

## **GOP Blames Migrants For Surge In Fentanyl Deaths, But 90% Are Trafficked By Americans**

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The Republican-controlled House of Representatives is blaming the surge of migrants at the southern border as the number of fentanyl-related deaths jumped nationwide.

Tennessee GOP Rep. Mark Green, the chairperson of the House Homeland Security Committee, claimed that "backpacks full of fentanyl [are] pouring into our country" while border officers are struggling with responding to migrants, [The Hill](#) reported.

A congressional hearing led by Green's committee last month tried to link illegal drug smuggling to migrants coming into the country.

Rebecca Kiessling, a lawyer from Michigan, testified about how fentanyl killed both of her sons in 2020.

"You're talking about children being taken away from their parents," Kiessling said, according to [ABC News](#).

Kiessling believes that the fentanyl used by her sons was illegally smuggled across the U.S.-Mexico border.

The Republicans' push to link the fentanyl crisis to migration was rebuked by Texas Democratic Rep. Veronica Escobar, who represents an El Paso district along the border.

Escobar argued that the hearings failed to discuss the domestic demand for fentanyl after concentrating on the supply-side issues.

Escobar said she wished her colleagues "would be as passionate about addressing addiction and the demand for illegal substances as they are passionate about the supply of them."

A survey conducted by [NPR](#) and Ipsos in August 2022 showed that 39% of Americans and 60% of Republicans believe that most of the fentanyl entering the country is "smuggled in by unauthorized migrants crossing the border illegally."

However, data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said that over 90% of fentanyl seizures occur at legal border crossings and interior vehicle checkpoints, despite claims that the synthetic opioid is entering the U.S. through illegal migration.

The CBP also said that 91% of drug seizures at checkpoints are from Americans, compared to 4% from "potentially removable" immigrants.

"Since it is easier for U.S. citizens to cross legally than noncitizens, it makes sense for fentanyl producers to hire U.S. citizen smugglers," Cato Institute said.

The think tank also noted that among the 1.8 million arrests by Border Patrol in relation to illegal border crossings, only 279, or 0.02%, resulted in a fentanyl seizure.

Cato Institute reviewed sentencing records at the U.S. Sentencing Commission and found that Americans accounted for 86.3% of fentanyl trafficking convictions in 2021, while just 8.9% were illegal immigrants.

As the COVID-19 pandemic engulfed the U.S. in early 2020, the Trump administration banned nonessential travel through the land ports of entry from Mexico. The move caused problems for smugglers of heroin and other drugs.

However, bad actors changed their tactics and instead smuggled fentanyl, which is at least 50 times more potent per pound than heroin.

As vast amounts of fentanyl flooded the U.S. in recent years, it contributed to a surge in overdose deaths.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), at least 59,569 fentanyl-related deaths were recorded in 2020 and 72,417 deaths in 2021, compared to just 38,259 deaths in 2019.