

COVID-19 pandemic tied to increase in overdose deaths

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experiencing homelessness increased from 23 to 34 percent. The percentage of fentanyl-attributable deaths increased (from 62 to 72 percent).

"Our findings suggest that to complement a strong public health response to COVID-19, there must be more robust overdose prevention for people who use drugs, particularly for people experiencing homelessness, people who identify as Black, and people who use fentanyl and/or stimulants," the authors write.

More information: Ayesha Appa et al, Drug Overdose Deaths Before and After Shelter-in-Place Orders During the COVID-19 Pandemic in San Francisco, *JAMA Network Open* (2021). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.10452](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.10452)

There was an increase in drug overdose deaths in San Francisco during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a research letter published online May 12 in *JAMA Network Open*.

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Ayesha Appa, M.D., from the University of California in San Francisco, and colleagues used data from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to compare unintentional [overdose](#) deaths (involving fentanyl, heroin, medicinal opioids, methamphetamine, and cocaine) in San Francisco 8.5 calendar months before and after the initial COVID-19 shelter-in-place order in March 2020.

The researchers found that 365 and 537 people experienced fatal overdoses before and after the shelter-in-place order, respectively. The median number of weekly overdose deaths was 10 before the shelter-in-place order versus 15 after the order, representing a 50 percent increase. Decedent age and sex were similar between time periods. The [death](#) rate for Black decedents remained disproportionately high (272 per 100,000 Black residents versus 89 per 100,000 White residents). After the order, the proportion of decedents

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