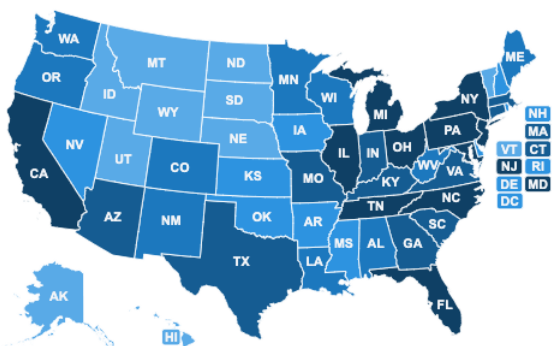


## The Illicit Fentanyl Epidemic: California

Synthetic opioid (fentanyl) deaths<sup>1</sup> have been rising across the country. Since 2015, synthetic opioids (fentanyl) have killed over 200,000 Americans. It remains the number one cause of death among Americans ages 18 to 45. In California, synthetic opioid (fentanyl) deaths have increased exponentially since 2015.



**California had the highest total number of synthetic opioid (fentanyl) fatalities in 2021, surpassing Florida and Ohio for the first time, with a total of 6,253 deaths in 2021.**

The heat map to the left breaks down the total number of fentanyl deaths in 2021 by state. The states with the highest number of fentanyl deaths are dark blue.

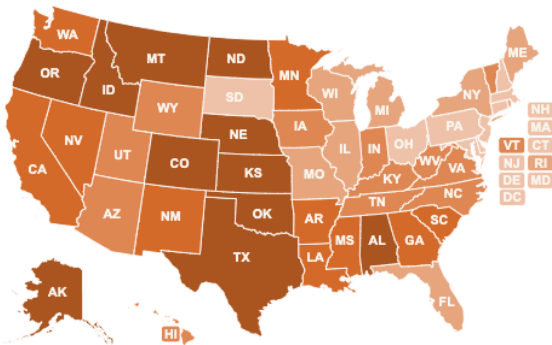
The list to the right is an order of the ten states with the highest total number of fentanyl deaths in calendar year 2021.

1. CALIFORNIA - 6,253
2. FLORIDA - 5,474
3. NEW YORK - 4,531
4. OHIO - 4,208
5. PENNSYLVANIA - 3,768
6. NORTH CAROLINA - 3,004
7. TENNESSEE - 2,842
8. ILLINOIS - 2,729
9. NEW JERSEY - 2,463
10. MARYLAND - 2,296

The number of fentanyl fatalities has increased exponentially from 2015 to 2021, and continues to rise at an alarming rate. **In just six years, the number of fentanyl deaths have increased seven-fold across the United States, or by 637%. In California the number of these deaths has increased by 2,631%, or 27 fold which is nearly 4x the national rate of growth during that same period. In other words, fentanyl deaths increased almost four times faster in California than in the United States overall.**

From 2019 to 2021, the number of fentanyl fatalities in California increased by 267%, nearly four-fold.

This was a much higher rate of growth than across the United States over that period, during which fentanyl deaths doubled.



The map to the left illustrates the alarming growth of fentanyl deaths across the United States in two years.

**In 2021, over one in four fentanyl deaths in California was among people ages 25 to 34.** The total number of deaths among that age demographic exceeded 1,800 in

<sup>1</sup> Our research team used the CDC's ICD-10 medical code T40.4, "other synthetic narcotics," in order to conduct our data analysis - in alignment with CDC medical code guidelines. The drugs that fall into this category include fentanyl and tramadol, though it is widely accepted that nearly all of the deaths assigned this code were caused by fentanyl.

2021 alone. In fact, over half of all fentanyl deaths in California were among people ages 25 to 44 in 2021.

**Most strikingly, the percentage of total fentanyl deaths among people ages 15 to 24 in 2021 was significantly higher in California than in the overall United States.** Over 13% of all fentanyl deaths in California impacted people ages 15 to 24, whereas only 8% of these deaths affected this demographic on a national scale. **From 2019 to 2021, fentanyl deaths among California teens nearly tripled.**