



QUICK STATS & FACTS SHEET

The Decriminalization of Opioids

1. Between July 2016 and January 2021, **opioid overdoses accounted for over 24,626 deaths**, with 90% of these deaths occurring from the use of non-pharmaceutical opioids.
2. Fentanyl is **20-40x more potent than heroin and can be fatal**, even in small doses.
3. A Schedule I indictable offense can lead to **imprisonment for a maximum of 7 years** while a first offense can lead to a **fine of \$1000 and/or 6 months imprisonment**.
4. **34% of people who died** from illicit substances in British Columbia between 2011 and 2016 had some sort of **contact with police in the preceding 2 years**.
5. In the two weeks post-release, an **incarcerated individual's risk for overdose is 56x higher** than that of the general population.
6. Those who had **police contact have significantly less total income and less consistent employment** compared to their counterparts who did not have any police contact.
7. In Nova Scotia, **only those already receiving OAT prior to admission continue to receive this therapy** in prison.
8. Lowest-income neighborhoods exhibited more opioid-related deaths, hospital admissions, emergency department visits, and neonatal abstinence syndrome. **The rates of opioid-related harms in the lowest income quintile were at least double that of the highest income quintile** within all of these categories.
9. Between 2011 and 2016, hospitalizations related to opioid poisoning were approximately **4 times higher in the lowest income quintile** than compared to people in the highest income quintile.

10. Almost **one in three sex workers who use drugs** in Vancouver experience at least one **non-fatal overdose**.
11. There is up to **5-fold greater opioid-related hospitalizations among Indigenous people** compared to non-Indigenous people.
12. Indigenous women in BC have a rate of **opioid-related deaths 10 times greater** than other women in the province.
13. The number of **opioid-related deaths in First Nations people increased by 132%** from pre-pandemic levels, compared to a 68% rise among non-First Nations people.
14. In Alberta, there was a **65% decrease in visits to supervised consumption sites at the onset of the COVID** pandemic.
15. The rates of emergency medical services (EMS) for **suspected opioid overdose increased by 57%** and the rates of **fatal opioid overdose increased by 60%** in Ontario since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.
16. In July 2020, the **Association of Nova Scotia Police Chiefs backed the ask to decriminalize** the possession of small amounts of illegal drugs.
17. In June 2021, Ontario Big City Mayors asked for the creation and funding of **Mental Health Crisis Responses Units** that would use **trained mental health professionals** with police officers to respond to low-risk crisis calls and **wellness checks**.