

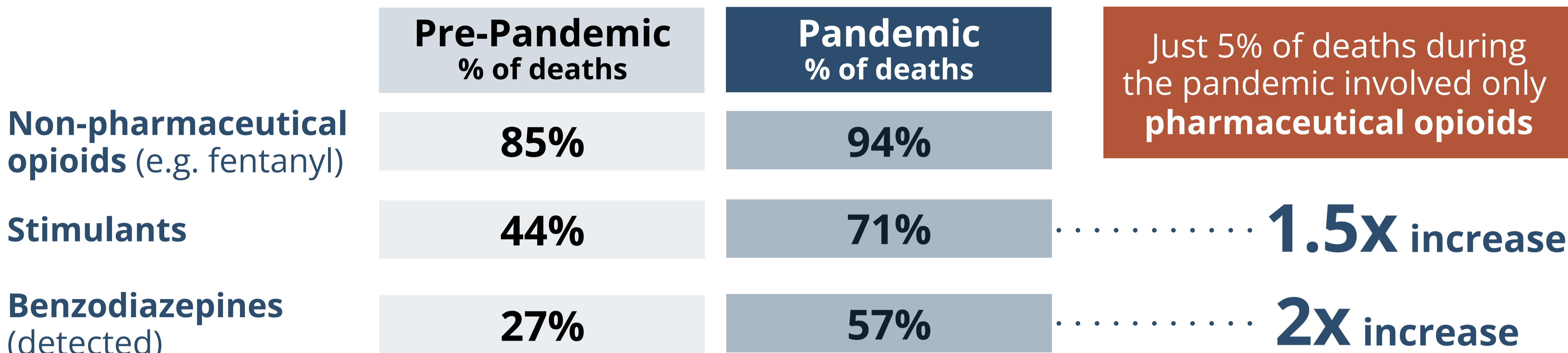
# Opioid-related toxicity deaths **within Ontario shelters** during the COVID-19 pandemic

**210**

Accidental opioid-related toxicity deaths within shelters between January 2018 and May 2022



## Substances Involved in Opioid-Related Death



The remainder of this infographic focuses on deaths in shelters **during the pandemic**

## Demographics



## Geography

The public health unit regions with the **highest rates** (per 100,000 population) of **opioid-related toxicity deaths** were:



## Mode of Drug Use

Smoking or inhalation of drugs increased during the pandemic

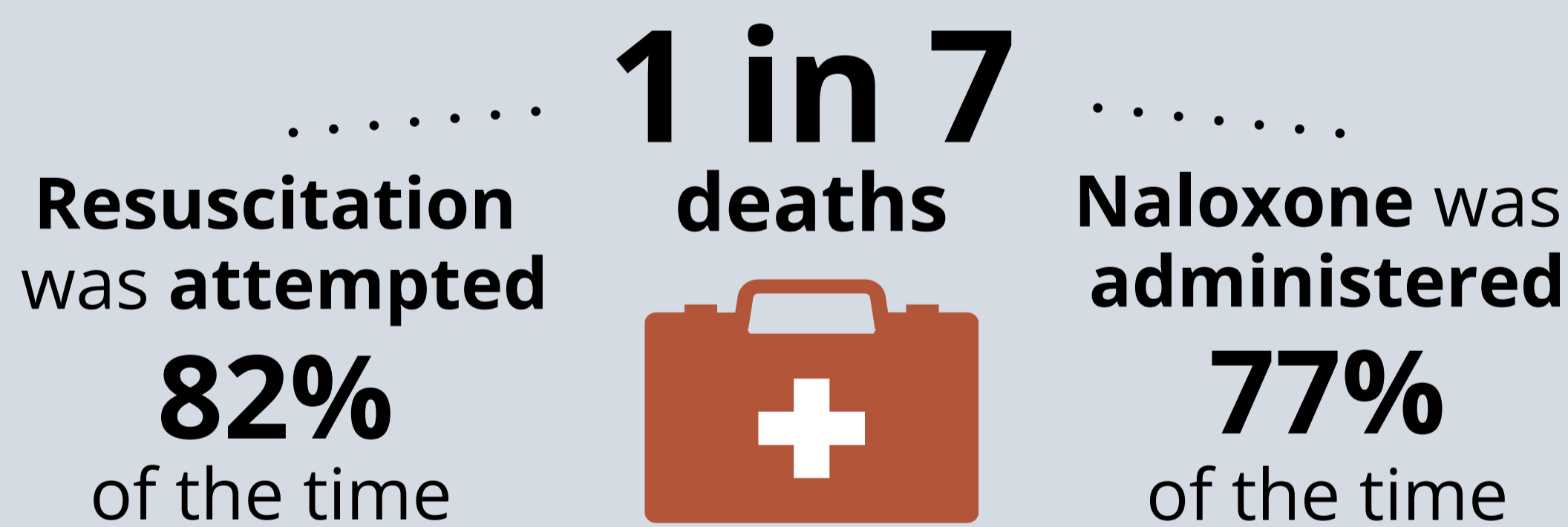


**51%** of opioid-related toxicity deaths involved **smoking and/or inhalation** (with or without injection)

**13%** involved injection alone

## Intervention

An individual was present and in a position to intervene in



## Previous Healthcare Encounters

About **1/2** of deaths occurred among people **with an opioid use disorder (OUD) diagnosis**  
 Only **1/3** of those with OUD received opioid agonist treatment in the month before death



People experiencing homelessness or unstable housing are disproportionately affected by the opioid toxicity crisis. The increase in deaths in shelters highlights the need to invest in expanded access to harm reduction services, connection to healthcare, social care, and treatment programs, and sufficient staff availability, training, and support in these settings.

**For more information:**  
 Hamzat B, Leece P, McCormack D, Holton A, Dodd Z, Firestone M, Wolfson-Stofko B, Smuts H, Sereda J, Smoke A, Watford J, Watts T, Shearer D, Schneider E, Singh S, Cheng C, Gomes T, on behalf of the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network and Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Opioid-related toxicity deaths within Ontario shelters: circumstances of death and prior medication & healthcare use. Toronto, ON: Ontario Drug Policy Research Network; 2024.

