



NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
BC Coroners Service

At least 192 British Columbians lost to toxic drugs in July 2024

VICTORIA – Updated reporting from the BC Coroners Service about unregulated drug toxicity deaths indicates at least 192 people died in July 2024.

Between January 2024 and July 2024, 1,365 lives were lost to drug toxicity, according to preliminary data.

“Unregulated toxic drugs continue to cause more loss of life in British Columbia than homicides, motor-vehicle incidents, suicides and natural disease combined, tragically equating to about 6.2 people losing their lives each day,” said Dr. Jatinder Baidwan, chief coroner. “The unregulated drug market is volatile and continues to put people’s lives at grave risk each month.”

The data from July 2024 represents a 15% decrease from the number of deaths reported in July 2023 (226). Further to that, the annualized rate of death in 2024 is 41 per 100,000 residents, which is less than the annual rates from 2021 (43.9), 2022 (44.5) and 2023 (46.6).

Despite the decrease, people who use drugs in communities across B.C. face risk of significant injury or death. While the greatest number of deaths in 2024 have occurred in the cities of Vancouver (296), Surrey (130) and Greater Victoria (101), the highest rates of unregulated drug deaths have been reported in the health authorities of Northern (75.7 per 100,000) and Vancouver Island (53.4 per 100,000).

“Tomorrow, we mark International Overdose Awareness Day. To the loved ones of the approximate 15,140 British Columbians who have lost their lives to drug toxicity since this public-health emergency was declared in 2016, I extend my deepest condolences,” Baidwan said. “These losses impact people far beyond our province, and we must not forget these are sons and daughters, parents and grandparents, co-workers and teammates.”

Additional findings from the latest report include:

- Eighty per cent of unregulated drug deaths in July 2024 were males, up from the year-to-date figure of 73%.
- The rate of female deaths in 2024 (22 deaths per 100,000 people) is almost double that from 2020 (13 per 100,000).
- Fentanyl was detected in nearly nine out of every 10 unregulated drug deaths in July 2024 that have undergone expedited toxicological testing.
- Smoking is the primary mode of consumption of substances (64%) among unregulated drug deaths, according to coroner investigations.

Please note the data is subject to change as additional toxicology results are received.

Learn More:

To learn more about July 2024 unregulated drug toxicity deaths, visit:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiMDg2ZGZmOGltZGQ1Ny00NTY3LThiYmEtYmExN2M0YmFjYTUxliwidCI6IjZmZGI1MjAwLTNkMGQtNGE4YS1iMDM2LWQzNjg1ZTM1OWFkYyJ9>

To learn more about youth unregulated drug toxicity deaths, 2019-2023, visit:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/statistical/youth_unregulated_drug_toxicity_deaths_in_bc_2019-2023.pdf

To learn more about unregulated drug toxicity - type of drug data (to Dec. 31, 2022), visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/statistical/illicit-drug-type.pdf>

To learn more about BC Coroners Service Death Review Panel: An Urgent Response to a Continuing Crisis, visit: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/death-review-panel/an_urgent_response_to_a_continuing_crisis_report.pdf

To learn more about BC Coroners Service Death Review Panel: A Review of Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths, visit: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/death-review-panel/review_of_illicit_drug_toxicity_deaths_2022.pdf

To learn more about Toward the Heart, visit: <https://www.towardtheheart.com>

To learn more about Stop Overdose BC, visit: <https://www.stopoverdose.gov.bc.ca>

To learn more about BC Centre on Substance Use, visit: <https://www.bccsu.ca>

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