

# County’s deadliest drug is officially fentanyl

Report notes racial discrepancies as the opioid outpaced meth in fatal ODs in 2022.

By Grace Toohey

Fentanyl has continued to tighten its deadly grip on Los Angeles, with the synthetic opioid causing the majority of fatal overdoses countywide in 2022.

For the first time in recent years, fentanyl surpassed methamphetamine as the most common drug listed as a cause of overdose deaths, according to a recent report from the L.A. County Department of Public Health. Fentanyl was blamed in almost 60% of all accidental drug or alcohol overdoses in 2022, the report said, and has continued to disproportionately kill Black Angelenos.

Overdoses in general increased again in almost every measure from the prior year, further escalating a crisis fueled by the opioid epidemic, which has devastated communities across the nation.

“It’s absolutely heart-breaking,” said Amanda Cowan, executive director of Community Health Project Los Angeles, which provides services to people who use drugs. The project’s harm-reduction approach tries to minimize the risks of drug use, for example by providing clean-needle programs

[See Fentanyl, A9]



STEPHANIE KEITH Getty Images

A NEW YORK policeman patrols near the Congregation Bais Yaakov Nechemia D’satmar synagogue in Brooklyn on Oct. 13.

## The fall and rise of U.S. antisemitism

Like a plague that long lay dormant, antisemitism has sprung back to virulence in the U.S., deeply unsettling American Jews, many of whom had viewed it as a relic of past generations, destined to fade away.

The upsurge began before the war in Gaza and has now accelerated, bringing intense debate over how to define an ancient hatred in modern times — in particular, where robust opposition to Israel or Zionism crosses the line into antisemitism.

A large share of the recent debate has focused on college and university campuses, generating congressional hearings and costing at least one prominent university president her job.

Incidents of hatred aimed at Jews, however, go far beyond campuses. Recent antisemitic acts nationwide include graffiti and vandalism at Jewish stores, restaurants and institutions, shots fired in the vicinity of synagogues and assaults on people wearing yar-

Used to seeing this country as a safe haven, American Jews are deeply unsettled amid the war in Gaza

By David Lauter and Jaweed Kaleem

mulkes, Star of David pendants or other Jewish apparel.

The cumulative impact has had a profound effect on the psychology of the American Jewish community.

In a survey released last month by the Jewish Federations of North America, nearly 9 in 10 American Jews and more than 6 in 10 Americans overall said they believed there was more antisemitism in the U.S. now than five years ago. Asked to consider “just the last few weeks,” one-third of the general population, but more than 7 in 10 Jews, said they believed antisemitism was on the increase not just nationally, but in their local communities.

Four in 10 American Jews said they worried “very much” or “all the time” about their personal safety because of their race, religion or other characteristics, a level more than twice as

[See Antisemitism, A6]

### COLUMN ONE

## How L.A.’s atheists tap into wonder

By Deborah Netburn  
Reporting from Zion National Park, Utah

In the cold dark of a November night, beneath the jagged cliffs of Zion National Park, Dani Hsia posed a question that mystics and religious thinkers have pondered for millennia.

“Why are we here?” she asked, a headlamp illuminating her handwritten notes as the first stars began to emerge in the sky. “Why are any of us here? Why does the universe exist instead of nothing?”

Seated in a circle around her, their faces lit by a crackling campfire, 20 nonbelievers listened with reverent attention. Like Hsia, they had signed up for this year’s Atheist Adventure camping trip to contemplate humanity’s deepest questions and experience awe and wonder in one of the most beautiful landscapes in the West — all without the threat of anyone bringing God into the conversation.

“These are the people who I can openly talk to about who I am and what I believe in,”

[See Atheists, A12]



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

A DECISION by Huntington Beach’s City Council to create an advisory board to review and remove children’s books in the public library drew strong opposition.

## In ‘Surf City,’ a sharp right turn by the City Council

Huntington Beach conservatives push social agenda

By Hannah Fry

Just three months after being elected to the Huntington Beach City Council, the new conservative majority voted to bar the rainbow flag from flying over City Hall each spring in celebration of Pride Month.

The prior council’s decision in 2021 to start raising the flag on city property — though common elsewhere in California — grabbed headlines in a city that for decades has borne a reputation for tolerating hate and bigotry. It turned out to be a

short-lived embrace of liberalism. The new majority elected in fall 2022 argued that raising any flags other than the American and military banners did nothing more than divide the city.

In most cities, the work of local elected officials — passing budgets, maintaining infrastructure and approving contracts — is carried out without much fanfare. But this year, the Huntington Beach City Council has taken on a range of issues not endemic to day-to-day operations, landing the town known as Surf City smack in the center of the

nation’s culture wars.

Over the course of several months, the council declared Huntington Beach to be a “no mask and no vaccine mandate city.” It sued the state over requirements that the city zone to create more housing over the next decade, arguing it would fundamentally change the beach city lifestyle. It created a council-appointed review panel to screen children’s books in the city library for sexual content, and drafted a ballot measure to require voter identification at the polls.

[See Conservatives, A9]

## Rules to protect laborers enacted

State OKs emergency measures to prevent silicosis, lung disease killing stonecutters.

By Emily Alpert Reyes

The deaths of young workers who cut kitchen and bathroom countertops prompted a state board to back emergency safety measures Thursday aimed at preventing silicosis, an incurable lung disease that has risen along with the booming popularity of engineered stone.

The artificial material is made of crushed stone bound together with resin and can have silica levels exceeding 93% — much higher than in marble or granite. Workers who cut and grind engineered stone are at risk of inhaling tiny particles of crystalline silica that scar their lungs, leaving them struggling to breathe.

The recent eruption in silicosis cases has cut down men who have barely reached middle age. Across California, 100 cases have been tallied since 2019 among workers who cut countertops. At least 10 have died, with a median age at death of 46 years. Others are waiting for lung transplants.

[See Silicosis, A7]

### EU takes a key step on Ukraine

The bloc decides to begin membership talks with the war-torn country. **WORLD, A3**

### Federal probe targets UCLA

Four other schools in state are also subject of civil rights inquiries. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

### Weather

Partly sunny; warm. L.A. Basin: 78/50. **B6**



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

**SHOHEI** Ohtani dons his Dodgers cap for the news media Thursday.

### Ohtani says hello to Dodgers era

Biggest catch in free agency addresses his contract and why he chose L.A. **SPORTS, B10**



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