

Multi-Drug Combinations in Opioid- or Stimulant-related Toxicity Deaths in Canada

January 2018 to December 2023

What are Multi-Drug Combinations?



Multi-drug combinations are the involvement (detection and/or contribution) of more than one psychoactive substance or substance class in a death. The number of substances involved in opioid- or stimulant-related toxicity deaths in Canada has increased, along with changes in the toxicity of the drug supply and polysubstance use (intentional or unintentional).^{1, 2, 3}

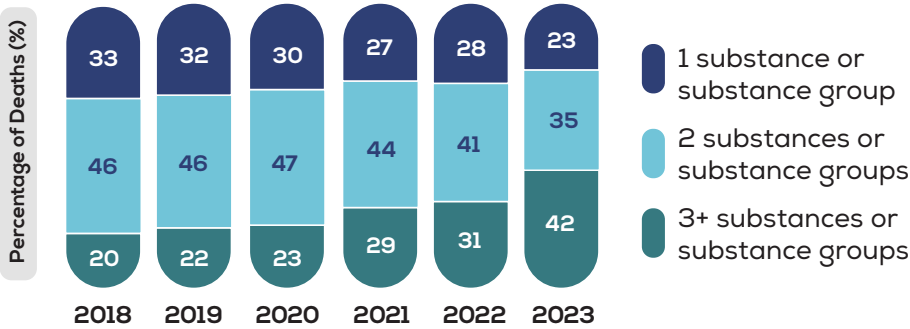
Impact in Canada

Based on available data, from 10 provinces and territories, there were **20,438** opioid- or stimulant-related toxicity deaths between 2018 and 2023*



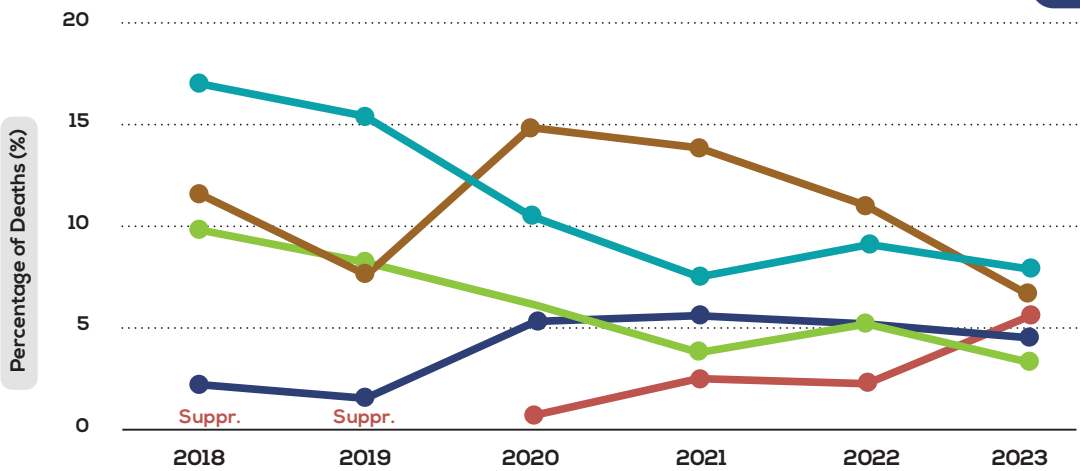
*Data may be underestimated as British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba were excluded for all years

Deaths with 3+ substances have doubled in the last 5 years



Multi-drug combinations on the rise

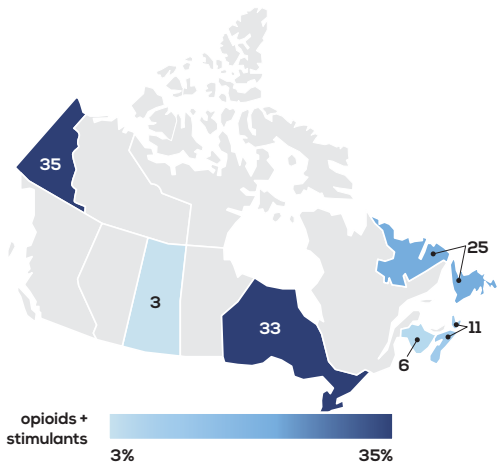
Deaths involving a single substance or group have declined, while those involving multiple—especially fentanyl combinations—have increased



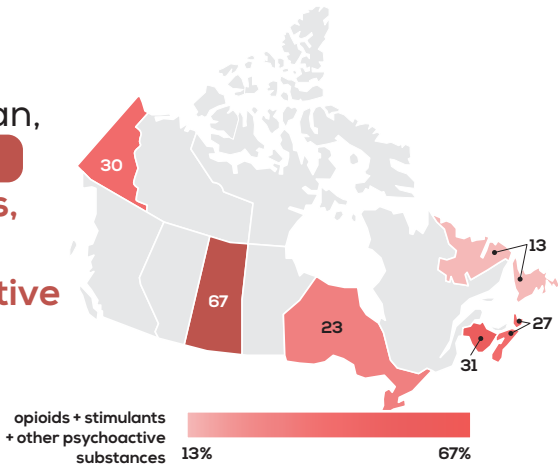
- Non-fentanyl opioids with other psychoactive substances has decreased since 2018
- Fentanyl alone has decreased since 2020
- Non-fentanyl opioids alone has decreased since 2018
- Fentanyl with cocaine and methamphetamine has increased since 2019
- Fentanyl with methamphetamine, fentanyl analogues, and other psychoactive substances has increased since 2018

Drug combinations differ across the country

In the Yukon and Ontario, over **30% of deaths** involved **opioids and stimulants**



In Saskatchewan, **67% of deaths** involved **opioids, stimulants, and other psychoactive substances**



Notes: Quebec data includes more than opioid and stimulant deaths for 2022-2023. The term "involving" includes deaths where a substance was detected and/or directly contributed to the death. The data collected include three substances (fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine) and four substance groups (fentanyl analogues, non-fentanyl opioids, other stimulants, and other psychoactive substances). 'Substance group' is a category consisting of one or more similar substances.

References: 1. <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-12678-z> 2. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35170930/> 3. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids/data-surveillance-research/multi-drug-combinations-national-opioid-stimulant-toxicity-deaths.html>