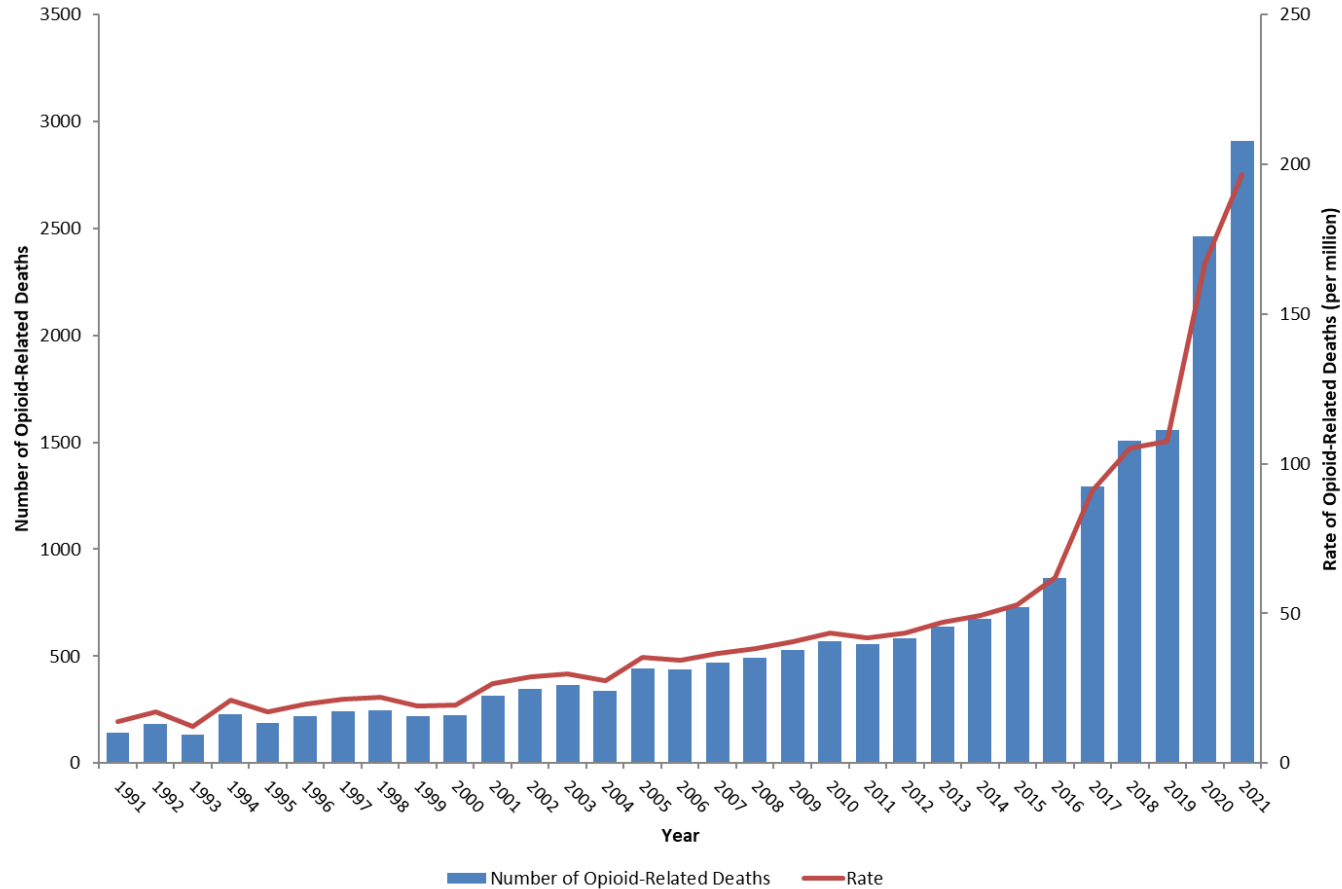


Using Evidence to Inform Action to Address the Opioid Toxicity Crisis

December 7, 2023

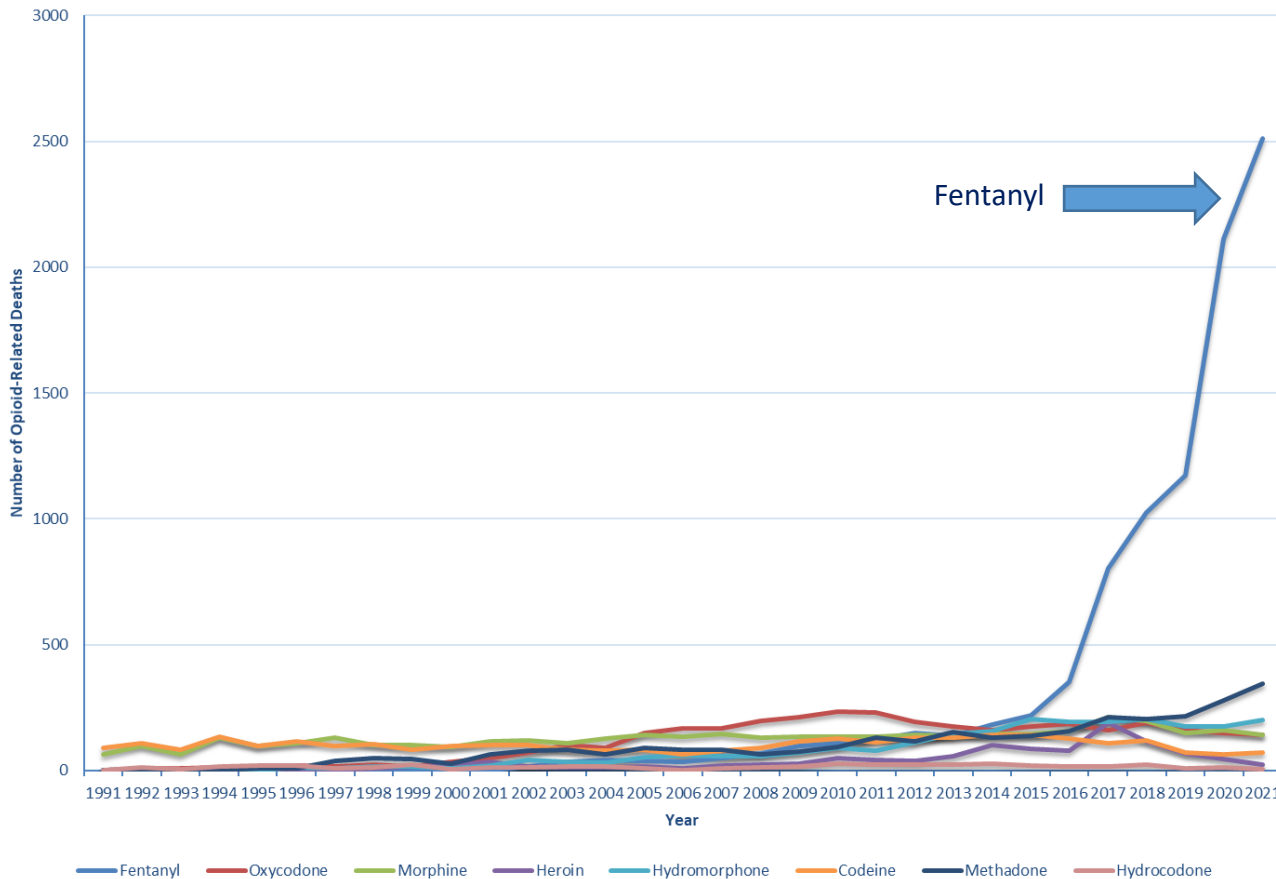
Tara Gomes, Principal Investigator, Ontario Drug Policy Research
Network

Evolution of the Opioid Toxicity Crisis



There was a **79% increase** in monthly opioid-related deaths in 2020, from **139 deaths in February 2020** to **249 deaths in December 2020**.

Evolution of the Opioid Toxicity Crisis



2020, Ontario

1 in 30 Deaths are Opioid-Related

Among Age 30-39, **1 in 3** Deaths are Opioid-Related

Important Patterns and Trends from Sudbury

1. Significant **rise** in deaths during COVID-19 pandemic leading to enormous public health impact
2. Deaths are primarily driven by the **unregulated drug supply** (fentanyl)
3. Increased **benzodiazepine** and **stimulant** involvement
4. **Inhalation** now more common than injection
5. Deaths occur primarily when **people use substances alone/in private residences**

Deaths among People Experiencing Homelessness

Deaths among People Experiencing Homelessness

Almost 1 in 6

opioid-related deaths during the pandemic occurred among people experiencing homelessness.

Opioid-related deaths among people experiencing homelessness increased by **139%** during the pandemic:



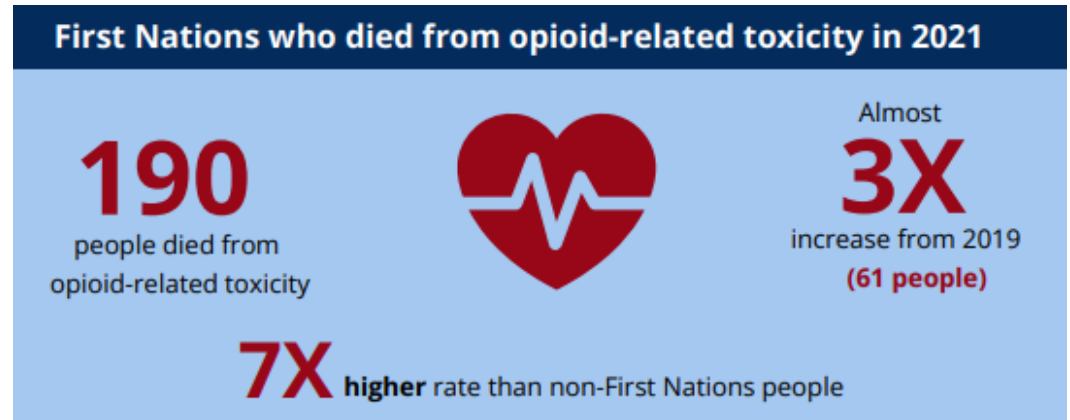
Nearly **1 in 10** of these deaths occurred within shelters or supportive housing.



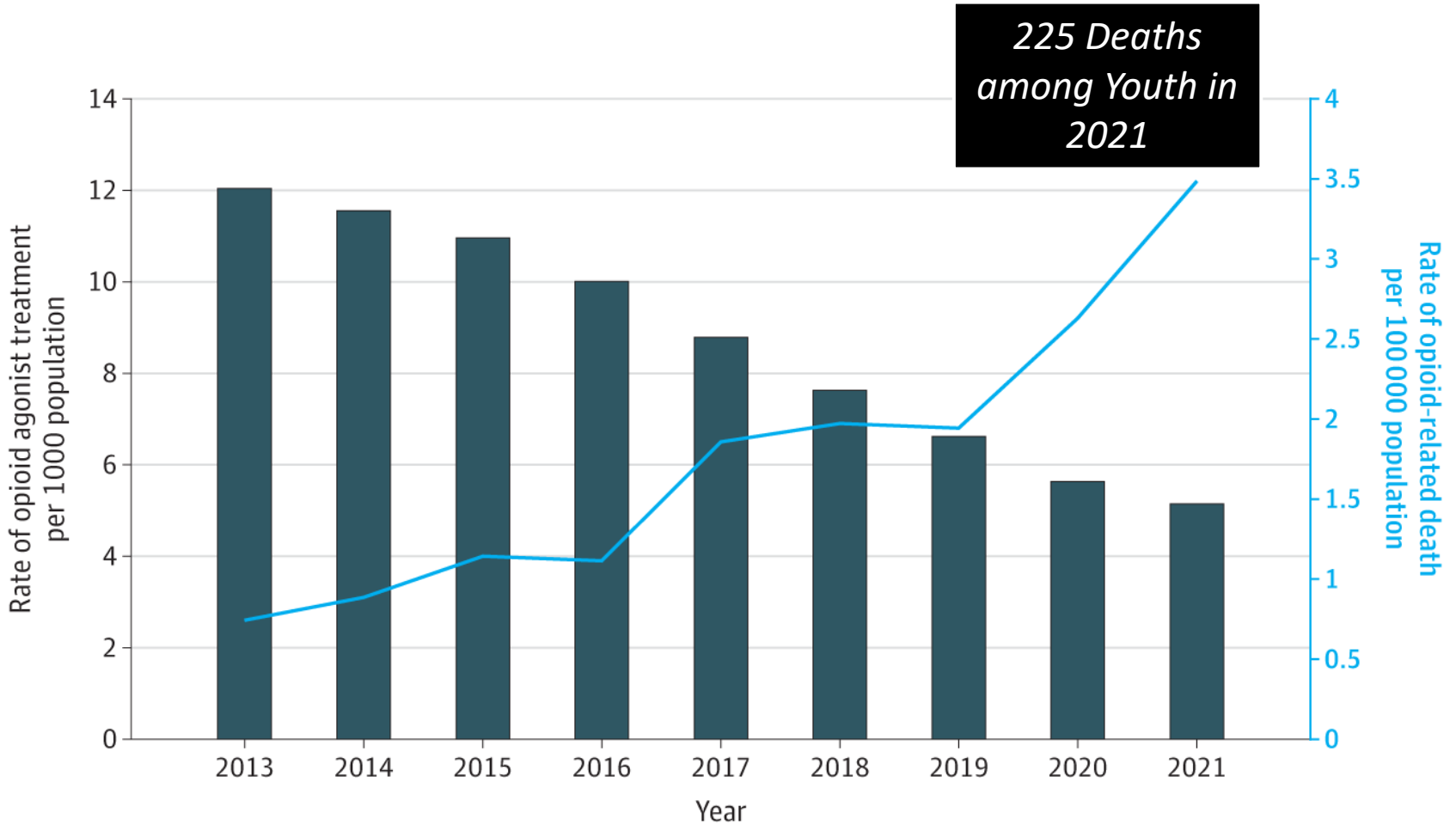
1 in 7 of these deaths occurred within hotels providing emergency shelter services.

59% of deaths among people experiencing homelessness in Toronto were attributed to drug toxicity (2021)

Disproportionate Impact Among First Nations People



Opioid-Related Harms in Youth (15-24yo)



Treatment as a Response

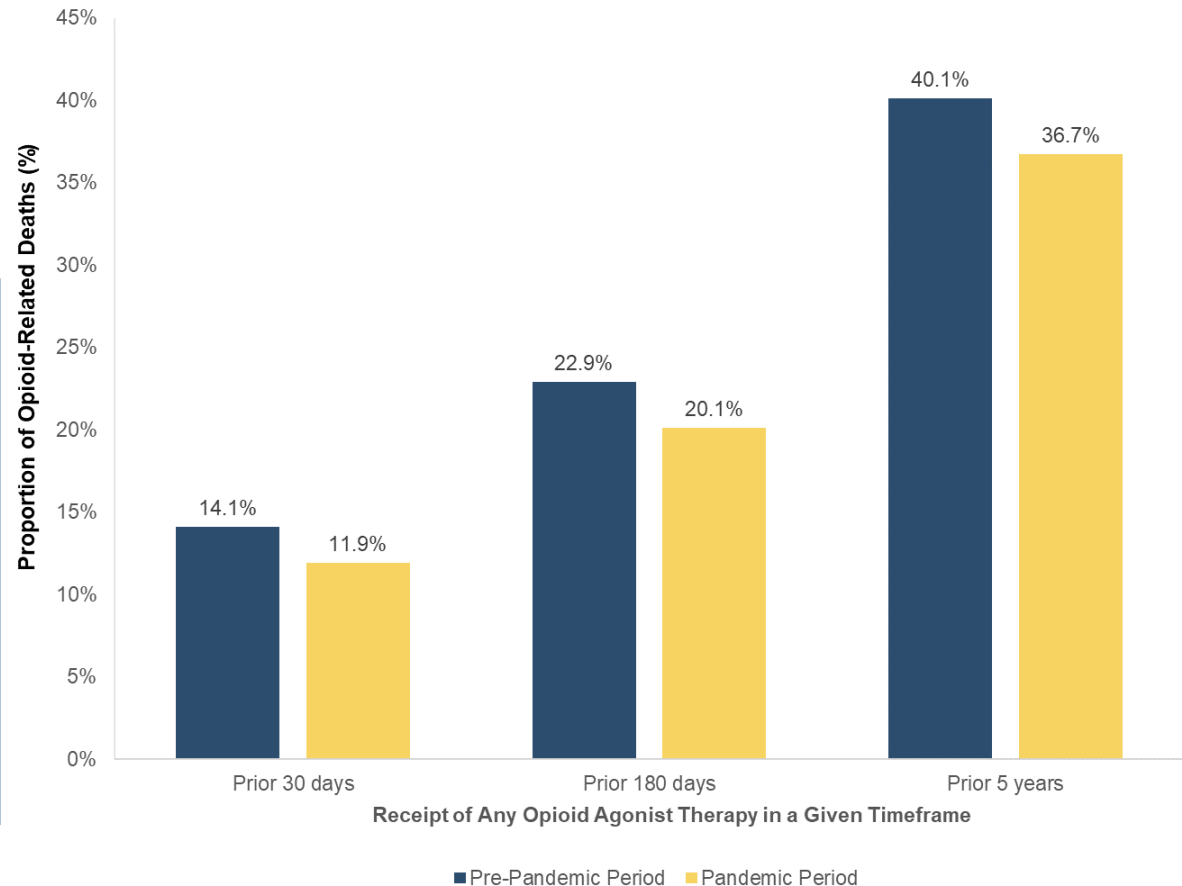
2 in 3

deaths occurred among people with a prior healthcare encounter related to opioid use disorder (OUD)

Median Time to Discontinuation of OAT:

181 days

Recent Receipt of OAT prior to death



Evidence to Inform Action

**Adaptations for Sparsely Populated
and Remote Communities**

**Ongoing Evidence Generation and
Evaluation**

Strengthening Pathways through Care



The need for options:

Supervised Consumption
Services

Low-Barrier Access to
Treatment

Safer Supply Programs

Drug Checking Services

Education

Services Tailored to
Specific Populations

Moving Forward



Engage



Learn



Adapt



Check-In

Questions?

Tara.Gomes@unityhealth.to
@Tara_Gomes