Drug Overdose Deaths in Ottawa, 2000-2015

- Based on the average of the last five years (2011-2015), 36 Ottawa residents die from unintentional\(^1\) drug overdose annually, representing 71% of the 51 total annual drug overdose deaths. Two-thirds of unintentional overdose deaths (24 per year) were due to opioids.
- During the most current year (2015) for which data are available, 48 Ottawa residents died from unintentional drug overdose; 60% (29) of these were due to opioids and in 14 deaths fentanyl was involved. Since 2014, fentanyl has been involved in the largest proportion of drug overdose deaths in Ottawa.
- Since 2001, Ottawa has had a lower rate of death from unintentional drug overdose than the rest of Ontario; however, in 2015 this gap narrowed because the rate of drug overdose increased 32% in Ottawa between 2014 and 2015, but only 6% in the rest of Ontario.
- Between 2000 to 2015, the rate of death due to unintentional drug overdose from any drug increased 23% in Ottawa and 139% in the rest of Ontario.
- The increase between 2000 and 2015 was gradual in the rest of Ontario. However, in Ottawa, there was a noticeable increase in unintentional drug overdose deaths in 2009.
- The increase in unintentional overdose deaths in Ottawa and in the rest of Ontario has been due to increased unintentional opioid overdose deaths.
- In Ottawa, unintentional overdose deaths due to opioids were 2.7 times higher during 2009–2015 (24 per year) compared to 2003–2008 (9 per year).
- In 2015, there was an increase in unintentional overdose deaths due to non-opioids (19 in that year compared to an average of 11 per year in the previous 5 years).
- An average of 1.8 times more men than women die of unintentional drug overdose (2011–2015).
- An average of 88% (21 per year) of unintentional opioid overdose deaths in Ottawa occurred among adults aged 20 to 59 (2011–2015).
- The number of overdoses due to injection drug use cannot be reliably estimated because mode of administration is not routinely or systematically captured in the death record.\(^2\)


Note that 2015 data are preliminary and subject to change once the statistical year has been completed. Drug data include toxicity due to drugs, and drugs and alcohol together.

\(^1\) Unintentional overdoses include deaths considered accidental (89% of unintentional) or of undetermined intent (11% of unintentional).

\(^2\) Personal communication. Andrew Stephen (Information Management Lead, Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario) and Louise McNaughton-Filion (Regional Supervising Coroner for Ottawa Region). April 14, 2016. Ottawa Public Health.