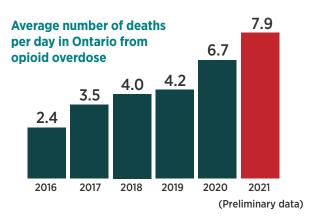
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Fact Sheet September 2022

Overdoses from toxic drug supply: A public health crisis

An escalating crisis



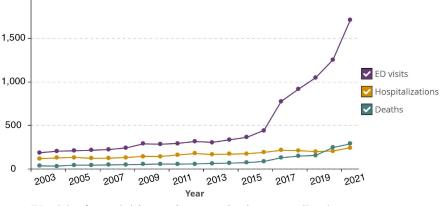
Origins of the opioid crisis

Limited access

to mental health

services

Cases of opioid-related morbidity and mortality, Ontario, 2003–2021



ER visits for opioid overdoses and other complications grew by 36 per cent from 2020 to 2021.



Poisoned illicit

drug supply

Social factors, such as experiences of grief and trauma



Stigma around substance use

Intersection of COVID-19 and the opioid overdose crisis

2,000

Number of cases

Unintended consequences of the COVID-19 response measures on people who use drugs:



Misleading

marketing and

over-prescribing

social isolation



limited access to direct services and supports



increasingly toxic drug supply



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greater risk of homelessness

negative impact on mental health

unsupported withdrawal

Harm reduction in theory and practice

"Harm reduction" refers to programs, policies and practices that aim to minimize negative health, social and legal impacts associated with a behaviour such as drug use. It focuses on positive change and working with people without judgment, coercion, discrimination or requiring they stop using drugs as a precondition of support.

Supervised consumption services

Supervised consumption services (SCS) sites are places where people who use drugs can do so in monitored, hygienic environments to reduce overdose deaths and other harms from substance use. They also offer other health and social services.

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Safe space for consumption



peer support

Education, counselling and



Access to care

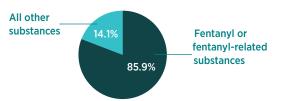
Safer supply

Contents of street drugs are unknown to users. Safer supply programs provide access to pharmaceutical-grade drugs as a safer alternative to the poisoned illicit drug supply.

Decriminalization

Decriminalization requires a federal exemption of Section 56.1 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA).

Type of opioid present at death, Ontario, 2020



Did you know? British Columbia has received a province-wide exemption under the CDSA. Starting Jan. 31, 2023, under a three-year pilot program, individuals in British Columbia will be able to legally carry up to 2.5 grams of certain illicit drugs.

Where are we now?

