Lives Lost to Opioid Toxicity among Ontarians Who Worked in the Construction Industry

People working in the construction industry are disproportionately impacted by the overdose crisis in Ontario. 2018 - 2020

"Construction workers" or "People who worked in construction" includes:
- Currently or previously employed in construction industry prior to death
- Trade, equipment operation, general labour, and other work
- Formal, informal, seasonal, and temporary employment

1 in 13 (8%) opioid toxicity deaths occurred among individuals in the construction industry. Representing 366 lives lost.

Construction workers who died of opioid toxicity

Over half (58%) were employed at time of death.

3 in 5 (60%) deaths occurred among those aged 25 to 44 years.

98% were male.

Drug involvement

Non-pharmaceutical opioids (mainly fentanyl) directly contributed to over 90% of deaths.

In contrast, opioids prescribed for pain contributed to only 11% of deaths.

Stimulants directly contributed to 56% of deaths, with 45% cocaine and 18% methamphetamine.

1 in 5 (18%) deaths involved alcohol.

Circumstances surrounding death

4 in 5 (79%) deaths occurred in a private residence.

<2% of deaths were at construction sites or motels/hotels used for work purposes.

Only 1 in 5 (18%) deaths had an individual present who could intervene.

Clinical characteristics

1 in 4 (24%) people had a healthcare encounter in the week before death.

Over three-quarters (76%) had an injury or pain diagnosis in the 5 years prior to death (mainly fractures, dislocations, strains or sprains, as well as low back pain).

3 in 5 (60%) had an indication of opioid use disorder (OUD).

Only 1 in 6 (17%) of those with an OUD diagnosis were dispensed any form of opioid antagonist treatment (OAT) in the month prior to death.

4 in 5 (82%) people had a healthcare encounter for a mental health diagnosis in the 5 years prior to death.

For more information