

Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative



University of California
San Francisco

Special Consideration for Research and Data Collection with
Underserved Populations:
**Individuals Experiencing
Homelessness**

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Disclosures

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- Board Member: Housing California, National Homelessness Law Center, Steinberg Institute



*“Most of the time we're ...running around, **trying to figure out where we're going to sleep at night** ... We're not worried about going to the doctors or going to see somebody or going to get help with our mental state.”*

-CASPEH Participant

Overdose is leading cause of death among people experiencing homelessness (PEH)

- Drug overdose accounted for **25%** of deaths in PEH in Boston from 2003 to 2018
- Drug overdose was the leading cause of death among PEH in Los Angeles County (2015-2019)
- Drug overdose was the leading cause of death among PEH in San Francisco (2016-2021)
 - Accounted for **82%** of deaths during the pandemic (2020-2021)

Fine DR, Dickins KA, Adams LD, et al. Drug Overdose Mortality Among People Experiencing Homelessness, 2003 to 2018. *JAMA Netw Open.* 2022;5(1):e2142676. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.42676

Nicholas W, Greenwell L, Henwood BF, Simon P. Using Point-in-Time Homeless Counts to Monitor Mortality Trends Among People Experiencing Homelessness in Los Angeles County, California, 2015–2019. *Am J Public Health.* 2021;111(12):2212-2222. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2021.306502

Cawley C, Kanzaria HK, Zevin B, Doran KM, Kushel M, Raven MC. Mortality Among People Experiencing Homelessness in San Francisco During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *JAMA Netw Open.* 2022;5(3):e221870. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.1870

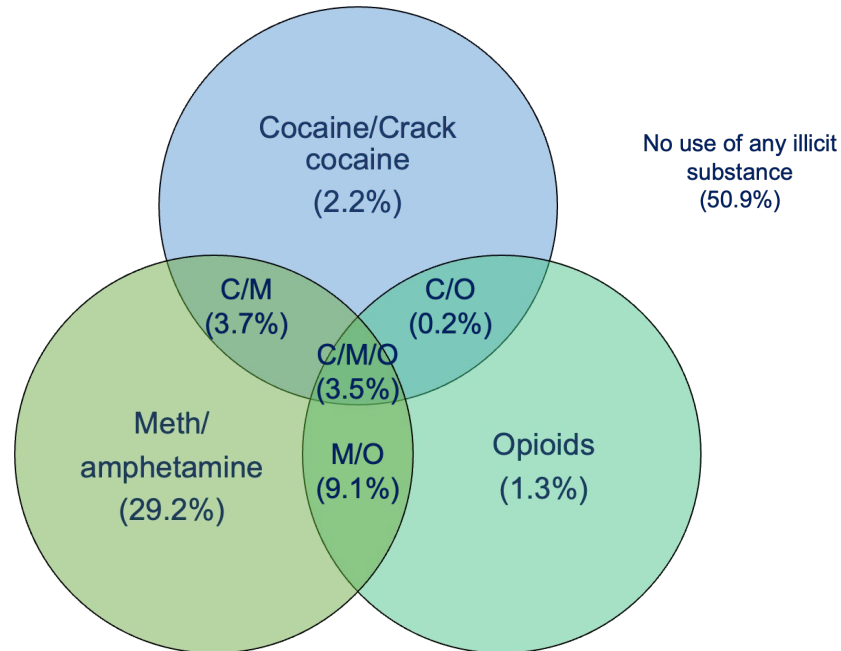
High prevalence of illicit drug use

- **35%** used illicit drugs 3x week or more during current episode
 - 31% methamphetamines
 - 11% opioids
 - 3% cocaine

Kushel, M., Moore, T., et al. (2023). Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness. UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative. homelessness.ucsf.edu/CASPEH

Most who used opioids used with other drugs

Last 6-month illicit substance use (any use)



Assaf RD, Morris MD, Straus ER, Martinez P, Philbin MM, Kushel M. Illicit substance use prevalence among a representative sample of homeless adults in California: Results from the California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness. (In preparation).

- **30%** had a short-term jail stay during episode of homelessness

Kushel, M., Moore, T., et al. (2023). Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness. UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative. homelessness.ucsf.edu/CASPEH

Forced displacements interfere with harm reduction

- **Forced displacements**
 - **36%** of all adults reported their belongings confiscated by authorities in prior six months
- Sweeps create unpredictability and disrupt routines of survival and drug use.
- **47%** have been harassed or roughed up by the police while experiencing homelessness

Kushel, M., Moore, T., et al. (2023). Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness. UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative. [Homelessness.ucsf.edu/CASPEH](https://homelessness.ucsf.edu/CASPEH)

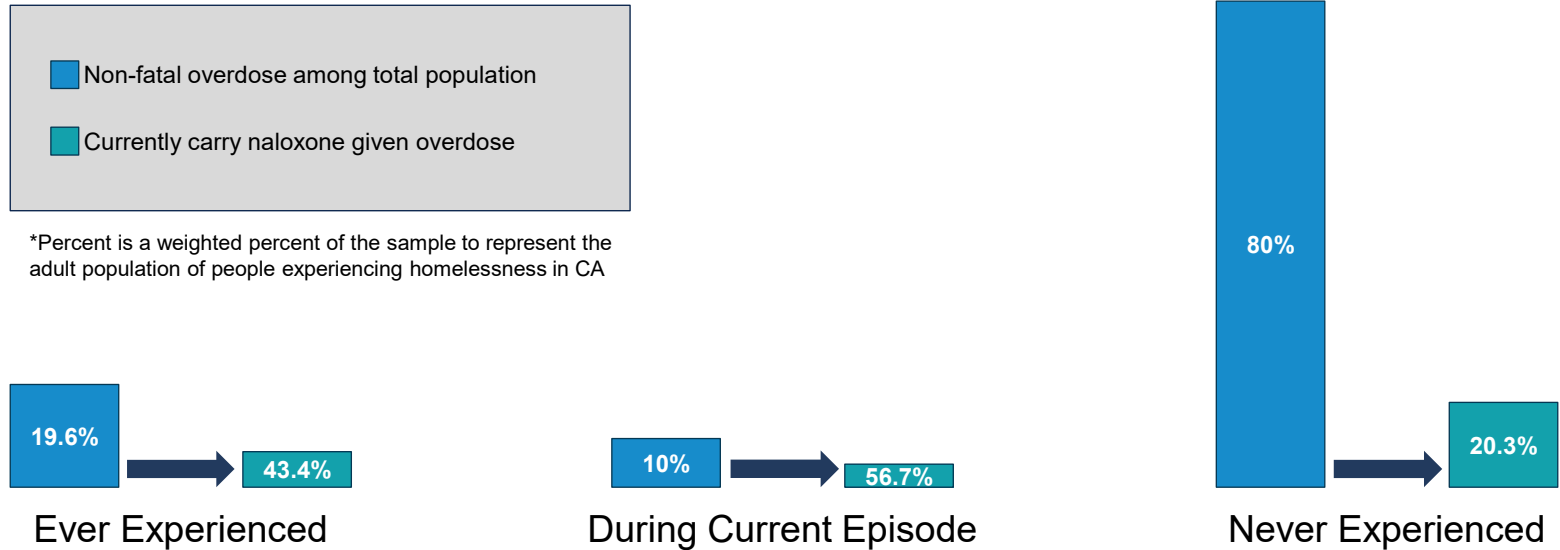
Goldshear JL, Kitonga N, Angelo N, Cowan A, Henwood BF, Bluthenthal RN. "Notice of major cleaning": A qualitative study of the negative impact of encampment sweeps on the ontological security of unhoused people who use drugs. *Soc Sci Med.* 2023;339:116408. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.116408

Health effects of involuntary displacement of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness

- Simulation modeling study to estimate the long-term health impacts of involuntary displacement of unsheltered PEH who inject drugs in 23 US cities
 - 15.6% to 24.4% increased deaths among unsheltered PEH at 10 years under continued involuntary displacement
- Via decreased access to sterile needles/materials, access to naloxone, and initiation of MOUD

Barocas JA, Nall SK, Axelrath S, et al. Population-Level Health Effects of Involuntary Displacement of People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness Who Inject Drugs in US Cities. *JAMA*. 2023;329(17):1478-1486. doi:10.1001/jama.2023.4800

Prevalence of non-fatal overdose and naloxone possession given respective overdose experience (n=3,200)



Assaf RD, Morris MD, Straus ER, Martinez P, Philbin MM, Kushel M. Illicit substance use prevalence among a representative sample of homeless adults in California: Results from the California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness. (In preparation).

- Among those who used illicit drugs
 - 7% currently in treatment (4% 12 step programs)
 - 19% wanted treatment, but unable to get it
- Among those who used opioids
 - 11% currently in treatment (5% MOUD)
 - 29% wanted treatment, unable to get it

Assaf RD, Morris MD, Straus ER, Martinez P, Philbin MM, Kushel M. Illicit substance use prevalence among a representative sample of homeless adults in California: Results from the California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness. (In preparation).

Challenges to treatment for people experiencing homelessness

- Homelessness presents barriers to MOUD
 - Small studies show similar outcomes for homeless/non-homeless with buprenorphine, but less uptake
 - Restrictions on methadone take-homes for PEH
- Conditions of homelessness limit access
 - Competing demands on time
 - Limited transportation, access to phones, storage

**The solution to
homelessness
is housing**



Concern for overdose risk in PSH

- Overdose mortality substantially higher among SRO residents in San Francisco, 2010-2017
 - Overdose mortality rate among SRO residents was 19 times that of non-SRO residents
- Of 49 surveyed supportive housing agencies in NY:
 - Two thirds of the agencies reported having opioid overdoses occurring at their supportive housing buildings in the past year.
 - 35% of agencies reported that less than half of their staff were trained to administer naloxone

Rowe CL, Riley ED, Eagen K, Zevin B, Coffin PO. Drug overdose mortality among residents of single room occupancy buildings in San Francisco, California, 2010-2017. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2019 Nov 1;204:107571. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2019.107571. Epub 2019 Sep 21. PMID: 31581024.

Corporation for Supportive Housing. Supportive Housing and the Opioid Crisis. Dec 2020. Available from: <https://www.csh.org/resources/supportive-housing-and-the-opioid-crisis/>

SRO Project: A model for overdose prevention and response in permanent supportive housing

- Support tenants and staff in developing capacity to address opioid-associated overdoses occurring in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) buildings

National Harm Reduction Coalition. Overdose Prevention in Supportive Housing a DOPE-Project Peer Led Pilot Project in San Francisco. 2022. https://drive.google.com/file/d/16X-Bdr-gcm_Psv0Q1Pt-ZmcNifLTE98v/view

SRO Project: Implementation

- **Outreach, training, and specialist recruitment**
 - Outreach to residents
 - OD response training sessions for residents and staff
 - Specialists recruited from resident training sessions
- **Specialist training**
 - Initial training in OD identification and response
 - Second session to test knowledge and skills
 - Specialist agreement signing
- **Program Implementation**
 - Naloxone wall mounts installed on each floor
 - Specialists carry out responsibilities

National Harm Reduction Coalition. Overdose Prevention in Supportive Housing a DOPE-Project Peer Led Pilot Project in San Francisco. 2022. https://drive.google.com/file/d/16X-Bdr-gcm_PSV0Q1Pt-ZmcNifLTE98v/view

SRO Project: Impacts

- Rapid and coordinated response to overdose within the buildings
- Increase in naloxone access and knowledge of use
- Awareness of importance of rescue breaths and calling 911 increased
- Naloxone wall mounts, specialist-driven harm reduction knowledge sharing, and resident-delivered overdose response facilitated privacy

National Harm Reduction Coalition. Overdose Prevention in Supportive Housing a DOPE-Project Peer Led Pilot Project in San Francisco. 2022. https://drive.google.com/file/d/16X-Bdr-gcm_PsV0Q1Pt-ZmcNifLTE98v/view

Conclusions

- Homelessness worsens individuals' vulnerability to drug-related harms
- Low threshold HR services prevent substance-related harms (including overdose mortality) while people are experiencing homelessness
- Access to housing can facilitate substance use stabilization and/or recovery through service access, trauma-informed care, and care continuity
- More research is needed by and for people with lived experience of substance use about harm reduction services during homelessness and housing



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