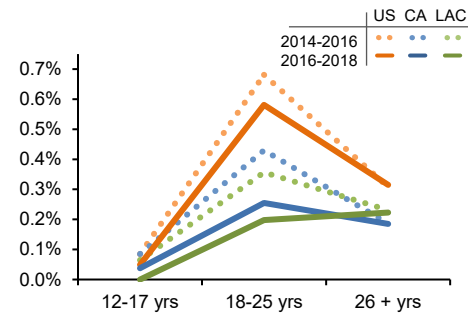


Heroin Misuse/Abuse and Consequences

April 2024

Prevalence

Heroin use in the past year by age, 2014-2018¹



Heroin use was highest among individuals aged 18-25 years in LAC

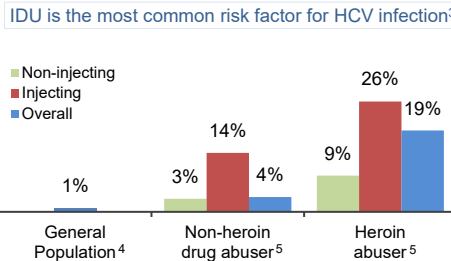
Injection Drug Use (IDU)



67% of injection drug users inject heroin²

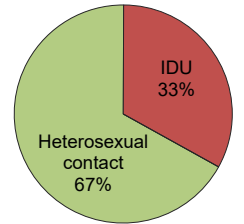


Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection rate, Los Angeles County (LAC), FY2223



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

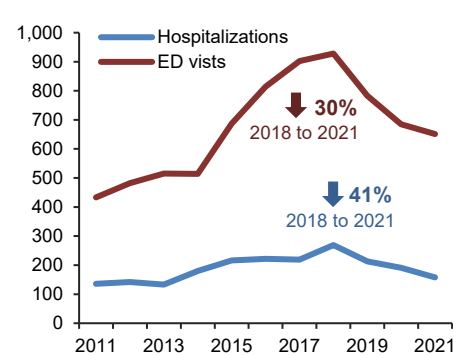
Category of HIV transmission among women, LAC, 2021⁶



About 1 in 3 women with HIV were infected via IDU

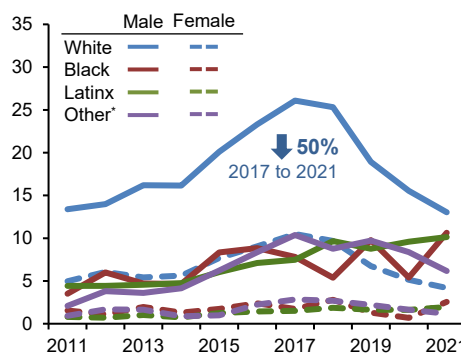
Healthcare Utilization

Heroin-related hospitalizations and ED visits, LAC, 2011-2021⁷



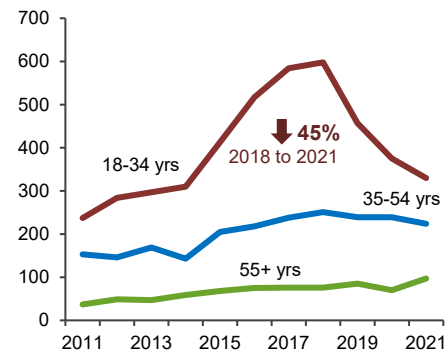
Heroin-related ED visits and hospitalizations began to decrease after 2018

Rate (/100K) of heroin-related ED visits by gender and race/ethnicity, LAC, 2011-2021⁷



Heroin-related ED visits were highest among white males in LAC

Heroin-related** ED visits by age group, LAC, 2011-2021⁷

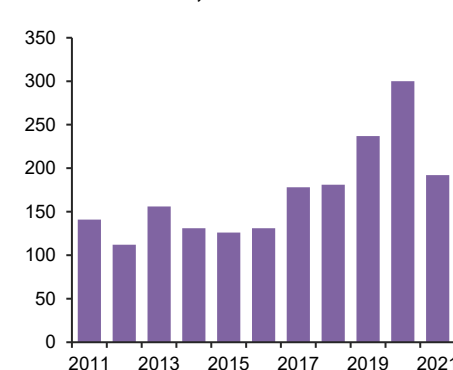


Heroin-related ED visits were highest among individuals aged 18-34 years

*Other Includes Asians, Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and other. **Heroin-related includes any records listing heroin as a diagnosis or an external cause of injury. Due to methodological changes in reporting race, use caution when comparing race/ethnicity rates for 2020 and 2021 with prior years.

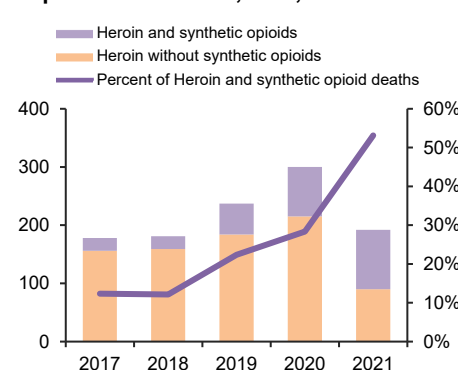
Mortality

Heroin overdose-related deaths, LAC, 2011-2021⁸



Heroin overdose-related deaths increased up to 2020, then declined in 2021

Heroin overdose deaths by synthetic opioid involvement, LAC, 2017-2021⁸



Heroin overdose deaths increasingly involved synthetic opioids (fentanyl) in recent years

Overdose Prevention

37% of overdoses were witnessed⁹

63% of drug overdose deaths had at least 1 potential opportunity for intervention⁹

53k naloxone kits were distributed by the OEND program in LAC¹⁰

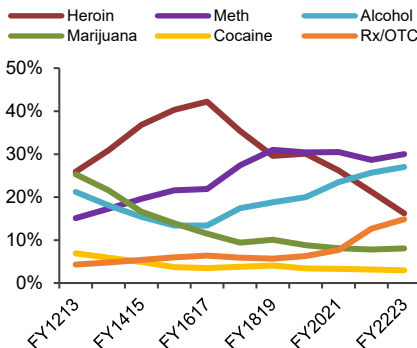
4,908 total reported uses of naloxone for opioid overdose reversal in LAC¹⁰

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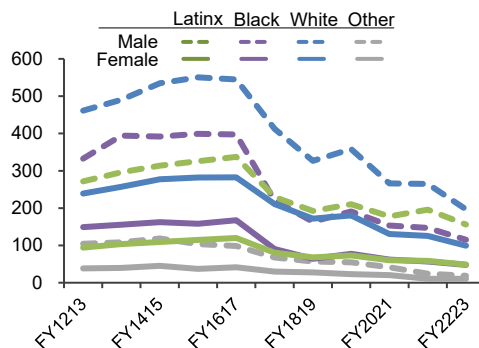
Treatment

Primary drug problem at treatment admission, LAC, FY1213-FY2223⁵



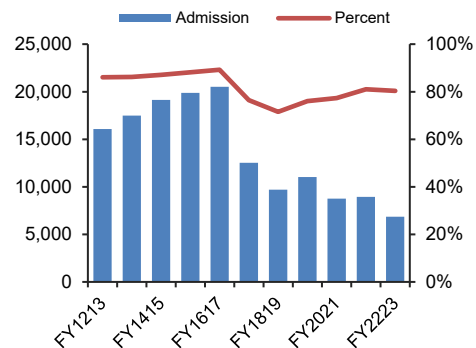
Heroin treatment admissions have been decreasing since FY1718

Primary heroin admission rate by gender and race/ethnicity, LAC, FY1213-2223⁵



Rates of primary heroin admissions were highest for White males

Medical-assisted treatment (MAT) in primary heroin admissions, LAC, FY1213-2223⁵



The majority of primary heroin admissions received 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. 2014-2016 and 2016-2018 NSDUH Substate Region Estimates by Age Group.

- From 2014 to 2018, heroin use in the past year was highest among young adults aged 18-25 years, compared to youth aged 12-17 years and adults aged 26+ years in the US, CA, and Los Angeles County (LAC).
- LAC had lower levels of heroin use in the past year compared to the US and CA for youth and younger adults, but had higher levels of use among adults compared to CA (0.22% vs 0.18% in 2016-2018).

2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) 2021: Annual Detailed Tables.

- Heroin is the most common injected drug, with 67% of injection drug users who were treated in publicly funded substance use disorder (SUD) treatment programs in the US injecting heroin in 2021, followed by methamphetamine (21%).
- Among heroin users who were treated in publicly funded SUD treatment programs in the US, most preferred to use heroin by injection (56%), followed by inhalation (33%) and smoking (9%).

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Viral Hepatitis Surveillance Report: United States, 2021

- In 2021, injection drug use (IDU) was the most frequently reported (57%) risky behavior/exposure reported among individuals with hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection.
- Injection drug use increases the risk of transmitting blood-borne pathogens, including HCV and HIV, through sharing contaminated syringes and other injection equipment.

4. Hofmeister MG, Rosenthal EM, Barker LK, et al. Estimating Prevalence of Hepatitis C Virus Infection in the United States, 2013-2016. Hepatology. 2019; 69(3):1020-1031.

- HCV infection is rare in the general population. An estimated 2.4 million (1.0%) US adults are currently infected.
- Although HCV prevalence is expected to decrease because of improved curative treatments available and those with chronic HCV infection are aging, HCV infections linked to the current opioid crisis in the US has increased the overall prevalence of persons ever 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.

Angeles County Department of Public Health.

- Among patients in LAC publicly funded SUD treatment programs in FY2223, HCV infection rates were much higher among heroin abusers than among other drug abusers (19% vs. 4%), especially among injecting heroin abusers (26% vs. 9%).
- In FY2223, 49% of admissions for primary heroin problem received education about naloxone use for drug overdose.
- From FY1213-FY1718, heroin was the most frequently reported primary drug problem at admissions to publicly funded SUD treatment programs in LAC. The percent of admissions for primary heroin decreased in FY1718 and continued declining in the following year. Decreases in the number of admissions in FY1718 may be due to the launch of the new Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System on July 1, 2017.
- The rates (per 100,000 population aged 12 or older) of admissions for a primary heroin problem was highest among White males compared to all other gender and racial/ethnic groups in LAC from FY1213-FY2223.
- In LAC, 4 in 5 primary heroin admissions received evidence-based medication-assisted treatment (MAT).

6. Division of HIV and STD Programs, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. HIV Surveillance Annual Report 2022.

- In 2021, HIV was transmitted via IDU for 33% of women newly diagnosed with HIV in LAC, while heterosexual contact accounted for 67% of cases. Among newly diagnosed men, IDU accounted for 9% of transmissions, while male-to-male sexual contact accounted for 89%.

7. Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI, previously OSHPD). 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 114% from 433 in 2011 to 928 in 2018, then decreased by 30% from 2018 to 2021.
- The number of hospitalizations with any heroin-related diagnosis or external cause of injury increased by 98% from 136 in 2011 to 269 in 2018, then decreased by 41% from 2018 to 2021.
- Despite decreases, the number of heroin-related ED visits and hospitalizations in 2021 were still higher than in 2011 (by 50% and 16%, respectively).
- From 2011-2021, White males consistently had by far the highest rate of heroin-related ED visits compared to all other gender and racial/ethnic groups in LAC. Rates among White males had increased 95% from 2011-2017, then decreased

by 50% from 2017 to 2021.

- Heroin-related ED visit rates for Latinx males gradually increased over the past decade by 128% from 2011-2021.
- Young adults aged 18-34 years had the highest rates of heroin-related ED visits in LAC from 2011-2021.
- Rates among young adults aged 18-34 years had increased by 152% from 2011 to 2018, then decreased sharply by 45% from 2018 to 2021. For adults aged 35-54 and 55+ years, heroin-related ED visit rates gradually increased over the past decade (by 46% and 162%, respectively).

8. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death. CDC WONDER Online Database.

- The number of heroin overdose-related deaths increased by 129% from 2016 to 2020, then declined in 2021.
- As fentanyl is increasingly mixed with heroin in the US, heroin overdose-related deaths increasingly involved synthetic opioids (primarily fentanyl).
- Heroin overdose-related deaths involving synthetic opioids greatly increased by 364% from 2017 to 2021.
- About 53% of heroin overdose-related deaths involved synthetic opioids in 2021.

9 O'Donnell J, et al. Vital Signs: Characteristics of Drug Overdose Deaths Involving Opioids and Stimulants — 24 States and the District of Columbia, January–June 2019. MMWR 2020; 69: 1189–1197.

- In 2019, medical examiner/coroner reports from 24 states and the District of Columbia indicated that the majority (62.7%) of opioid and stimulant overdose deaths had documented evidence of at least one potential opportunity for intervention.
- More than one in three (37%) opioid and stimulant overdose deaths occurred with a bystander present.

10. Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion and Opioid Overdose Education & Naloxone Distributions (OEND). Office of Division and Reentry, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services.

- Naloxone is an FDA approved medication that rapidly reverses opioid overdose. In LAC, naloxone can be obtained for free at multiple locations to people who may be at risk of an opioid overdose.
- The LAC OEND program, which provides preventive education and naloxone to those at risk of opioid overdose or persons likely to witness an overdose, distributed 53,250 naloxone kits across LAC in 2019-2021.
- Through these kits, naloxone has been used a total of 4,908 times to prevent a fatal overdose.

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