



NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
BC Coroners Service

BC Coroners Service drug toxicity death update through June 2024

VICTORIA – At least 1,158 British Columbians have lost their lives to unregulated drug toxicity in the first half of 2024, according to preliminary data from the BC Coroners Service (BCCS).

The findings show there were 181 and 185 suspected unregulated drug deaths in May and June 2024, respectively. Though the number of deaths to date this year is lower than at the same mark over the previous three years, approximately six people are still dying each day because of unregulated toxic drugs.

“People are continuing to lose their loved ones in communities across B.C. at a tragic rate,” said John McNamee, acting chief coroner. “Even as the figures reflect a 9% decrease in the number of deaths reported to the coroners service during the first six months of this year from 2023, the number of lives lost is still significant.”

Nearly half of reported deaths in May and June were people between the ages of 30 and 49. While males account for 72% of deaths so far in 2024, the rate of deaths among females continues to rise and currently accounts for 28% of deaths in 2024.

Notably, the rates of unregulated drug toxicity deaths (per 100,000) by health service delivery area are highest in the Northern Interior (106.6), North Vancouver Island (78.8), Vancouver (66.3) and Central Vancouver Island (62.8). More than one-fifth of the lives lost so far in 2024 have been in Vancouver (22%), followed by Surrey (10%) and Greater Victoria (7%).

Fentanyl continues to be the driver of unregulated drug-toxicity deaths, detected in 82% of expedited toxicological tests conducted so far in 2024.

Unregulated drug toxicity remains the leading cause of death in British Columbia for those age 10 to 59, accounting for more deaths than homicides, suicides, accidents and natural diseases combined. Since the public-health emergency was declared in April 2016, more than 14,948 people have lost their lives to unregulated toxic drugs.

Some of the data reported is based on preliminary circumstances and is subject to change as investigations are concluded.

Learn More:

To learn more about May 2024 and June 2024 unregulated drug toxicity deaths, visit:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNzE0ZmZmNTctOTE3Ny00ZmI5LTliNjctNWQ5NWw1MTI0OTJhliwidCI6IjZmZGI1MjAwLTNkMGQ4tNGE4YS1iMDM2LWQzNjg1ZTM1OWFkYyJ9>

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 stopping overdose in B.C., visit: <https://www.stopoverdose.gov.bc.ca>

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

Contact:

Amber Schinkel
Manager
Strategic Communications and Media
Relations
BC Coroners Service
amber.schinkel@gov.bc.ca
236 969-1759

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