

Paul A. Allen
San Francisco, CA
August 14, 2024

(via email)

San Francisco Police Commissioners:

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Re: Narcotics Arrests and Overdose Death Data, January 2023-July 2024

Dear Commissioners:

Attached are two charts reflecting narcotics arrests and overdose deaths, these charts incorporating the July 2024 overdose death data just released.

I draw your attention to the footnotes on the charts, explaining why the need for two charts. In brief, this time the DMACC narcotics arrest data for July included five weeks rather than the usual four, thereby potentially (and I think actually) overstating the actual number of such arrests for the 31 days of July. For that reason, Version 2 of the data (the second chart) strips out all arrests for that “July 31” week that, of course, includes the last day of that month.

Yet again, there is a negative or inverse correlation between narcotics arrests and overdose deaths; that is, as the former increase the latter decline. One can see this (i) in the aggressive City response in the three months preceding the APEC summit; (ii) in January-April this year when arrests were generally high but deaths declined; (iv) in May when arrests declined but deaths increased; (v) in June when arrests increased again but deaths decline; and (vi) now the same pattern in July.

As always, I acknowledge that correlation is not causation; it could be that the association is random; and there are obviously additional variables at play. As to the latter, one would certainly want to know the number of successful “interventions” (e.g. Narcan administrations) by month throughout the relevant time period, but that data apparently is not available. Just two days ago *The San Francisco Standard* reported

the opinion of some users that “weak fentanyl” is on the market;¹ and Dr. Grant Colfax, in response to the decline in deaths, was quoted as saying “I can’t speculate on this or that specific thing making the difference we’re seeing now...”² Still, one continues to be perplexed that the aforementioned inverse association evident over many months, notwithstanding the necessary caveats and admonitions, remains largely unknown, ignored, or dismissed.

Moving on, oddly the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has retroactively changed its description of the location of overdose deaths; it now uses zip codes rather than words to describe neighborhoods. Thus, while 94102 is a fair representation of the Tenderloin and 94103 a fair representation of SOMA, 94109 is much bigger than the old “Lower Polk/Russian Hill.” (94109 extends to San Francisco Bay.) Still, the prior pattern of about 2/3 of deaths being in those neighborhoods remains the same.

Sincerely,

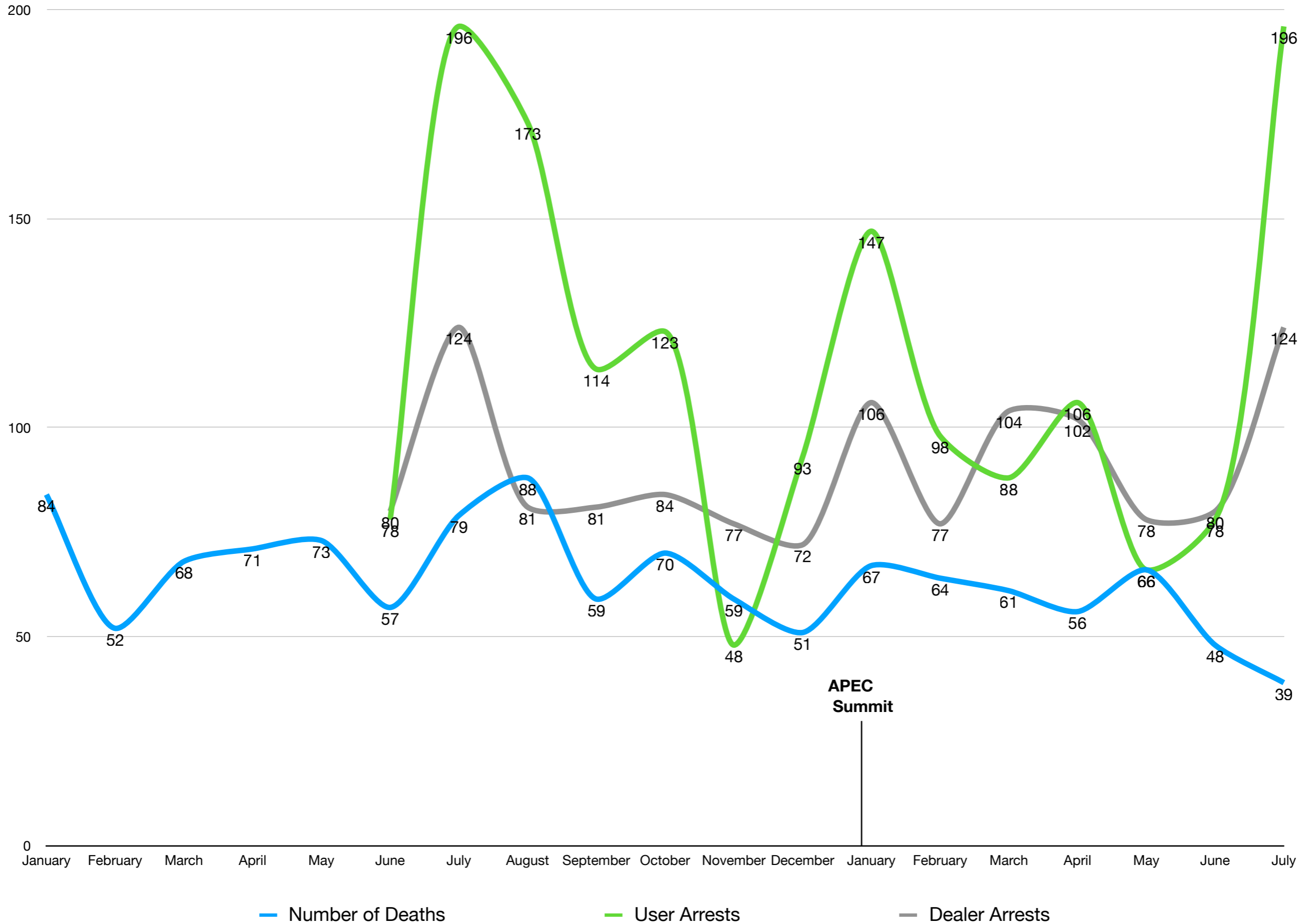
Paul A. Allen

Attached: Version 1 and Version 2, Chart of Number of City-Wide Overdose Deaths and Dealer/User Arrests per Month, January 2023-July 2024

¹ <https://sfstandard.com/2024/08/12/fentanyl-soap-purity/>

² <https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/s-f-fatal-overdoses-drop-amid-fentanyl-crisis-19656263.php>

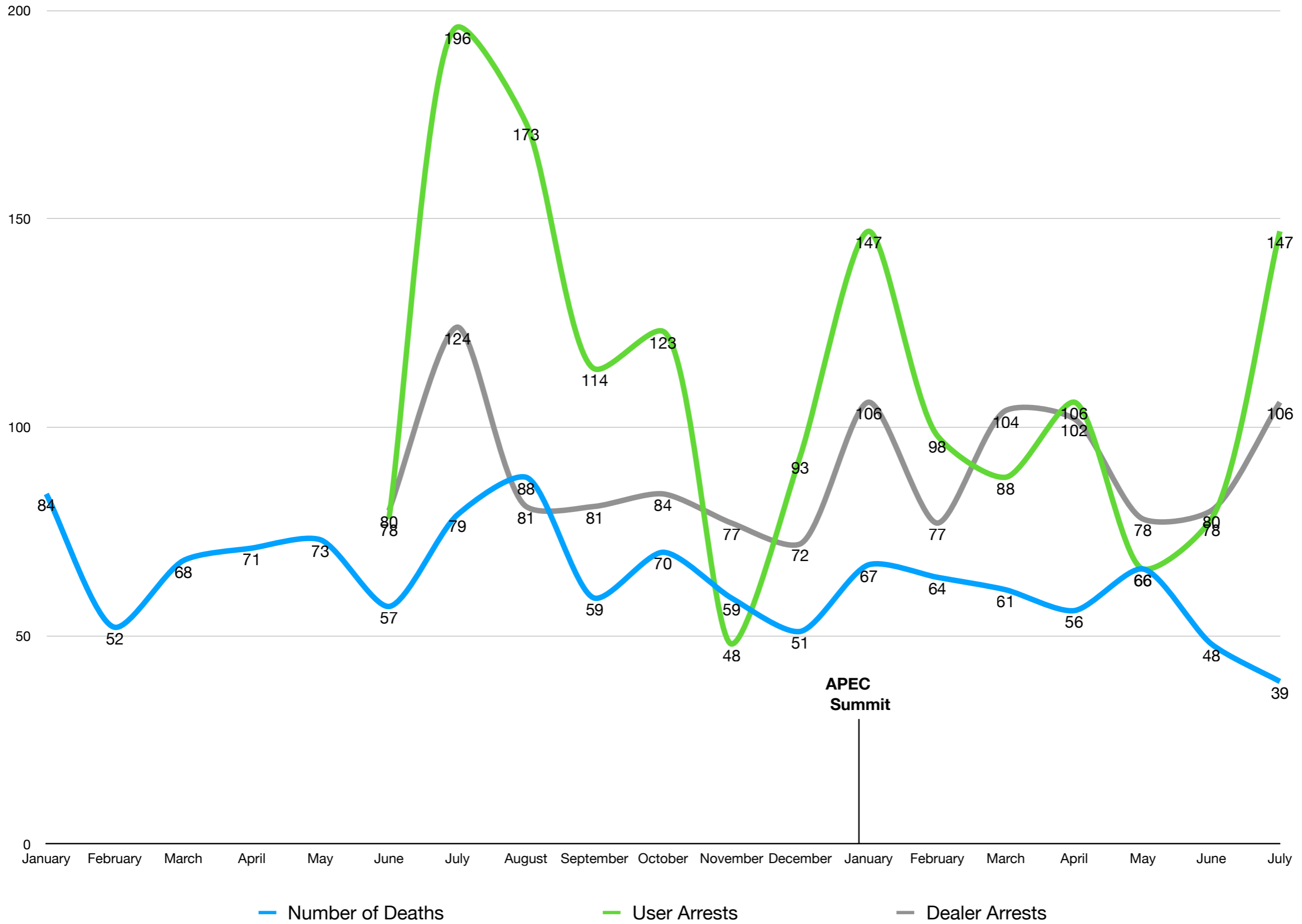
Number of City-Wide Overdose Deaths and Dealer/User Arrests Per Month, January 2023-July 2024 - Version 1



Sources: 1. SF Medical Examiner Reports for Deaths Data.
2. SFPD DMACC Dashboard for Arrest Data — but see note below.

Caution: The July DMACC data for July 2024 includes 5 reporting weeks, rather than the customary 4, the most recent such week labelled “July 31” for which 49 user arrests and 18 dealer arrests were reported. Hence, the sharp upward spike in the two arrest lines. Version 2 of this data removes that fifth reporting week of July 31 in its entirety in order, in the author’s opinion, to reflect more fairly the number of actual arrests in July as well as the inverse association with overdose deaths.

Number of City-Wide Overdose Deaths and Dealer/User Arrests Per Month, January 2023-July 2024 - Version 2



Sources: 1. SF Medical Examiner Reports for Deaths Data.
2. SFPD DMACC Dashboard for Arrest Data — but see note below.

Note: As noted in the footnote to Version 1, the July DMACC data for July 2024 includes 5 reporting weeks, rather than the usual 4, the most recent being “July 31” when there were 49 user arrests and 18 dealer arrests. This Version 2 strips out that fifth week of data (i.e. removing 49 user arrests and 18 dealer arrests) in order, in the author’s opinion, to reflect more fairly both the number of arrests and the inverse association with overdose deaths.