

Vital Statistics Information Box

COUNTS OF DEATHS BY CAUSATIVE SUBSTANCES

Over the past ten years, deaths involving single heroin/morphine type drug use appear to be declining slightly. On the other hand, deaths where cocaine was the only substance implicated appear to be on the increase, along with deaths from combined narcotics.

Deaths from the combined use of illicit drugs with other drugs (other than narcotics) have risen sharply since 2007 and remain the leading cause of illicit drug overdose since then.

The use of psychostimulants is a relatively new phenomenon. Its place as the direct cause of unintentional overdose does not appear to be rising. It is interesting to note that methadone, a substance used in the treatment of heroin addiction, is apparently being used illicitly and causing overdose deaths in and of itself.

OVERDOSE DEATHS BY TYPE OF DRUG

BRITISH COLUMBIA, 2002-2011

Drug	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Heroin/morphine type only	63	71	50	74	75	37	31	35	44	44
Methadone only	26	20	25	20	18	26	15	14	20	8
Cocaine only	42	52	71	59	59	49	33	24	25	26
Other narcotic/hallucinogen only	6	5	1	4	5	5	7	4	13	3
GHB only	0	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	1	0
Psychostimulants* only	2	7	5	5	5	9	6	6	5	6
Multiple narcotics	52	52	59	66	74	64	64	83	66	77
Other mixed drugs	23	22	24	35	31	68	83	86	95	78
TOTAL	214	229	235	263	271	259	240	252	269	242

Note: Deaths that were still under investigation may later be identified as unintentional illicit/illegal overdose deaths.

*ICD-10 codes for psychostimulants include "crystal meth" and "ecstasy".

Unintentional illicit/illegal drug overdose deaths (X41,X42,X44) include these specified drug injury categories:

- 1) T40.0, T40.1, or T40.2 for heroin/morphine type.
- 2) T40.3 for methadone.
- 3) T40.5 for cocaine.
- 4) T40.4, T40.6, T40.9 for other narcotic/hallucinogen.
- 5) T41.2 for gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB).
- 6) T43.6 for psychostimulant*.

Multiple Narcotic deaths involve mixed drugs from categories 1 - 4 only.

Other Mixed Drug deaths include one illicit drug from categories 1 - 6 (T40.0-T40.9, T41.2, T43.6) and one or more other drugs (T36.0-T48.6, T52.8, T53.9) and are not multiple narcotic deaths.

Non-residents are excluded.