

Vital Statistics Information Box

UNINTENTIONAL ILLICIT/ILLEGAL DRUG DEATHS BRITISH COLUMBIA, 2001-2010

In 1993, British Columbia experienced an unprecedented "high water" mark in unintentional drug overdoses. In that year, 470 people died as the result of unintentional poisoning by drugs. Over 300 of these were determined to be the result of illicit drug use. These included heroin and other opiates, methadone, and cocaine, used alone or in various combinations or with a variety of other substances being used illicitly.

This information box provides a code-based analysis of deaths due to accidental illicit drug overdoses in British Columbia since 2000. It is important to note that numbers for 2010 (and to a certain extent previous years) may be revised upwards as final reports from investigating coroners are submitted to the Agency for processing. This analysis includes deaths where unintentional drug overdose was determined to be the "underlying cause of death" (see Glossary for the definition of this term), and where the offending substances included selected "narcotics and psychodysleptics" – heroin, morphine, methadone, and cocaine - and "psychostimulants with abuse potential", specifically so-called "crystal meth" (methamphetamine hydrochloride) and "ecstasy" (methylenedioxymethamphetamine). "Mixed drug overdoses" included at least one of the above substances, as well as any other drug. A separate total for deaths in which mixed narcotics such as heroin with cocaine were implicated is also included, because multiple narcotic substances are used in combination relatively frequently.

UNINTENTIONAL ILLICIT/ILLEGAL OVERDOSE DEATHS BY TYPE OF DRUG
BRITISH COLUMBIA, 2001-2010

