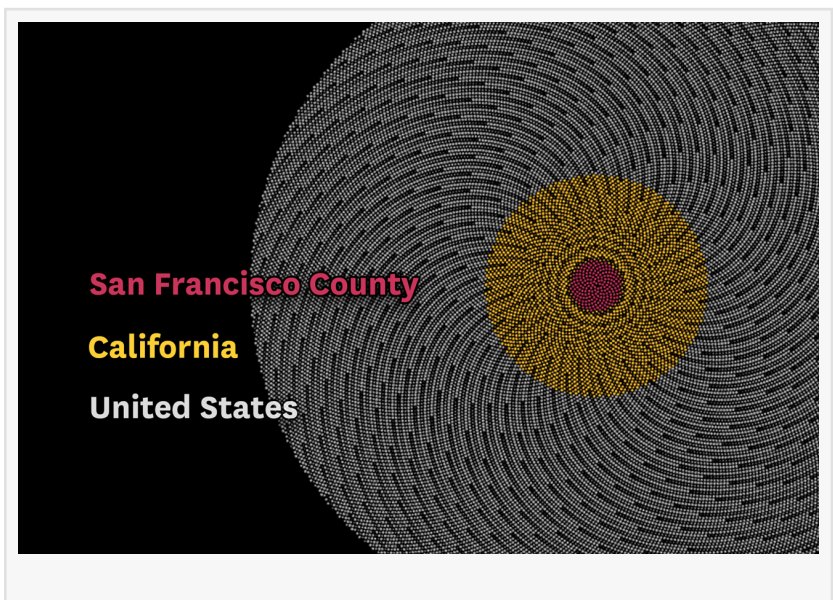


San Francisco Chronicle and Hearst DevHub launch first-of-its-kind nationwide tracker of drug overdose deaths

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA, August 21, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Drug overdoses have killed more than a million people in the United States since 1999, with the majority of deaths in recent years driven by the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl. Last year, 107,669 people died of drug overdoses, part of an accelerating epidemic that has stretched across the country, affecting big cities and rural towns.



San Francisco, too, has been gripped by the crisis. The overdose death rate has more than doubled since 2018, with fentanyl now involved in about 70% of fatalities. In December 2022, the city saw 8.8 fatal overdoses per 100,000 residents, more than three times the national average.

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Dan Kopf

The San Francisco Chronicle has been documenting the growing toll, and together with Hearst Newspapers’ DevHub, today it is publishing a first-of-its-kind nationwide database that tracks overdose deaths and reveals the full scale of the epidemic.

“The drug overdose crisis is impacting nearly every corner of the U.S.” said the Chronicle’s data editor Dan Kopf. “But we found that there was no easy-to-use resource to help people understand the impact on their community and where to get help. Given the gravity of the crisis and the expertise we’ve built on the subject, it was clear we needed

to build such a tool.”

Read the stories:

[Drug overdose deaths: Tracking devastating toll of U.S. crisis](#)
[How seven lives were 'forever changed' by the drug overdose crisis](#)
[Five takeaways from the Chronicle's drug overdose tracker](#)

The tracker uses data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's public health database CDC WONDER, which receives death certificates from local coroners and medical examiners. The tracker will update monthly. When possible, it is searchable down to the county level, the smallest geographical region covered in the data.

As such, the tracker provides a local picture of the overdose crisis for readers almost anywhere in the U.S., allowing them to better understand the impact on their own communities, as well as the extent of the devastation.

"We hope governments, public health professionals and regular citizens concerned about the crisis will use this information to monitor whether the situation is worsening in their county and state," said Kopf. "National numbers are one thing, but seeing the growing number of deaths locally may give communities a sense of urgency to act."

The data analysis shows that the following counties and cities had the highest drug overdose death rates in 2022 (following CDC's data reporting guidelines, city data is reported only when a city is not part of a county):

1. Baltimore city, Maryland.: 174.1 drug overdoses per 100,000 people
2. Davidson County, Tennessee: 101.5
3. Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania: 88.5
4. Marion County, Indiana: 84.1
5. Washington D.C.: 77.9
6. Jefferson County, Kentucky: 77.6
7. San Francisco County, California: 72.9
8. Milwaukee County, Wisconsin: 72.6
9. Bernalillo County, New Mexico: 68.8
10. Camden County, New Jersey: 67.8

Today, Hearst newspapers around the country are publishing localized versions of the project, including the Houston Chronicle, San Antonio Express-News, (Albany) Times Union and Connecticut Media Group.

The Chronicle will also be making the data easily downloadable for reporters at other publications.

Along with the database, the Hearst papers are also publishing personal stories of people on the front lines of the overdose crisis, from a father grieving a 14-year-old daughter to a paramedic administering Narcan during every shift to a peer counselor who has battled addiction herself. These are the human impacts behind each data point.

“For more than four years, shining a light on the growing drug epidemic has been one of the Chronicle’s main priorities. It may be the most important subject we cover,” said Director of News Demian Bulwa. “Our journalists have embedded in the neighborhoods most affected, followed people struggling with addiction, and held public officials accountable for their failures in containing the crisis. While clear solutions have been elusive, we hope this data project helps both readers and officials understand the tremendous urgency and scope of the problem.”

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About The San Francisco Chronicle

The San Francisco Chronicle (www.sfchronicle.com) is the largest newspaper in Northern California and the second largest on the West Coast. Acquired by Hearst in 2000, The San Francisco Chronicle was founded in 1865 by Charles and Michael de Young and has been awarded six Pulitzer Prizes for journalistic excellence. Follow us on Twitter at @SFChronicle.

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