

This report summarizes deaths of individuals experiencing homelessness reported to the BC Coroners Service (BCCS) between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2021. Deaths that must be reported to a coroner include all non-natural deaths and all sudden and unexpected deaths where the person was not under the care of a physician. The report does not include the deaths of individuals experiencing homelessness that did not meet the legal criteria in the *Coroners Act* for reporting.

**Caveats:** As the BCCS operates in a live database environment, the data are considered preliminary and subject to change as coroners' investigations conclude. These data were compiled by date of death, which may differ from the date of injury. In some cases, the death may occur days or weeks after injury. The data may be underreported as it is not always possible to determine a person's housing status.

**Inclusion Criteria:** The data presented in this report are based on suspected homelessness where 'no fixed address' was given as the home address, the injury premise was identified as a homeless shelter or if the preliminary circumstances of death suggested homelessness based on the definition below.

**Definition:** An individual experiencing homelessness is defined as:

- A person living outdoors, in a make-shift shelter, a parked vehicle, or any other structure not intended for habitation; or
- A person staying at an emergency shelter (overnight) or temporarily sheltered (suspected to be for less than 30 days) by friends or family, in a short-term shelter, temporary modular housing, safe house for youth, or transition house for women and children fleeing violence. Persons residing in short-term shelters, safe houses, or transition houses for an unknown length of time were included.

There are many definitions of homelessness. Some individuals who do not meet the above definitions of homelessness may be considered homeless under other definitions. Examples of individuals who were not considered homeless for the purposes of this report include:

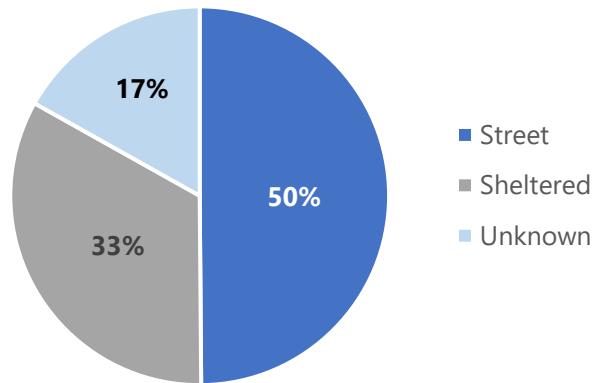
- People in correctional institutions, hospitals, or residential drug or alcohol treatment facilities; and
- People who have a permanent residence but are considered at high risk of homelessness because of unemployment, domestic violence, or other factors.

**Summary:**

- In 2021, there were 247 deaths among individuals experiencing homelessness in British Columbia (*Table 1*). This equates to a 75% increase over the number of deaths reported in 2020 (141).
- From 2012-2021, there were 120 deaths of individuals experiencing homelessness per year on average.
- 50% of individuals met the criteria for street homelessness and 33% for sheltered homelessness (*Fig. 1*).
- Deaths occurred more often in the later months of the year. November (11%) had the highest proportion of deaths, followed by August (10%) and December (10%) (*Fig. 2*).
- Overall, 83% of decedents were male. Males were more likely than females to meet criteria for street homelessness (51% vs 44%) (*Fig. 3*).
- Individuals aged 30 to 59 accounted for 72% of deaths (*Fig. 4*).
- By classification, from 2012-2021, 74% of deaths were considered accidental, followed by 13% classified as natural and 7% as suicides.
- From 2012-2021, 87% of all accidental deaths were suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths. The percentage of accidental illicit drug toxicity deaths among individuals experiencing homelessness remained high in 2021 at 93% (*Fig. 6*).
- 32% of deaths occurred in the Fraser Health region, followed by Vancouver Coastal Health region (25%) (*Fig. 7*).
- The townships with the highest number of deaths were Vancouver (248), Surrey (127), and Victoria (99) (*Table 6*).

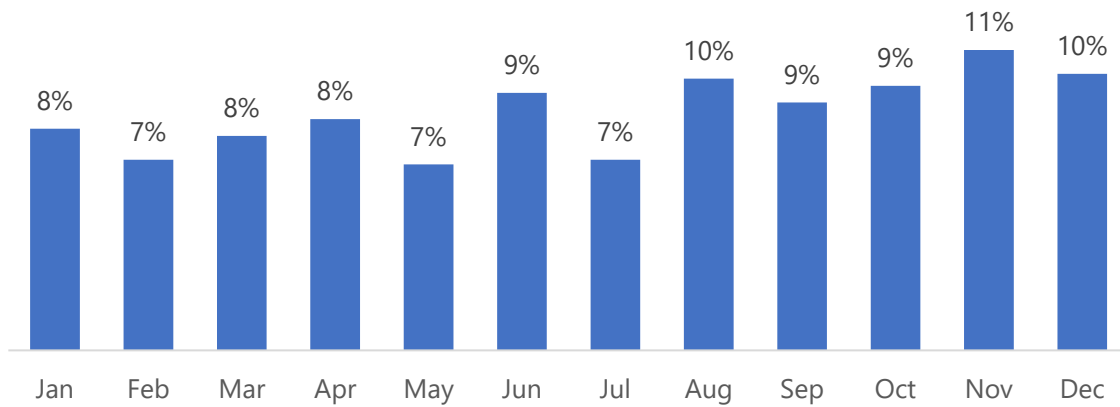
**Table 1. Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Type of Homelessness, 2012-2021**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Street	16	11	23	36	89	72	78	65	84	123
Sheltered	9	17	21	26	70	50	34	42	40	89
Unknown	6	3	5	11	22	38	43	22	17	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>247</b>



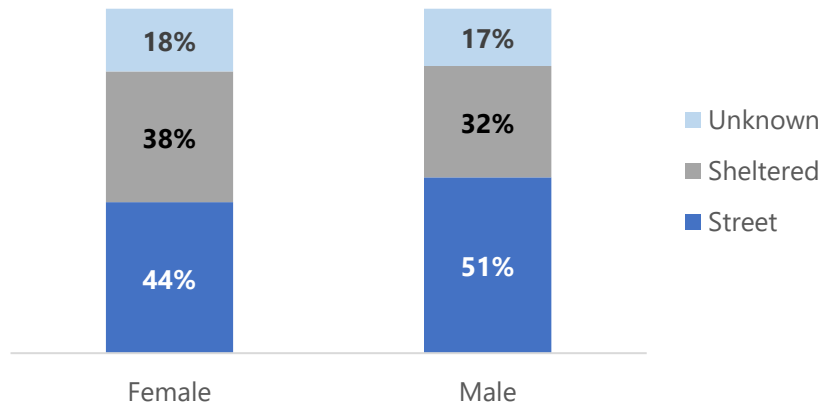
**Fig. 1.** Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Type of Homelessness as %, 2012-2021

Table 2. Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Month, 2012-2021										
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
January	3	1	5	1	14	22	7	16	8	16
February	3	2	1	6	13	10	16	12	7	10
March	2	2	2	7	12	9	10	16	17	13
April	2	2	5	3	11	16	12	16	15	15
May	1	2	3	3	13	13	8	8	12	15
June	1	2	5	4	12	20	14	11	21	18
July	0	1	4	5	8	9	13	5	9	26
August	3	3	9	9	17	14	23	6	7	23
September	6	2	4	11	10	13	14	6	12	26
October	3	4	4	3	23	10	15	12	7	30
November	3	7	3	7	25	14	16	10	16	25
December	4	3	4	14	23	10	7	11	10	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>247</b>



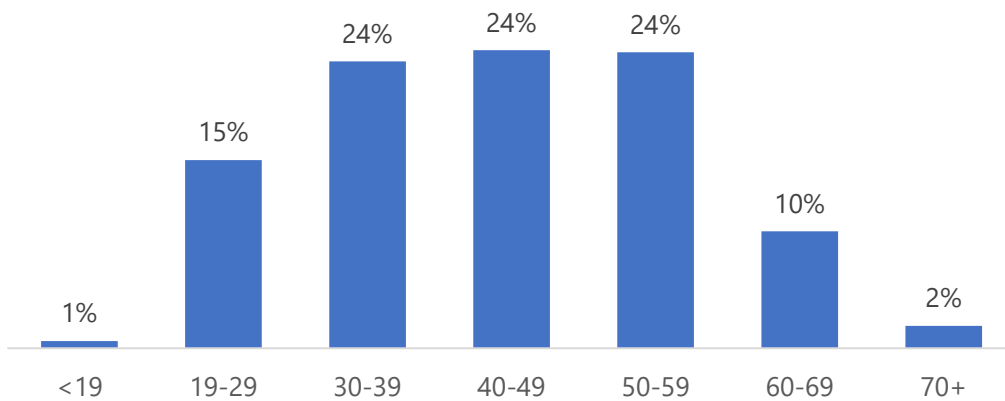
**Fig. 2.** Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Month as %, 2012-2021

Table 3. Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Sex, 2012-2021										
Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Female	7	5	6	9	30	32	29	15	22	48
Male	24	26	43	64	151	128	126	113	119	199
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total	31	31	49	73	181	160	155	129	141	247



**Fig. 3.** Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Type of Homelessness and Sex as %, 2012-2021

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<19	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
19-29	5	3	6	11	36	27	26	16	22	33
30-39	7	10	9	14	30	36	34	26	35	81
40-49	11	8	10	24	37	56	31	35	31	50
50-59	4	4	17	16	56	33	45	32	36	48
60-69	2	5	4	5	18	4	18	18	13	28
70+	2	0	2	3	3	1	1	1	3	6
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>247</b>



**Fig. 4.** Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Age Group as %, 2012-2021

Table 5. Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Classification of Death, 2012-2021										
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Accidental	13	18	27	44	112	133	128	87	114	209
Illicit Drug Toxicity	5	12	14	37	93	125	112	74	106	195
Natural	6	8	13	19	31	10	17	26	8	15
Suicide	5	3	6	7	20	10	5	11	6	5
Undetermined	6	0	1	1	13	7	4	3	10	17
Homicide	1	2	2	2	5	0	1	2	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>247</b>

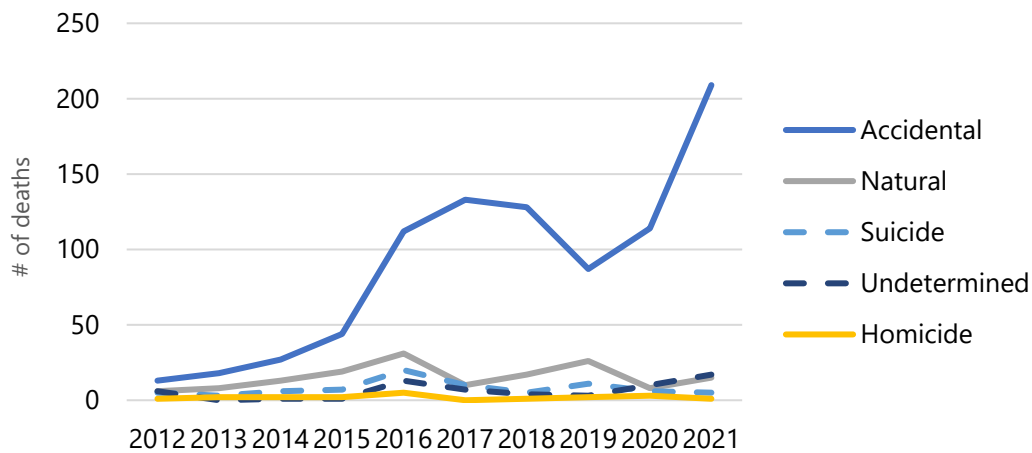


Fig. 5. Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Year and Classification, 2012-2021

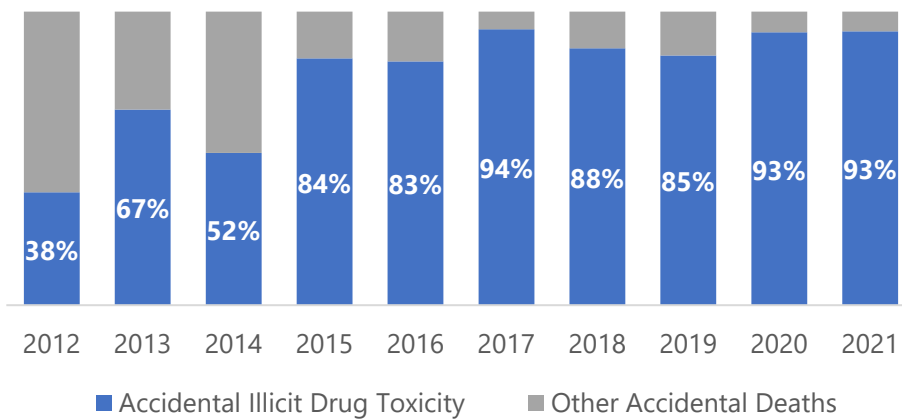
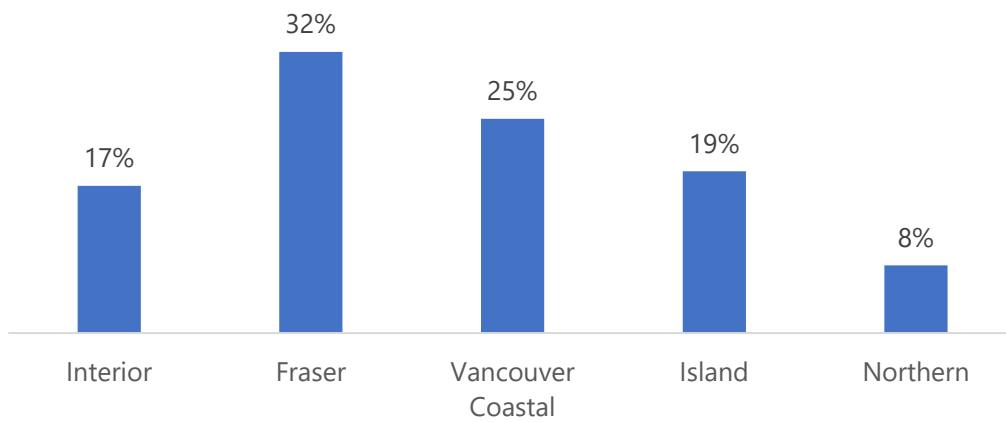


Fig. 6. Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths of Homeless Individuals as % of Accidental Deaths, 2012-2021

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Interior	1	3	8	7	34	31	27	21	26	44
Fraser	7	10	15	32	60	51	47	40	46	78
Vancouver Coastal	12	6	10	16	51	37	39	28	35	60
Island	7	9	9	14	27	29	29	31	23	44
Northern	4	3	7	4	9	12	13	9	11	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>247</b>



**Fig. 7.** Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Health Authority as %, 2012-2021



**Table 7. Accidental Deaths of Homeless Individuals by Township of Injury, 2012-2021**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Vancouver	7	5	8	11	44	32	37	24	30	50
Surrey	2	3	5	12	17	14	19	13	13	29
Victoria	4	3	4	5	17	14	8	14	12	18
Abbotsford	1	0	0	3	8	12	6	10	12	14
Kelowna	1	0	1	3	10	12	7	4	5	11
Prince George	1	1	3	2	5	8	12	3	7	11
Kamloops	0	0	3	1	8	7	6	5	8	5
Chilliwack	1	3	0	1	7	6	4	5	5	7
Nanaimo	0	1	0	3	1	5	4	5	3	8
Langley	0	1	0	3	5	8	2	1	2	3
Maple Ridge	1	0	2	9	5	0	3	2	1	2
Vernon	0	1	2	2	5	1	7	1	2	4
New Westminster	0	1	2	1	1	3	3	4	3	5
Burnaby	1	1	1	0	2	4	1	1	3	7
North Vancouver	5	1	1	1	4	3	0	2	1	3
Other Township	7	10	17	16	42	31	36	35	34	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>247</b>

Note: 'Other Township' includes townships with <20 deaths.

**Note:**

1. Health region breakdowns can be found at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/geographic-data-services/land-use/administrative-boundaries/health-boundaries>