groups. Those being: The Homeless, those who became addicted through medical treatment, and those who have lost loved ones due to Fentanyl. These three groups, in totality, make up the brunt of the American population of whom Fentanyl has done the most amount of sheer damage to.

With this finding one can see the three distinct groups in real time. Through my research, I see the homelessness crisis and how the Fentanyl market has completely annihilated the homeless and their livelihood. Before the involvement of illicit drugs like Fentanyl, there was no major increase in homelessness deaths but after the introduction of Fentanyl things changed drastically. We see deaths go up within the homeless communities across America by a large margin, and this figure will only continue to go up. Next, I see the number of adolescents who are killed due to Fentanyl, and how this affects the lives of families across the countries who are

experiencing the same problems. Think back to Shari Dukes and her perspective, and how her sixteen-year-old son, Ethan, died due to Fentanyl. All she could think about were the “empty slots” of adolescents and family members who she knew would go through the exact same struggles and pains as her. Now the main cause of overdose-related deaths in adolescents is Fentanyl. Next, through my research, I also see the third group. Those who have been in near-death accidents or sustained injuries and were given pain relief medication like Fentanyl or other drugs to help smoothen out the treatment. People like Ronny Morales who got into a horrible car accident and the only way of helping him get through his situation through treatment was by giving him Percocet. Little did he know that he would face immense Physical Withdrawals and would have to turn back to pain medication just to function properly. Once he found Fentanyl he claimed it was so potent that it “steals your soul.” Ronny is just one of the many individuals who were administered Fentanyl or a similar pain relief drug and ended up developing a dependence and becoming addicted.

If there was one key takeaway that I would distinguish as a finding through my research it is that Fentanyl has already done enough damage to America and American lives and it will only get worse. One can clearly see how it is affecting the lives of three distinct groups of Americans today, and how it will continue to do so unless transformational change is made to stop the crisis as opposed to simple firefighting. With that being said, government lawmakers in Congress and the like do have their ideas for dealing with Fentanyl. Whether they truly address the problem at hand, one can never tell. But these are some potential solutions that GOP and Democratic Lawmakers are proposing to stop the crisis. Let’s hear what they have to say.

As of last year, Republican Representative Dan Crenshaw of Texas is leading the republican task force to send the U.S. military into Mexico in order to attack and possibly get rid of the drug cartels (Politico). Crenshaw is attempting to get a bi-partisan bill passed that would give the green light for military operations against the Mexican Cartels. Through engaging in a war against the Cartels, Crenshaw wants them to know that they made a “bad business decision” (Politico). Crenshaw claims, “We cannot allow heavily armed and deadly cartels to destabilize Mexico and import people and drugs into the United States. We must start treating them like ISIS – because that is who they are” (Dan Crenshaw). Crenshaw’s colleague and former GOP Presidential Primary Candidate, Ron DeSantis, believes that the U.S. Government should drone strike Mexico to eliminate the cartels in one fell swoop. DeSantis also claims that any person entering the border from Mexico with a backpack or any sort of heavy-duty baggage is hostile and should be gunned down upon entry. Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas is one of the few others who also believes that the U.S. should get militarily involved against the Mexican Drug Cartels. He believes Special Operations Forces should be sent in order to dismantle the drug cartels within Mexico, he also states that if Mexico does not want to do anything about it, “So be it” (Politico). But, in response to these propositions by GOP Lawmakers, Democratic lawmakers claim they are way too extreme. Democratic Senator Bob Menendez out of New Jersey claims the rhetoric Crenshaw and his colleagues are using is “dangerous.” He claims he backed multiple pieces of legislation to fight the cartels, including ones on Fentanyl. But he now believes that what Crenshaw and his team are proposing is just too much (Politico).

According to a survey done by Reuters, Americans were asked whether they would support sending the military to Mexico to fight the cartels. Reuters states, “Republicans were

supportive by a 64% to 28% margin; Democrats were narrowly opposed, 47% to 44%” (Reuters). Then when asked if this should be done without permission from Mexico, “Some 59% of poll respondents opposed unilateral action, while 29% were supportive. Fifty-one percent of Republicans opposed unilateral action, compared to 40% who supported it” (Reuters). Here one can easily see that most Americans support going to war with the Cartels. But the reality of the situation is that Fentanyl is already in the U.S., and unless it’s ripped out of the country, it’s here to stay for a long time. Using drone strikes or sending the military to fight the cartels violates the basic principles of Just War, if the military is sent or if something worse occurs and drones are sent, it could change the entire trajectory of our country. Within a situation like this, if the operation had to be carried out correctly that would imply everything thing gets destroyed. But in that sense, that would mean the homes, the areas, and the families of those who live near the cartels will be destroyed as well. Under the Just War Principle of Jus Ad Bellum, war must only be started to create peace, and this would only bring more destruction. The fact that the majority of Americans support this idea is truly very scary. Doing this would be nothing short of an act of war, and the full implications of the situation must be understood before action is taken.

So through my research, I can visibly see the fact that not only is the country torn apart by Fentanyl the U.S. government is too. There are Americans across the United States who are suffering and the government is not sure how to address the situation other than stopping the drug from entering the United States. Whatever talks they are having as to coming up with a proposed solution to the crisis not only is not the correct approach but also cannot be agreed upon unanimously. The problem has already exceeded our expectations, rather than focus on the long term why not focus on the current problem at hand, the millions of Americans across the

country suffering at the hands of Fentanyl? No solution, to this day, from GOP Lawmakers, Democratic Lawmakers, and even from the Biden Administration has single-handedly set out to eradicate the United States of this crisis by starting with the everyday American who has been affected by this deadly drug.

That being said, another one of my findings, which in fact has proven my hypothesis, is that the government is currently not doing enough to delineate strategies for the demand side of the fentanyl crisis. And that is true through the research done on the three groups of Americans affected by Fentanyl as well as the current dismissible conversations the government is currently having to help stop the crisis even further than it believes it is already doing. With that, my hypothesis has been proven through my research. Please allow me to discuss my research findings further as well as how they matched up to my research question and my expectations.

Discussion of Research Findings

To begin the discussion of my research findings I must first go back to my motivations for starting this research as well my go over my hypothesis once more. In late 2022, not by choice but for the sake of closure, I began researching Fentanyl and trying to find out how lethal it truly is. 2022 was quite a difficult year for me because I had friends who were going to concerts, festivals, and raves like Coachella or EDC and were passing away simply by taking an unknown drug and not knowing what would happen to them next. Little did they know that they would not come back to consciousness. When the people I knew passed away, I was angered, sad, and frustrated all at once. I did not know how to react to the emotions I was feeling at the time. Out of desperation, I began researching Fentanyl, attempting to come up with ways my friends could have survived and avoided passing away those nights they went out to party. I

found so much information and similar stories that it was almost as if I was given closure, and realized that my friends were not alone in this deadly crisis that is Fentanyl.

Out of sheer curiosity, I began researching more and learning more as well. Towards the tail end of 2022, I felt that I knew about the topic enough to write a Thesis on it. I approached Professor Daniel Brunstetter to be my advisor and he said yes. From that day onwards, I started my eclectic yet fulfilling journey of writing my Political Science Honors Thesis on the Fentanyl Crisis within the United States. While writing this thesis, to start off, I had no clear goal in mind, I had no clear agenda, and I had no clear vision of what I was going to do. My head was filled with statistics, and figures, and charts and graphs, and government policy. But not of actual concrete, real-time data of how the Fentanyl crisis was currently affecting Americans across the country. As I began writing, I felt it was in my best interest to make sure that this perspective was a crucial part of my writing that I did shed light on. In doing so, I hoped that someone may read this research paper and understand that although the government is somewhat trying to avert the current Fentanyl crisis there are already three distinct groups of millions of Americans who are affected by this crisis through and through. And once that realization hits, hopefully, they also understand that what is being done by the government currently not only is the wrong approach but will not help the Americans that need it the most.

With all that being said, my current hypothesis for this research paper is that the U.S. Government is currently doing enough to handle the supply side of the Fentanyl Crisis in America, but not the demand side. In order to prove this hypothesis I have looked at different pieces of legislation including Bi-Partisan legislation like the Unity Agenda and statewide Bi-Partisan Legislation like the HALT and END Fentanyl Act. With the research I have been doing I

analyzed the Unity Agenda, and have come to the conclusion that all it does it help seize Fentanyl at our Southern Border. But conversely, while all the Fentanyl seizures go up, the death toll for affected cities and counties within the United States goes up. The Unity Agenda also aids in mobilizing the Department of Homeland Security, or DHS, to create initiatives to stop the drug at the border, such as Operation Blue Lotus and Operation Four Horsemen. But then again, these initiatives have only been started in order to help seize Fentanyl at the border. The HALT Fentanyl Act is one of many statewide pieces of Bi-Partisan legislation that have been created in order to stop the spread of Fentanyl, but all it does, just like the similar legislation that has been passed, is deem Fentanyl as a Schedule 1 drug claiming it is indiscriminately dangerous. Acts like this simply put a label on the drug and provide no steps to eradicate the drug from the country.

On top of this, both the Unity Agenda and the multiple pieces of Bi-partisan statewide legislation do not provide any legitimized steps that the country can take to help and provide recourse for the millions of Americans across the country who are all but suffering due to the dangerous effects of the drug. In conclusion, my hypothesis is proven to be true due to the fact that the Unity Agenda and the pieces of statewide legislation that have been passed are not holistically enough to not only help seize fentanyl at the border but also provide recourse for Americans all across the country in order to address the demands of the three groups of Americans affected by the crisis. From my analysis of the different government efforts as well as my analysis of the current status of the drug in the United States, it is true that the U.S. government clearly is not doing enough to help stop the Fentanyl crisis within the United States. With that, according to my research, my Hypothesis was proven to be true. Now allow me to

take a look at my research question and determine whether or not my research findings have answered that question.

The original research question was, “What efforts have been made currently, either at a national, statewide, or local level to stop the spreading Fentanyl Crisis in America? What can lawmakers, organizations, and individuals do currently in order to finally put an end to this issue?” With this question, I have addressed that efforts are being made at the nationwide and statewide level via the Unity Agenda and the bi-partisan legislation pieces like the HALT Fentanyl Act and the END Fentanyl Act. Though they are not enough these efforts are still being made, and through identifying them I have successfully answered the first part of my research question. As per the second part of the question, I will answer that here while discussing my findings.

If I am being entirely honest, the Fentanyl market is so vast and expansive, that I don't think anything can be done to finally put an end to this issue. As long as Fentanyl continues to be shipped into the U.S., and as long it continues to be administered as a pain relief drug by hospitals, there is no telling how far this issue will grow. Unfortunately, through my research, this is the ugly truth that I have found. Fentanyl is already so deeply entrenched within our country that it would be exceedingly hard to rid the country of the drug not to mention the fact that it will still be supplied by illegal off shore exporters like Mexico and China. In my findings section I did mention the fact that one thing the U.S. government can do is send DHS to be on the ground and dismantle and seize any of the fentanyl houses in the country while making sure they never operate again. This can be one thing that lawmakers do that will temporarily stop the

crisis in it's tracks, God forbid more fentanyl enters the country. But even if it does it will not be processed by illegal fentanyl plants, but will rather get seized.

If there is anything that organizations and individuals can do, it would be to have hope. Have hope that there is a brighter side and that one does not have to give their life to some meaningless drug. Through research, I have found stories of those like Shari Dukes and Ronny Morales. Stories of those who have lost loved ones due to Fentanyl or who were addicted but saw the other side. It takes time, and it's a journey. It's a process that takes a lot of dedication but once you start it will get easier and easier. Individuals like Shari are part of organizations that help shed light on Fentanyl addiction and she is doing whatever she can to make sure that people living in this country do not face the same fate as her son. Ronny also took advantage of the 12 Step Process and Recovery Homes and got better, the 12 step process helped him come to terms with his situation and he had a realization and a conversation with his Higher Power that allowed him to never go back to drugs again. For those millions of Americans across the country who are suffering, there is hope. It simply just takes that first step in realizing that you are not alone, and that you will get through this no matter what. Ronny and Shari are two of the many individuals who got through their struggles, even though there were rough patches in their journey each of them adapted, came to terms with their situation, and chose to get better. It's a choice that every suffering American can choose to make, a simple mental switch from addict to human being can go a long way and make someone realize their full potential. If Americans who were affected by Fentanyl across the country were to do this and do the same thing as Ronny and Shari, the country would be one step closer in eliminating the Fentanyl Crisis as we speak.

In answering my research question, I have realized that the Fentanyl Crisis is truly a multi-part problem that requires a multi-part solution. Not only does the U.S. Government have to stop Fentanyl from coming across our Southern Border or overseas, but they also have to eradicate all the fentanyl houses on our streets, while providing recourse for the millions of Americans across the country who are suffering from the lethal effects of the drug. The solution to this ever-growing and multi-part crisis, is a three-part solution, that if done will tackle all the parts of the crisis itself and make sure no stone is left unturned. With that said, it is not clear what the government's next steps will be and what they will choose to do in terms of making a decision to end to try and stop the crisis.

With my findings, I have come to the conclusion that something else must be done, and what the U.S. Government is currently doing to stop the Fentanyl crisis is not enough. And that there must be a multi-part solution to a multi-part problem in order to finally solve the crisis.

Conclusion

Allow me to go back to that same analogy described in the Methodology section of the research paper. Imagine a moldy, sodded, old log. Now imagine, the dirt, the mold, the decay, the insects, and the rot that will rear its ugly head once one were to turn that log over. When the log is turned over, the situation is much worse than one would think. It is filled with mold and horridness, it is rotting completely and is holding many weeks of decay along with the insects that are crawling all over it. That log, when turned over, perfectly depicts the Fentanyl Crisis within the United States. And that log has only just begun being turned over.

A common theme of this research paper is the unnoticed Americans who are affected by Fentanyl and who potentially have no recourse. We see millions of adolescents, homeless

individuals, and people who were first introduced to the drug as part of a pain relief treatment. See, the Biden Administration has put measures into place to help seize Fentanyl at our Southern Border and deem the drug as indiscriminately dangerous, but what about the millions of Americans who are already suffering from the lethally dangerous effects of this drug in our own country in real-time. The Fentanyl Crisis is a multi-faceted issue, the current administration must stop and seize the drug from entering the country while also making sure there is recourse for those who have passed because of the drug and those who have been negatively affected by the drug itself. If analyzed carefully, the Biden Administration is only addressing one part of the overall crisis itself, that being stopping and seizing the drug from entering the country. What should be blatantly obvious yet seems somewhat unbeknownst to the current administration is that Americans are already suffering from this drug, it has already done enough damage that death tolls within cities and counties near ports of entry have doubled, tripled, and have even exponentially increased over the past 4 years. Yes, obviously, fentanyl should be stopped from entering our country, but why is it that the Americans who have been negatively affected by the drug have no other choice but to accept their fate and continue to struggle?

The hypothesis I have laid out in this research paper is that the government is currently not doing enough in order to address the demands of the Fentanyl crisis itself= from the United States, and I believe my research only proves that hypothesis further. Throughout the different sections of this research paper, I have allowed readers to get a sense of the entire Fentanyl Crisis that the United States is currently experiencing. Not only this but I have analyzed the legislation passed on this issue, I have analyzed post-mortem statistics, and I have gone through the population of Americans in real-time that have been negatively impacted by Fentanyl or are still

experiencing the lethally dangerous effects of this drug. As of late, the Biden Administration, in my humble opinion, is attempting to fire fight. They are only now attempting to hose down a fire that has been raging on for acres upon acres. What the current administration is attempting to do is nowhere near enough. To fully get a handle on this pressing issue and eliminate this drug from the United States, efforts must be made to be on the ground within the affected counties and cities, and it must be made sure that this drug can never be used any longer.

It's quite a simple two-part solution to a multi-part problem: stop and seize the drug from coming into the United States and make sure the drug is no longer used within the U.S. itself. Doing these two things, over time, will eliminate the Fentanyl crisis and provide recourse for those so heavily affected by the drug and its dangerous effects. It is a critical and unprecedented time for President Joseph Biden, and Fentanyl is one of the main issues that can either make or break his campaign in 2024. As stated earlier, he is currently trying to firefight, and attempt to quell or slow down, an issue that has already done a very significant amount of damage. Is what he is doing truly enough to help fundamentally solve this crisis? A simple effort to send government officials to these affected cities and counties with exponentially high fentanyl overdose death tolls, while also providing medical attention and recourse for those currently negatively impacted by the drug will go a long way. This will not happen overnight! Again, the combined effort of stopping and seizing the drug at the Southern Border and addressing the millions of Americans who are suffering due to the Fentanyl is enough, but it will take time. It will be interesting to see President Biden's stance and approach to dealing with this issue as the 2024 General Election nears.

With that said, I will reiterate my research findings and enter into a final discussion to describe the results that I have found. Even though the Biden Administration has initiated the Unity Agenda and on top of this bi-partisan statewide legislation has been passed in order to stop the spread of Fentanyl within the U.S. and place it under Schedule 1 classification, this only solves one part of the multi-part problem which is the Fentanyl Crisis. With that being said, millions of Americans who are already affected and suffering from the current Fentanyl crisis are left by the wayside and are not provided any recourse. These Americans can be categorized into three groups, 1-The Homeless, 2-Those who were given Fentanyl or a similar drug for pain relief and who are now addicted, 3-Those who have loved ones who have passed due to Fentanyl.

With each of these groups, I could see a correlation between the Fentanyl used by each group and the amount of deaths within each of the groups as well. In counties and cities across the United States, I saw how Fentanyl overdose is the leading cause of death. And how more and more homeless individuals are passing away due to homelessness. Life for the homeless before the Fentanyl market was very different, now there are individual who take the drug every day and are dependent on the drug to survive. They could care less if they wake up the next morning as long as they have Fentanyl they're fine. And a lot of these homeless individuals do not end up waking the next morning, they sit on a park or community bench under the influence slowly drift off into sleep, and next thing you know that person is not living anymore. These are the issues the homeless population faces when dealing with Fentanyl.

Next, you have people who have been administered the drug and once the prescription of it was cut off they are now addicted to it. These are people like Ronny Morales who have ungodly Physical Withdrawals and need more of the drug just to be able to function. Ronny got

better but many do not have the same perseverance as he did, a lot of individuals today are living with themselves and their families as fentanyl addicts. They are addicted to a drug that once helped them but now they cannot seem to get off of. There are thousands of Americans just like this across the country, who have been given the drug for pain relief purposes but the Physical Withdrawals are so unbearable that they have no other choice but to go back to the drug through illegal means once their hospital prescription is cut off. This is the second group of individuals who are affected by Fentanyl, and there are so many of them across the country. Ronny's situation was not unfamiliar to other Americans living today, but he made the choice to get better and if they can too it would immensely change the scope of the crisis itself.

The third group that is being affected by the Fentanyl Crisis are those who have lost loved ones to Fentanyl. Here I saw fathers and mothers, like Shari Dukes, who talked about all the other families and individuals who may be experiencing the same struggles their family was experiencing in losing a loved one due to fentanyl, like their son Ethan. These families, and groups of individuals also make up a large part of the Americans who are affected by the Fentanyl Crisis. Shari chose to educate people on Fentanyl and its dangers, but others like Shari may not do the same. There are plenty of families across the country who have lost their loved ones due to Fentanyl, through my research I have found that the leading cause of overdose death for adolescents is Fentanyl. As the years go by, this number only grows and more and more families lose their loved ones due to Fentanyl. This group makes up a large part of the Americans who are affected by Fentanyl.

While finding all this, I also researched proposed solutions that both GOP Lawmakers and Democratic lawmakers have to combat the crisis. Texas Representative, Dan Crenshaw,

claims that we should use military force in order to attack and dismantle the Mexican Cartels. His colleagues like the Florida Governor and GOP Presidential Primary Candidate, Ron DeSantis states we should drone strike the Mexican Cartels while Senator Tom Cotton from Arkansas states we should get Special Operations involved in order to dismantle the drug cartels beyond the southern border. Democratic Lawmakers believe the propositions from Crenshaw's team are too much, many democratic lawmakers have voted on bi-partisan bills to fight the cartels and to even stop the fentanyl crisis but they believe that Crenshaw's plans do not have enough support across both aisles of the political spectrum. Again all of these ideas toward a proposed solution ignore the elephant in the room, those being the Americans in real-time who are suffering from the Fentanyl crisis already. They are not enough to fully solve the multi-part problem which is the Fentanyl Crisis. These are the findings I have come to through my research.

At this point of the research paper, I want readers to think about the origins of what a drug is. Drugs were used over 200 million years ago, to enhance cognitive benefits and to give users mental clarity among other things. They became a daily part of life and something that was used almost unanimously by our ancestors. At that time, drugs were simply a means of entering a mind frame that allowed oneself to be more in tune with who they are. How did the simple idea of a drug become so bastardized and misconstrued that the very same thing that originally helped our ancestors is now killing millions of Americans nationwide and creating an irrevocable cataclysmic rift within our country itself? That question is one, in all fairness, that is unanswerable. With the shift of time and technology, society and human beings have given drugs the qualities that they should not have. As substances and strains of drugs around the world

become more and more potent and lethal, drugs like Fentanyl enter into the system and wreak havoc amongst those who use it.

Let us think back to one of the first main efforts by President Ronald Reagan that was initiated to combat the spread of drugs in the 1980s, the *War on Drugs*. Originally, this was an initiative that former President Richard Nixon started and wanted Reagan to finish. Forget about the result of the war, and what happened because of it. Yes, there was harsher criminal sentencing, yes there were more punitive charges, and yes, the war did not do what people expected it to do because it encroached on the freedom and sovereignty of Americans. But I want you to ignore that. Why was the war even started to begin with? Recreational drug use became popularized in the early 1900s and continued on into the 1980s until now in which there is the amalgamation of a mess of addiction and death. But why did something as daunting as drugs have a whole effort around it that was bound to end up stopping it? Think back to the origins of drugs, see they were not things that had the heinous and addictive qualities that they do now compared to when our ancestors took them. Back then, it was simply something that could help boost cognitive performance. What is all this politicking over drugs going to do? Where will this lead? Where will this take us? The War on Drugs was a complete failure for many reasons, but the main one being that it was a good-intentioned effort that took an undefeatable opponent! It was never going to be successful, it was never going to make headway, and the war on drugs was never going to make any sort of remote progress. Why? Because drugs have now devolved to become something unrelentingly dangerous that has already done an exceedingly large amount of damage on the American population. By Reagan's time, it was much too late.

The issues surrounding the War on Drugs are akin to what is happening now with Fentanyl, efforts are being made to try and stop Fentanyl but as stated previously the drug has already done irrevocable damage to American society. But why all this talk about the origins of drugs, Ronald Reagan, and the war on drugs? The main reason for that being is the biggest lessons can be learned from our history. See our leaders attempted to stop the spread of drugs before it was too late, they were good-intentioned but did not have the right approach. Now we see the downwards spiral of the consequences of what became of the growing drug market and the evolving opioid crisis. The point being that it is already much too late. Fentanyl has truly created a rift within American society and it has killed the lives of millions across the country while also putting them on the street. Unless the current administration or an administration that comes after can initiate a remediating solution that will not only stop the drug from entering the United States but also provide recourse to those families whose loved ones passed due to the drug or who are currently affected by the drug, Fentanyl will continue to run rampant and wreak havoc in our country.

It is a critical time for President Joseph Biden and his current administration. He is the current nominee for the Democrats and is set to debate former President Donald Trump on June 27th of this year. It is fair to say that the Fentanyl crisis only grew to great lengths once Biden entered office, it was up to him to finally change the drug landscape in the United States and do something that both former Presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan could not do. But even with the damage Fentanyl has already done to the country, Biden chose to firefight and protect our country on one front rather than protect and remediate to deter an already growing crisis and provide a future for millions of Americans affected by Fentanyl. As Election Day nears, the

Fentanyl crisis is an issue that will either make or break Biden's campaign for President. I will say it here, and I will stand by this statement. See, Biden has chosen to be a "strong" president by protecting our border and our ports of entry, and I'm sure he also believed he is doing a good job in handling the crisis. But in taking this approach he is overlooking the millions of Americans who are addicted, on the street, or whose loved ones have passed due to Fentanyl. Plain and simple, what he is doing is not enough. And it will never be unless something drastically different is done and done soon.

Like any Opioid, Fentanyl was once a drug prescribed to treat simple medical ailments that were painful. A patient would take a very minuscule micro-dose of Fentanyl and they would not feel pain. It was a household name for Medical Professionals and Doctors, it was something that they all used to treat ailments and help cure disease. For things like childbirth, surgeries, or critical operations, Fentanyl was used and was counted on to do the job. Who in their right mind would think that a simple opioid will do the damage it has done in this day and age? I for one would never have thought that, and I'm sure many Americans agree with me on this, yet this drug devolved into being one the deadliest drugs roaming the marketplace that has done irrevocable damage to our country. Where does the answer lie? Well sure, an attempt at a given solution was made within this research paper. But only time will tell how the current administration or even a new one might attack this issue once again. That being said, I will leave you with this.

Think back to the very beginning of this paper, to the story of a mother Shari Dukes who had lost her sixteen year old son Ethan. Does one believe that in the day and age of the current times we are living in, Mrs. Dukes can be at ease knowing her son did not die in vain? That her

and the millions of other mothers and fathers who had to say goodbye to their adolescent children because they simply misjudged something they put in their body can now have closure knowing their children did not die for no reason? Simply put, no, that is not the case. These American parents who have buried their children will always be haunted by the memory of the drug that killed their kids, Fentanyl. With that said, nothing is being done to protect these individuals, fathers and mothers like Shari Dukes, those who are addicted to Fentanyl, and the millions of Americans all across America who are suffering from this very same fate. What will it take for these individuals to see the light of day? For them not to be ignored and be given means to come back from whatever trauma, demons, or haunting past they are facing? Why are we ignoring these people? These are the very same people who have been affected by the sheer catastrophe that is the Fentanyl crisis, yet they are being ignored and brushed aside. It is my only hope that within the coming years, we see a reckoning, so that mothers like Shari Dukes do not have to bury their children and Americans across the country have a future that is free from drugs.

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