

Vital Statistics Information Box

COUNTS OF DEATHS BY CAUSATIVE SUBSTANCES

Over the past nine 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, 2001-2010

Drug	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Heroin/morphine type only	97	63	71	50	73	75	37	31	35	36
Methadone only	23	26	20	25	20	18	26	15	14	13
Cocaine only	52	41	52	71	59	59	49	32	23	18
Other narcotic/ hallucinogen only	8	6	5	1	4	5	5	6	4	11
GHB only	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	0
Psychostimulants* only	2	2	7	5	5	5	9	5	6	3
Multiple narcotics	66	52	52	59	66	74	64	64	82	53
Other mixed drugs	17	23	22	24	35	31	68	83	85	73
TOTAL	265	213	229	235	262	271	259	237	249	207

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.