

Opioid Misuse: Prevention and Treatment

July 17, 2024

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Opioid use and overdoses have continued to rise in the United States, especially among youth and younger adults.¹
2. The percentage of opioid overdose deaths in 2022 was higher among Texas youth and adults between the ages of 25-34 compared to the United States.²
3. Tucker's Law, requiring prevention instruction in public schools, and the "One Pill Kills" campaign have brought awareness and introduced prevention measures to substance misuse in Texas.³⁻⁵

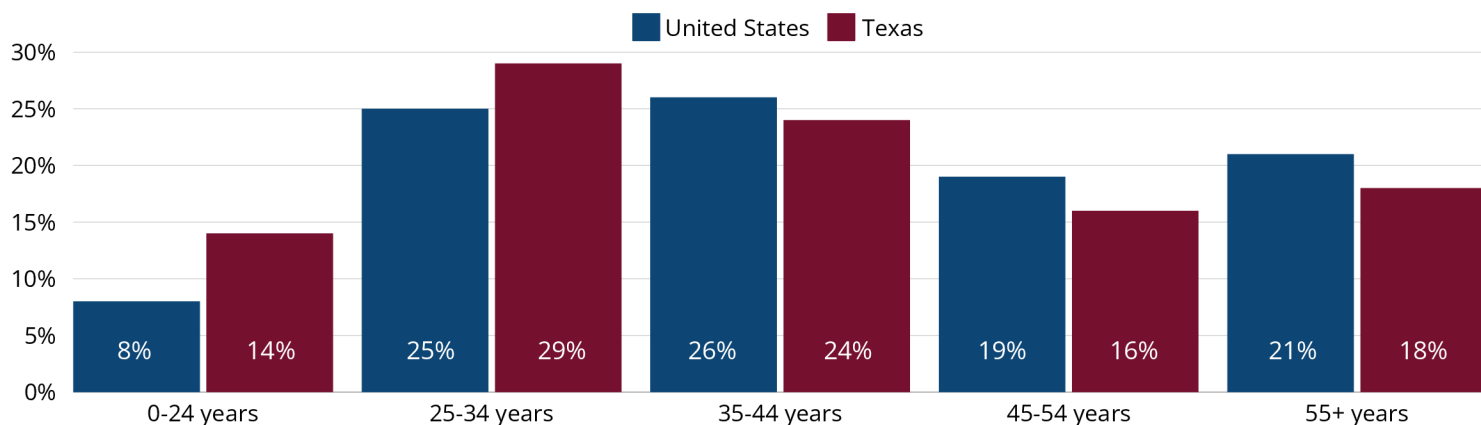
Background

Opioids are a class of drugs used to alleviate pain.

- Types of opioids include illegal (e.g., heroin), synthetic (e.g., fentanyl), and prescription drugs (e.g., oxycodone).^{6,7}
 - The number of opioid-involved overdose deaths in the United States rose from 49,860 in 2019 to 81,806 in 2022.⁸
- Overdoses have continued to increase, especially among youth and males.¹
- In 2022, American adults aged 25-44 had the highest rates of opioid-related deaths.²

Between August 2022 and August 2023, approximately 45% of drug-related deaths involved opioids.⁹





Percent of Opioid Overdose Deaths by Age Group in 2022, United States vs. Texas²



Fentanyl

- Fentanyl is an FDA-approved opioid that can be used as a prescribed narcotic for anesthesia, emergencies, and cancer-related pain.^{10,11}
- Illegal fentanyl is commonly mixed with other drugs (e.g. heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines, and counterfeit pills) due to its low production cost.¹⁰
 - Illegal fentanyl has contributed to a rise in accidental overdose deaths among individuals who unknowingly ingest fentanyl.¹²⁻¹⁴
- Approximately 45% of all drug-related deaths in Texas in 2022 were from fentanyl, compared to 4.5% in 2015.¹³
- Fentanyl overdose deaths increased 400% between 2019 and 2021 in Texas.¹⁵
 - Around 1,662 people died in 2021 from fentanyl overdoses, compared to 333 people in 2019.¹⁵

Symptoms of Fentanyl Overdose¹²

-  Increased pupil size
-  Respiratory failure
-  Blue- or purple-tinted skin
-  Coma

Comparing the Potency and Cost of Fentanyl to Other Drugs^{10,12}

100x

more potent than morphine

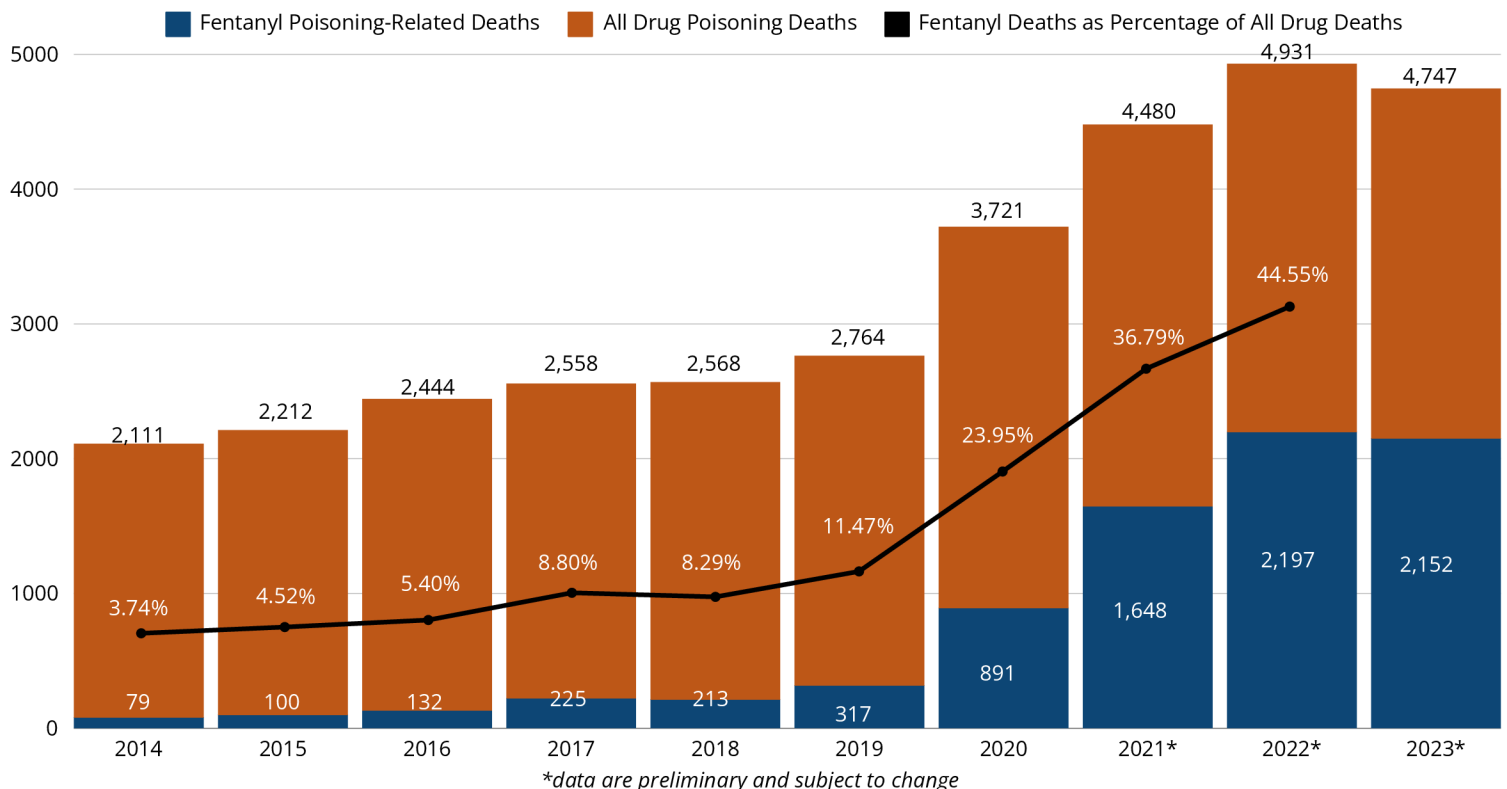
50x

more potent than heroin

18x

less costly to produce per kilogram than heroin

All Drug Poisoning and Fentanyl-Related Deaths in Texas, 2014-2023*¹³



Texas Legislation

Tucker's Law³⁻⁵

- In September 2023, House Bill 3908, also known as Tucker's Law, was passed, requiring public schools to provide drug abuse and fentanyl prevention for grades 6-12.



"One Pill Kills" Campaign

- In 2023, Texas Governor Greg Abbott allocated \$10 million to a fentanyl awareness campaign that distributes Narcan (naloxone) doses to every county (254) throughout the state.¹⁵
 - Abbott also established Fentanyl Poisoning Awareness Week, which took place October 15-21, 2023.¹⁶

Tucker's Law (House Bill 3908) requires fentanyl prevention and drug poisoning awareness and must include:³⁻⁵

- 1** Prevention of the abuse of and addiction to fentanyl
- 2** Suicide prevention
- 3** Awareness of local school and community resources, and how to access those resources
- 4** Health education on substance abuse and misuse

Recommendations

Investment in Youth Misuse Prevention Programs

- Primary prevention in youth and young adults reduces the risk of substance misuse, other unintended outcomes, and can help prevent:^{1,17,18}
 - delinquency
 - academic underachievement
 - teen pregnancy
 - poor mental health conditions
- School-based prevention programs for youth have shown to have a **return on investment** of \$18 per student for every \$1 spent on a prevention program.^{1,17, 18}

Fentanyl Testing Strips and Narcan Saves Lives

- Fentanyl testing strips are currently illegal in Texas. However, testing strips may be useful in harm reduction programs to reduce fentanyl overdoses. Testing strips can help detect the presence of fentanyl.¹⁹
- Naloxone is a medication that reverses opioid overdose and is available in local pharmacies with and without prescriptions.²⁰
 - The cost of naloxone can vary depending on the location you are buying from and the type of naloxone bought.²¹

Investment in Substance Use Recovery Support Services in Texas^{22,23}

- Project HOMES is a recovery support service program that provides housing for those looking to stop drug misuse. The project utilizes medication-assisted recovery (MAR) strategies to support opioid recovery.
- The project currently has 15 recovery residences across Texas located in Austin (4), Houston (4), Midland (3), San Angelo (2), and El Paso (2).
 - The women's house in San Angelo accepts pregnant women, and two women's houses in Midland accept women with children up to age 18.
 - Since 2023, the El Paso, Midland, and San Angelo residences accept people in recovery from stimulant use.

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Resources

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