

# A STUDY OF FENTANYL USE BY MODE OF ADMINISTRATION IN CALIFORNIA

01

## PROBLEM

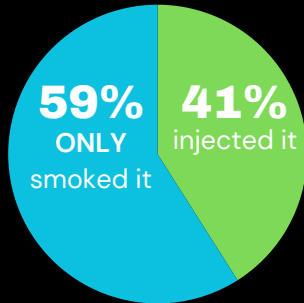
High potency fentanyl has driven a steady rise in fentanyl-involved overdose fatalities across the nation. As fentanyl use & availability grows in California, more people are choosing to smoke the opioid rather than inject it. Because of the prevalence of this mode of administration, we conducted a study to compare health & healthcare utilization outcomes among people who inject or smoke fentanyl in California.

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## STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

**66%** of 999 participants used fentanyl in the past 90 days

Of those that used fentanyl...



People who ONLY smoked fentanyl were...



**40%**  
less likely to experience a non-fatal overdose



**253%**  
less likely to have a skin & soft tissue infection

compared to people who injected fentanyl

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## DEMOGRAPHICS

Note: Black and Native American people are overrepresented in fatal overdose rates for fentanyl & stimulants.

**Race**

White: 49%  
Hispanic / Latino/x: 23%  
Black: 12%  
Native American/Alaskan Native: 6%  
Multiracial or another race: 11%

**Gender**

Cis-gender man: 63%  
Cis-gender woman: 31%  
Transgender: 2%  
Queer/non-binary: 2%

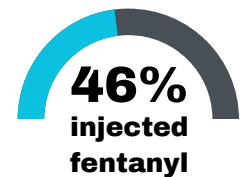
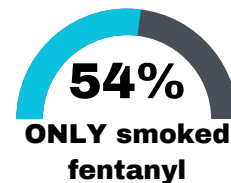
**Age**

39 years old (median)

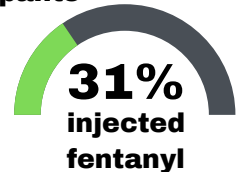
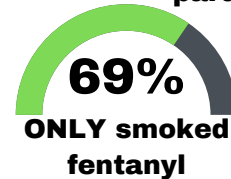
**Housing**

73% were unhoused & lived outdoors, in a tent or vehicle in the past 90 days

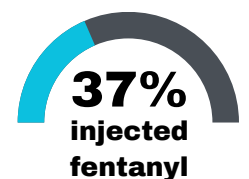
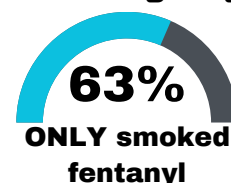
Among White participants



Among Hispanic / Latino/x participants



Among cis-gender women



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## FINDINGS\*

\*All outcomes reported in past 90 days



22%

reported a non-fatal overdose



25%

reported having a skin & soft tissue infection



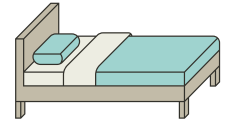
3%

reported having endocarditis



35%

went to the emergency department



17%

spent at least 1 night in the hospital

# 05

## STUDY METHODS

Quantitative survey data were collected by staff at 34 of 72 syringe services programs (SSPs) across California from January to February 2023

The survey covered:

- ✓ demographics
- ✓ drug use
- ✓ modes of drug administration
- ✓ overdose experiences
- ✓ health status



All participating SSPs were funded by the California Harm Reduction Initiative

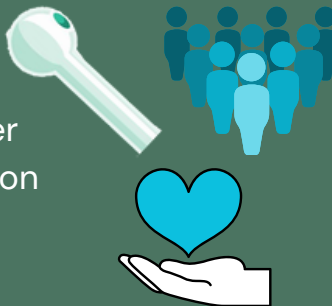
Participants received \$25

999 respondents completed the survey

# 06

## CONCLUSIONS

These findings support current public health recommendations of safer smoking supply distribution as a best practice



By providing safer smoking supplies & educating participants on their benefits, SSPs can reach a broader population at risk for overdose & skin & soft tissue infections

**NATIONAL  
HARM REDUCTION  
COALITION**

&

**RTI**  
INTERNATIONAL