Non-prescribed fentanyl and methamphetamine use increased significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a new report by specialty laboratory Millennium Health. Additionally, all U.S. census divisions saw jumps in positivity rates for at least one of the four drugs evaluated by the laboratory (fentanyl, methamphetamine, heroin, and cocaine). Over the past eight years, Millennium Health analyzed 3.5 million urine drug tests across the country. Most recently, it evaluated samples to compare drug-use rates from before the Covid-19 national emergency was declared — March 13, 2019 to Dec. 31, 2019 — and after the declaration — March 13, 2020 to Dec. 31, 2020. It found that fentanyl use increased in every census division, most significantly jumping 180 percent in the Pacific division — made up of Alaska, California, Oregon and Washington. And the New England division had a 119 percent increase in methamphetamine use, the highest of any division. Heroin and cocaine use, however, overall had tapered back to pre-pandemic levels.

Experts say these increases are largely a result of stressors that have been placed on those struggling with substance use disorders during the pandemic. With treatment centers closing their doors and 12-step programs transitioning to virtual meetings, many are left without the support systems they heavily relied on. According to a report published by the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control earlier this month, Hispanic/Latino Americans are being hit hardest with substance misuse during the pandemic. Increased or newly initiated substance use to cope with stress or emotions during the Covid-19 pandemic was reported among 36.9 percent of Hispanic respondents — the highest of any race or ethnic group. Black Americans were second: 15.6 percent reported increased substance use.

**Non-prescribed drug use heightened in the Covid-19 pandemic**

**MOVING AVERAGES OF POSITIVITY RATES**

- Fentanyl moves west, while methamphetamine spreads in the New England division

**PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN DRUG USE BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19 WAS DECLARED A NATIONAL EMERGENCY**

- Fifteen states saw significant increases in fentanyl, methamphetamine and heroin during the pandemic

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* Rates have been adjusted for age, sex, U.S. census division and specialty of referring clinic

Source: Millennium Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

By Jennifer Oles, POLITICO Pro DataPoint