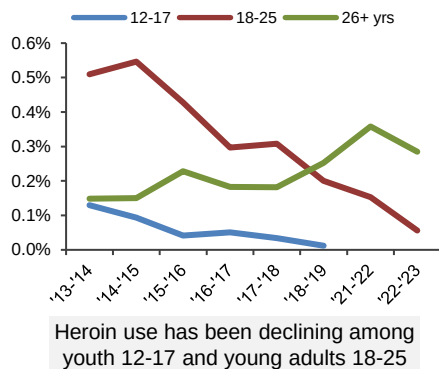


Heroin Misuse/Abuse and Consequences

November 2025

Prevalence

Heroin use in the past year by age, CA, 2013-2023¹



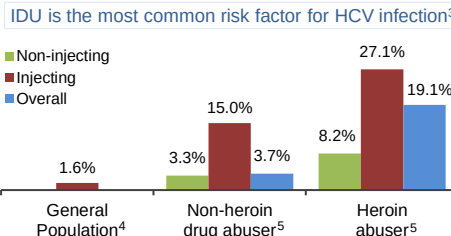
Injection Drug Use (IDU)



52% of injection drug users inject heroin²

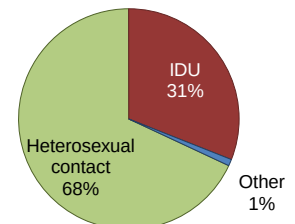


Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection rate, Los Angeles County (LAC), FY2324



HCV infection rates are high among heroin abusers, especially among those who inject heroin

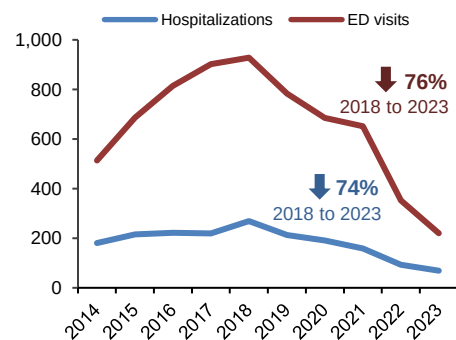
Category of HIV transmission among women, LAC, 2022⁶



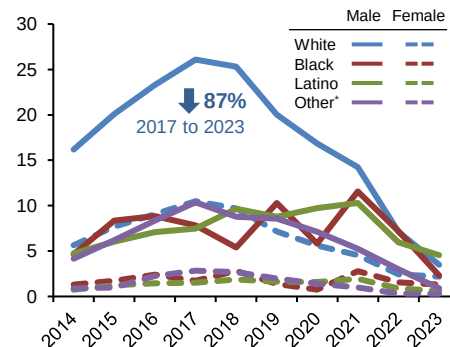
Nearly 1 in 3 women with HIV were infected via injection drug use

Healthcare Utilization

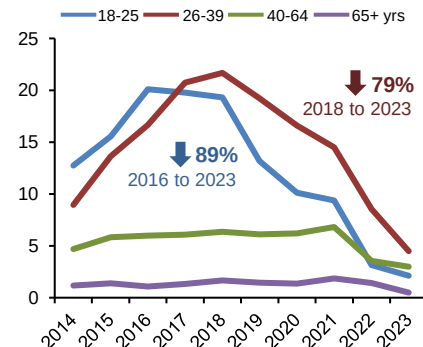
Heroin-related** hospitalizations and ED visits, LAC, 2014-2023⁷



Rate of heroin-related ED visits by gender and race/ethnicity, LAC, 2014-2023⁷

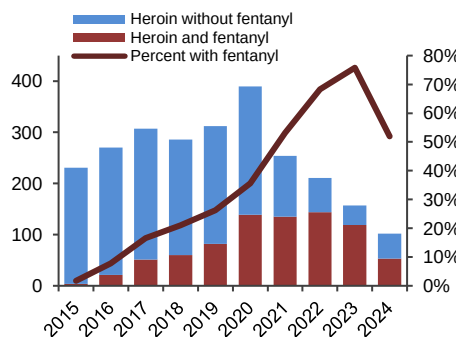


Rate of heroin-related ED visits by age group, LAC, 2014-2023⁷

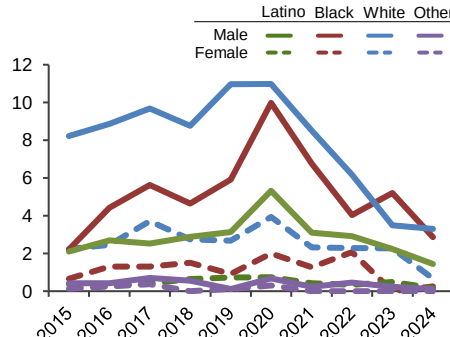


Mortality

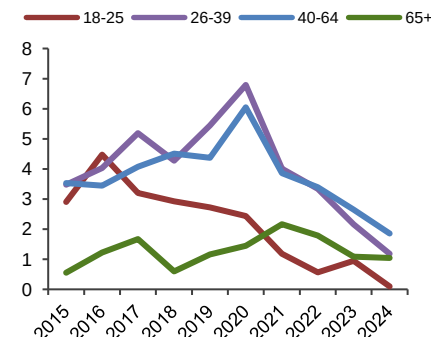
Heroin overdose-related deaths by fentanyl involvement, LAC, 2015-2024⁸



Rate of heroin overdose deaths by gender and race/ethnicity, LAC, 2015-2024⁸



Rate of heroin overdose deaths by age group, LAC, 2015-2024⁸



*Other includes Asians, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and other. **Heroin-related hospitalizations and ED visits include any records listing heroin as a diagnosis or an external cause of injury. All rates are per 100,000 population. Changes in collecting race/ethnicity in ED visit data were implemented in 2020. Data for NSDUH 2020 were omitted due to comparability issues.

For substance use disorder treatment in LAC, call the Substance Abuse Service Helpline (SASH) at 844-804-7500, or use the web-based [Service & Bed Availability Tool](#).

For more information on data or resources regarding heroin and prescription opioid abuse in LAC, see Safe Med LA's [data story](#) or visit [www.safemedla.org](#).

For more information on substance use disorders in LAC, visit [http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/sapc](#).

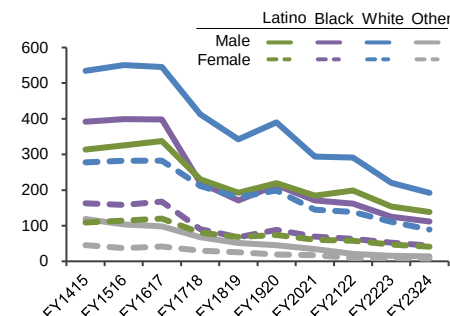
For more information regarding this data brief, please contact Tina Kim, PhD at [tkim@ph.lacounty.gov](#).

Heroin Misuse/Abuse and Consequences

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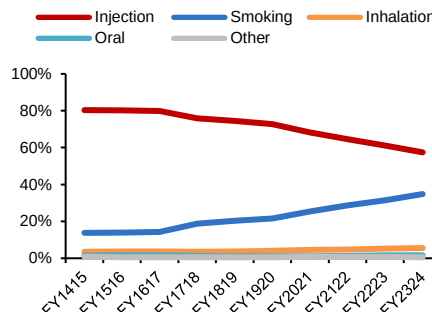
Treatment

Primary heroin admission rate by gender and race/ethnicity, LAC, FY1415-2324⁵



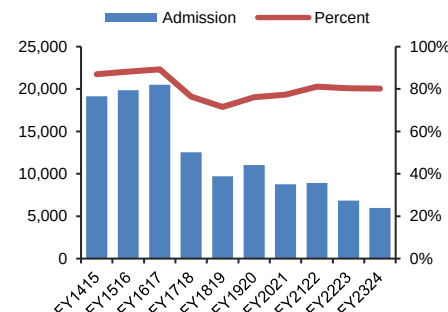
Rates of primary heroin admissions were highest for White males

Primary heroin admissions by usual route of administration, LAC, FY1415-2324⁵



Over the past decade, smoking heroin became more common as injecting decreased

Medications for addiction treatment in heroin admissions, LAC, FY1415-2324⁵



The majority of primary heroin admissions were prescribed evidence-based MAT

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Survey on Drug Use and Health. [NSDUH State Reports and Tables](#).

- In California (CA), past year use of heroin decreased among youth aged 12-17 and young adults aged 18-25, but increased for adults aged 26+ over the last decade from 2013-2023.
- From 2013 to 2018, heroin use in the past year was highest among young adults aged 18-25, but was surpassed by adults aged 26+ in 2018-2019.
- CA had lower levels of heroin use in the past year compared to the national average for young adults (0.06% vs. 0.12%) and adults (0.28% vs. 0.36%) in 2022-2023.

2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. [Treatment Episode Data Set \(TEDS\) 2023: Annual Detailed Tables](#).

- Heroin is the most common injected drug. In 2023, among clients treated in publicly funded substance use disorder (SUD) treatment programs in the US, 52% of injection drug users reported heroin as their primary drug problem, followed by methamphetamine (26%).
- Among heroin users who were treated in publicly funded SUD treatment programs in the US, most preferred to use heroin by injection (46%), followed by inhalation (39%) and smoking (12%).

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Viral Hepatitis Surveillance Report: United States, 2023](#)

- In 2023, among individuals with hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection, the most frequently reported risky behavior or exposure was injection drug use (IDU, 43%).
- IDU increases the risk of transmitting blood-borne pathogens, including HCV and HIV, through sharing contaminated syringes and other injection equipment.

4. Hall EW, Bradley H, Barker LK, et al. [Estimating Hepatitis C Virus Prevalence in the United States, 2017-2020. *Hepatology*. 2025;81\(2\):625-636.](#)

- HCV infection is not common in the general population. An estimated 4.0 million (1.6%) US adults are currently infected with HCV.

5. Los Angeles County Participant Reporting System and Sage data. Substance Abuse Prevention and Control, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

- Among clients in LAC publicly funded SUD treatment

programs in FY2324, HCV infection rates were much higher among heroin abusers than among other drug abusers (19% vs. 4%), especially for drug abusers injecting heroin compared to those that injected other drugs (27% vs. 15%).

- From FY1415-FY1718, heroin was the most frequently reported primary drug problem at admission to publicly funded SUD treatment programs in LAC. The percent of admissions for a primary heroin problem decreased in FY1718 and continued to decline. In FY2324, treatment admissions for a primary heroin problem fell behind those for alcohol, methamphetamine, and prescription/over-the-counter drugs.

- The rates per 100,000 population aged 12+ of treatment admissions for a primary heroin problem were highest among White males compared to all other gender-race/ethnic groups in LAC from FY1415-FY2324.

- From FY1415 to FY2324, the proportion of primary heroin admissions reporting their usual route of administration as injection dropped steadily from 80% to 57%, while those that reported smoking as their usual route increased from 14% to 35%. Primary heroin admissions reporting inhalation, oral, or other routes were infrequent in the past decade.

- In LAC, about 4 in 5 primary heroin admissions were prescribed evidence-based medications for addiction treatment (MAT).
- In FY2324, 56% of primary heroin admissions received education about naloxone use for drug overdose.

6. Division of HIV and STD Programs, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. [HIV Surveillance Annual Report 2023](#).

- In 2022, HIV was transmitted via IDU for 31% of women newly diagnosed with HIV in LAC, while heterosexual contact accounted for 68% of cases. Among newly diagnosed men, IDU accounted for 4% of transmissions, while male-to-male sexual contact accounted for 89%.

7. Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI). [Emergency Department and Inpatient Discharge Data Set. California Department of Public Health](#).

- In LAC, the number of emergency department (ED) visits with any heroin-related diagnosis or external cause of injury increased by 81% from 514 in 2014 to 928 in 2018, then decreased by 76% from 2018 to 2023.
- The number of hospitalizations with any heroin-related diagnosis or external cause of injury increased by 49%

from 180 in 2014 to 269 in 2018, then decreased by 74% from 2018 to 2023.

- While White males historically had the highest rate of heroin-related ED visits compared to all other gender-race/ethnic groups in LAC, rates among White males had been consistently dropping since 2017, to below that of Hispanic/Latino males by 2023.
- In 2023, rate of heroin-related ED visits was highest among Hispanic/Latino males (rate=4.5), followed by White males (rate=3.5), Black males (rate=2.3), White females (rate=2.2), Black females (rate=1.3), and Hispanic/Latino females (rate=0.6).

- The rate of heroin-related ED visits among young adults aged 18-25 peaked earlier in 2016, and decreased more substantially (by 89% from 2016-2023) compared to the other age groups. Rates for adults 26-39 declined by 79% from a peak of 21.7 in 2018 to 4.5 in 2023.

8. Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner. [Medical Examiner investigation reports. Data as of May 2025](#).

- The number of accidental heroin overdose deaths increased by 69% from 2015 to 2020, then declined by 74% from 2020 to 2024.
- As fentanyl is increasingly mixed with heroin in the US, accidental heroin overdose deaths increasingly involved fentanyl, from 2% in 2015 to 76% in 2023. Despite a decrease in 2024, fentanyl continued to be involved in 52% of heroin overdose deaths.
- Heroin overdose death rates peaked in 2020 for all gender-race/ethnicity groups. From 2015 to 2020, the rate of heroin overdose deaths increased the most among Black males (by 352% to rate=10.0 per 100,000), while White males increased the least (by 34% to rate=11.0).
- In 2024, White males (rate=3.3) had the highest rate of heroin overdose deaths, followed by Black males (rate=2.9), Hispanic/Latino males (rate=1.4), White females (rate=0.7), Black females (rate=0.3), and Hispanic/Latino females (rate=0.2).

- In 2024, rate of heroin overdose deaths was highest among adults aged 40-64, followed by adults 26-39, older adults aged 65+, and young adults 18-25.
- Heroin overdose death rates among young adults aged 18-25 decreased by 98% from 2016 to 2024. Rates among middle and older adults peaked later, falling by 83% for adults aged 26-39 and by 69% for adults 40-64 from 2020 to 2024, and by 52% for older adults aged 65+ from 2021 to 2024.