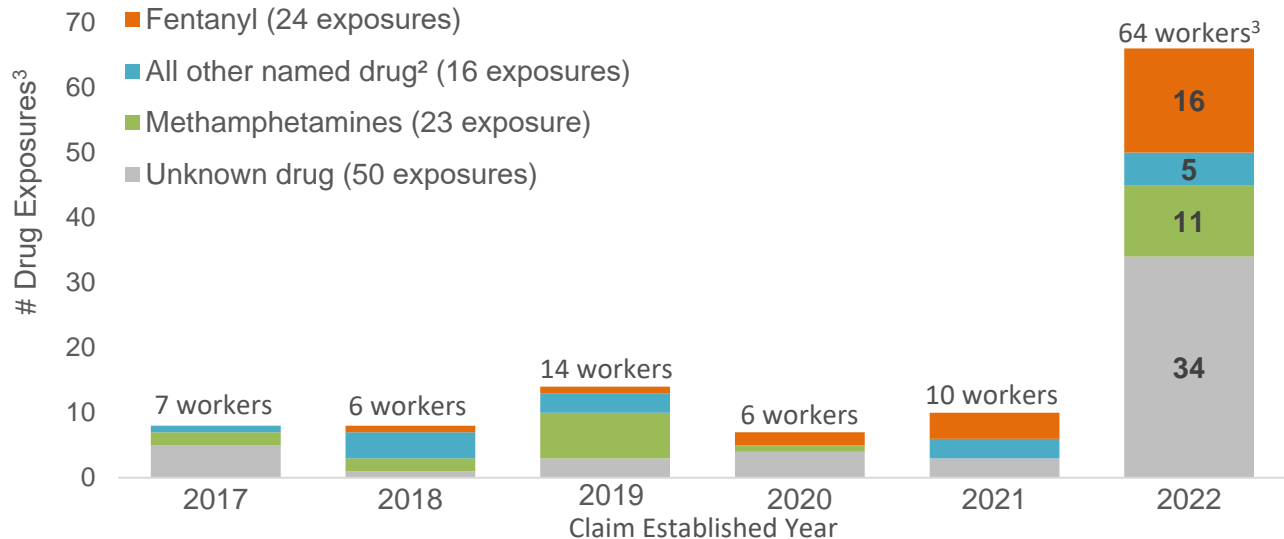


## Accidental occupational exposure to illicit drugs increased strikingly in 2022

Washington State Workers' Compensation Data, 2017–2022<sup>1</sup>



### There was a six-fold increase in workers' compensation claims for inhalation exposure to illicit drugs in the workplace between 2021 and 2022.

- Between 2017 and 2022, 107 workers filed claims for illicit drug exposures. Five workers reported being exposed to more than one drug.
- A variety of occupations are at risk during routine job duties. Two-thirds of exposed workers were in occupations outside of police and security guards, such as public transit operators (15 claims), social service workers (10 claims), and maintenance and janitorial staff (10 claims). Other exposed occupations include retail workers, office workers, and flight attendants. Common locations for exposure were public restrooms (18 claims) and buses (16 claims).
- The drug(s) named in the claim is based on the perceptions and information available to the exposed worker. The name of the illicit drug was unknown in 72% of cases. Fentanyl and methamphetamines were the most commonly specified illicit drugs. Reports of fentanyl exposure increased from 4 claims in 2021 to 16 claims in 2022.
- As public awareness of fentanyl and illicit drugs increases, workers may be more likely to seek medical care for exposure to suspicious smoke. Claims were accepted 39% of the time. While no long-term symptoms or time loss was reported, exposure can be a source of occupational stress.

1. Workers' compensation claims were filed for potential or confirmed inhalation exposure to an illicit drug in the workplace, which may or may not have resulted in symptoms or disease. For information on the methods of the toxic inhalation surveillance system, see [SHARP's Toxic Inhalation Surveillance Program](#), technical report # [64-30-2021](#).

2. Other drug exposures included heroin (N=8), cannabis (N=5), synthetic cannabinoids (N=2), and unspecified opioids (N=1). Washington State legalized the possession and private use of cannabis in 2012. However, cannabis use in public is illegal.

3. Workers can report more than one drug exposure per claim. In 2017-2022, there was a total of 107 claimants and 113 drug exposures.