

# 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



**1 in 13**

(8%) opioid toxicity deaths occurred among individuals in the construction industry

Representing  
**366**  
lives lost

**"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

## 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

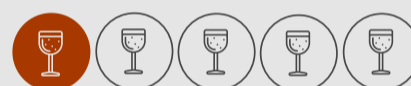
**45%**  
cocaine



**18%**  
methamphetamines

**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**

(78%) 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 agonist 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



Gomes T, Iacono A, Kolla G, Nunez E, Leece P, Wang T, Campbell T, Auger C, Boyce N, Doolittle M, Eswaran A, Kitchen S, Murray R, Shearer D, Singh S, Watford J. on behalf of the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network, Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario and Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Lives lost to opioid toxicity among Ontarians who worked in construction. Toronto, ON: Ontario Drug Policy Research Network; 2022.

