

# Let's Talk Overdose: The Hidden Pandemic

## Workshop 2G. COVID-19 and Overdose Prevention- Learnings from the Pandemic

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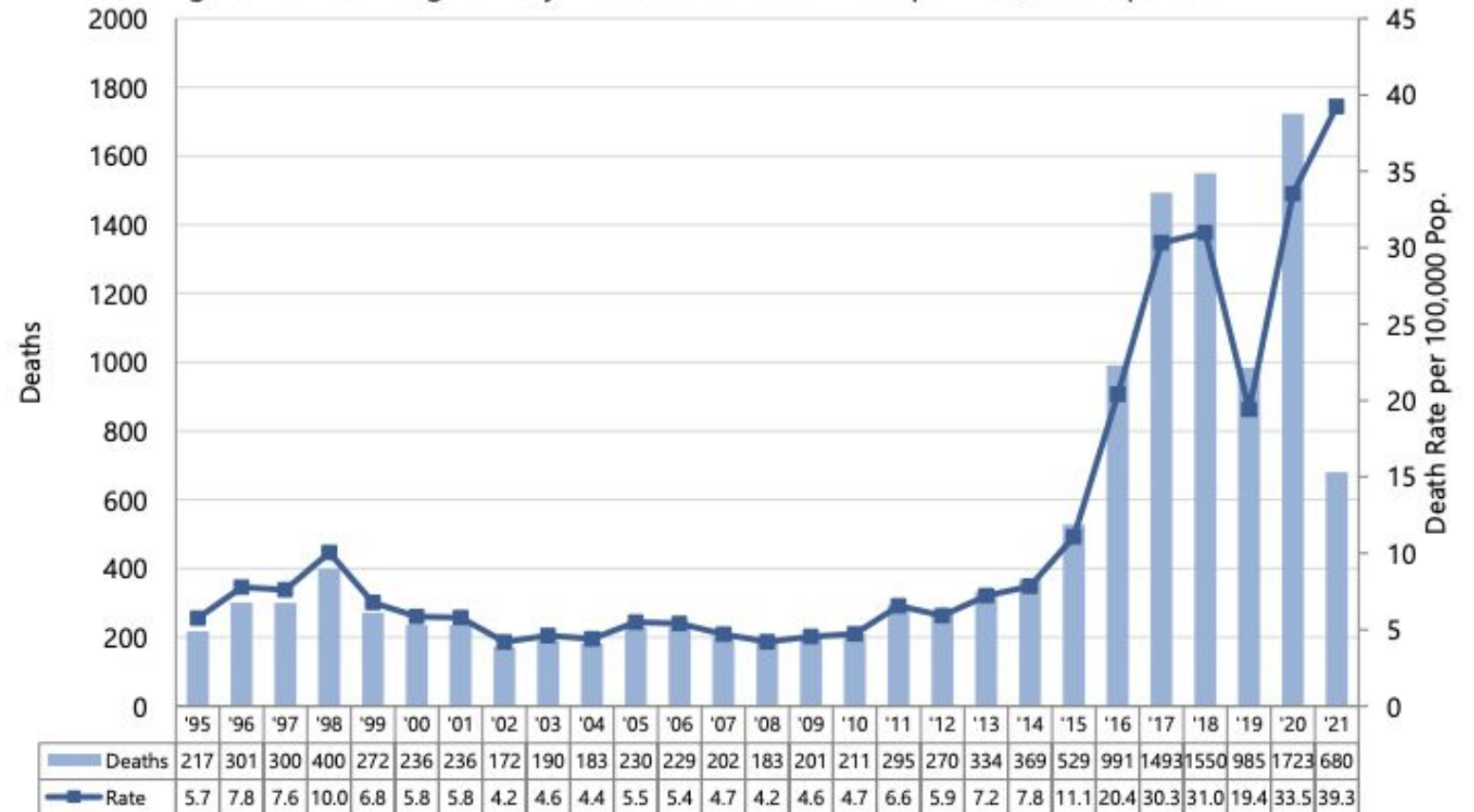
Department of Psychiatry  
Faculty of Medicine

# Workshop goals and objectives

- Explore events leading up to current overdose crisis
- Impact of COVID-19 on rates of overdose
- Draw parallels between COVID-19 and Overdose
- Hearing the different perspectives
- Working together through discussion

## Ongoing Overdose Crisis (Pre-COVID)

Figure 1: Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths and Death Rate per 100,000 Population <sup>[3,5]</sup>

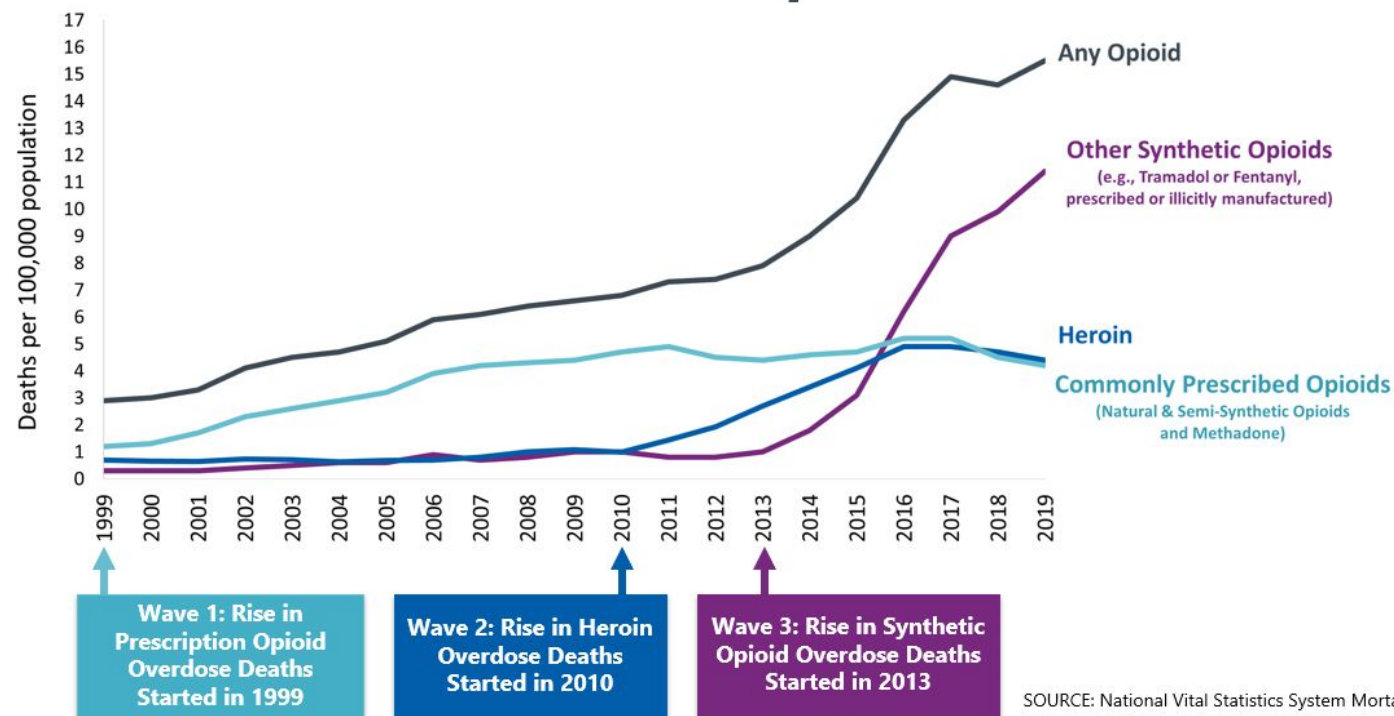


Retrieved from: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/coroners-service/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

# Events leading up to the overdose crisis

**Discussion question:** What are possible driving factors for the dramatic increase in overdose in 2015 and 2016?

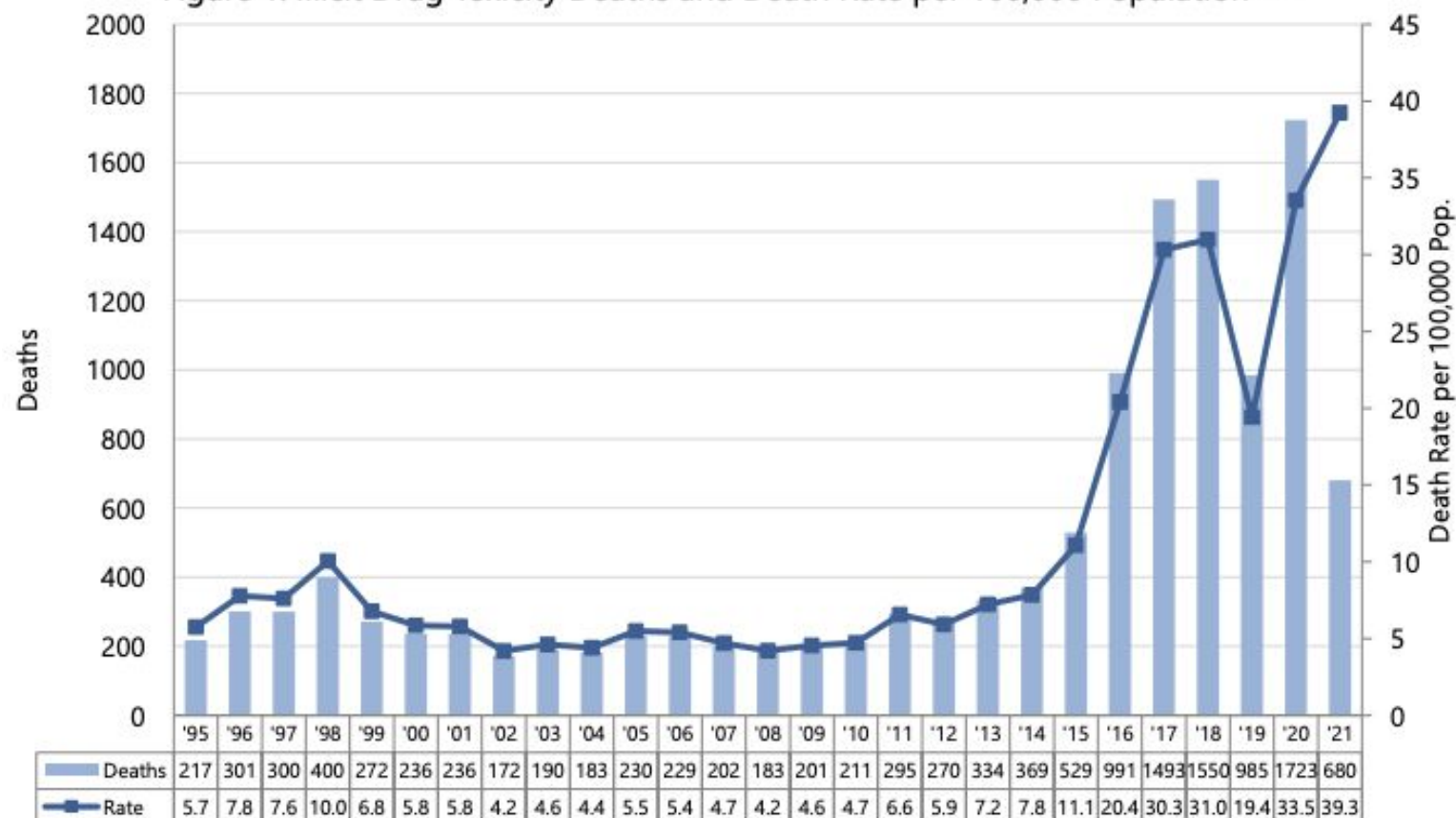
## Three Waves of the Rise in Opioid Overdose Deaths



Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html>

## Ongoing Overdose Crisis (Post-COVID)

Figure 1: Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths and Death Rate per 100,000 Population <sup>[3,5]</sup>



Retrieved from: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/coroners-service/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

# Public health emergency: April 2016

Table 1: Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths by Month, British Columbia, 2011-2021 <sup>[3]</sup>											
Month	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Jan	24	20	20	23	43	85	147	134	94	80	185
Feb	24	17	21	38	31	58	124	108	85	75	159
Mar	25	25	33	28	32	76	130	158	116	112	160
Apr	27	31	31	29	34	72	154	135	83	123	176
Subtotal	100	93	105	118	140	291	555	535	378	390	680
May	22	19	28	40	41	51	149	119	88	177	-
Jun	22	25	25	29	34	71	128	116	74	185	-
Jul	33	29	39	25	40	74	123	147	75	183	-
Aug	22	20	21	37	53	64	127	123	84	159	-
Sep	22	16	28	32	50	63	97	136	61	137	-
Oct	23	19	19	35	53	76	98	118	79	173	-
Nov	27	28	31	28	52	140	112	131	83	163	-
Dec	24	21	38	25	66	161	104	124	64	159	-
Total	295	270	334	369	529	991	1,493	1,549	986	1,726	680
Average	24.6	22.5	27.8	30.8	44.1	82.6	124.4	129.1	82.2	143.8	170.0

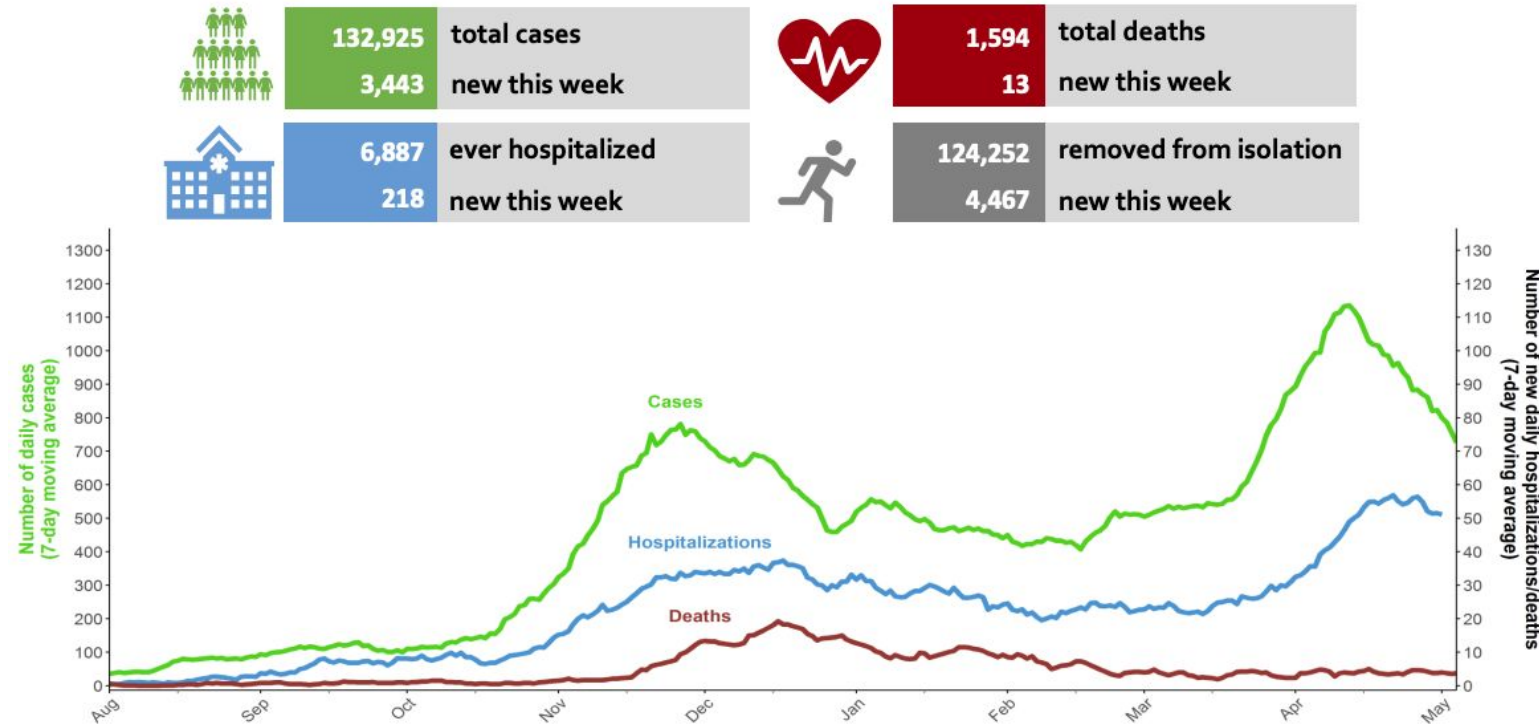
5.9  
deaths/day

632



# Drawing comparisons to COVID-19

## April 30 to May 6: BC COVID-19 Profile





# Who is most vulnerable?

**Discussion question:** Which subpopulation saw the greatest increase in overdose during COVID-19? Any thoughts on why?

# Social Factors

- Health disparities
- Race and ethnicity
- Treatment and access
- Systemic issues

# Clinical Factors

- Physical health issues
- Hospitalization and isolation
- Mental health and illness



Artist: Said Ali Akhlaqi (Kabul, Afghanistan)

# Location and Regional Shifts?

•Retrieved from:  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/coroners-service/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

**Table 2: Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths by Place of Injury, BC, 2018-2021<sup>[3]</sup>**

	2018	2019	2020	2021
side:				
Private Residence	925 (59.7%)	568 (57.6%)	971 (56.3%)	379 (55.7%)
Other Residence	371 (23.9%)	259 (26.3%)	453 (26.3%)	182 (26.8%)
Correctional facility/police cell	5 (0.3%)	4 (0.4%)	5 (0.3%)	2 (0.3%)
Medical facility	5 (0.3%)	5 (0.5%)	5 (0.3%)	5 (0.7%)
Occupational site	6 (0.4%)	5 (0.5%)	5 (0.3%)	3 (0.4%)
Public building				
Public washroom	23 (1.5%)	11 (1.1%)	6 (0.4%)	2 (0.3%)
Other area of building	11 (0.7%)	7 (0.7%)	13 (0.8%)	6 (0.9%)
Outside	193 (12.5%)	120 (12.2%)	248 (14.4%)	94 (13.8%)
Unknown	10 (0.7%)	7 (0.7%)	20 (1.2%)	7 (1.0%)
Total	1,549	986	1,726	680

**Table 3: Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths by Place of Injury and Health Authority, BC, 2018-2021<sup>[3]</sup>**

	Interior	Fraser	Vancouver Coastal	Vancouver Island	Northern
Inside:					
Private Residence	501 (65.6%)	1,177 (71.2%)	486 (34.8%)	455 (58.1%)	224 (64.9%)
Other Residence	150 (19.6%)	198 (12.0%)	662 (47.5%)	190 (24.3%)	65 (18.8%)
Other Inside	24 (3.1%)	53 (3.2%)	34 (2.4%)	14 (1.8%)	9 (2.6%)
Outside	84 (11.0%)	212 (12.8%)	201 (14.4%)	114 (14.6%)	44 (12.8%)
Unknown	5 (0.7%)	14 (0.9%)	12 (0.9%)	10 (1.3%)	3 (0.9%)
Total	764	1,654	1,395	783	345

# Experiences and concerns

**Discussion question:** What are possible approaches to mitigate the crisis from continuing to escalate? With COVID-19 cases decreasing, will its impact on opioid overdose also decrease?

# Opinions of those in BC

- Total sample of 659
- 3 age groups
- 6 provincial regions

INNERCHANGE FOUNDATION JULY 2020  
PUBLIC POLL

## Sample Population

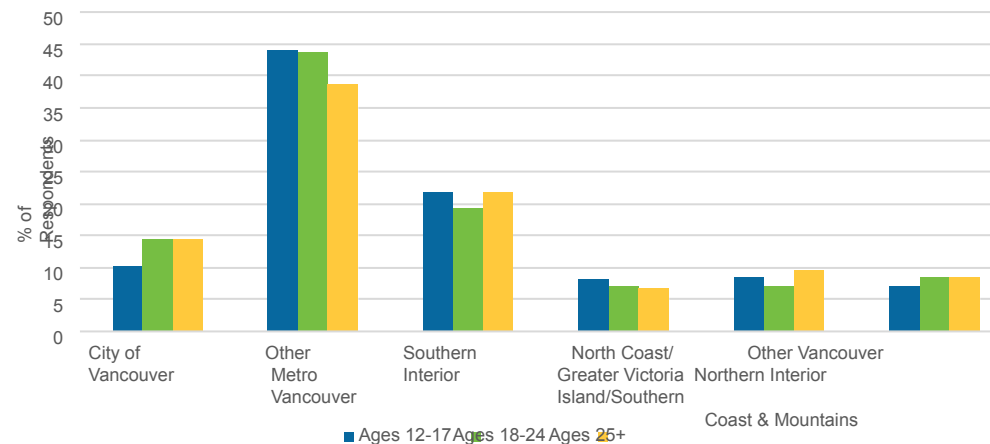


Youth currently attending high school  
Ages 12-17  
80 men, 76 women  
**156 total responses**

Young adults  
Ages 18-24  
53 men, 50 women, 1 other  
**103 total responses**

Adults  
Ages 25+  
193 men, 206 women, 1 other  
**400 total responses**

## Regional Representation per Age Group:



## Opioid crisis hits close to home

The province declared the opioid overdose crisis as a public health emergency in 2016.

Since 2016, there have been 6,434 fatalities due to illicit drugs.

Record number of overdose deaths in the past 6 months here in BC with 160 and 176 in March and April 2021.

**29% of young adults** said a peer aged 18-24 had experienced a drug overdose.

**38% of adults 25+** know someone personally who has had an overdose.

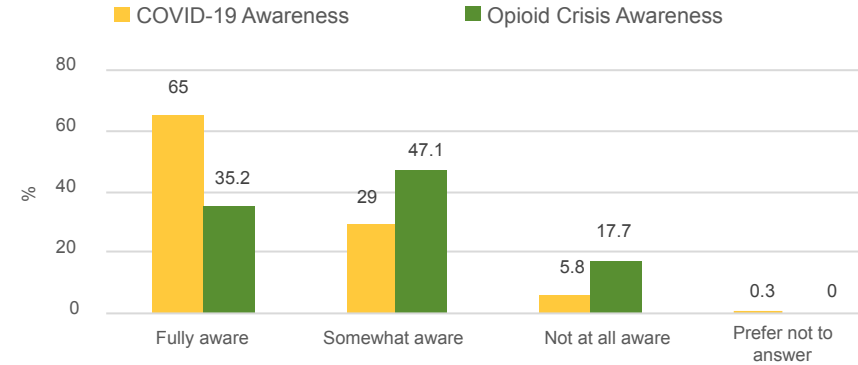


**Those who are at risk for overdose need to be in treatment, but only approximately 24% are in treatment.**



## Awareness

Despite overdose deaths reaching record highs in B.C., in contrast to awareness about COVID-19, the awareness about the opioid overdose crisis is lower.



58% felt the public health response to the drug overdose crisis in B.C. has been somewhat insufficient or not





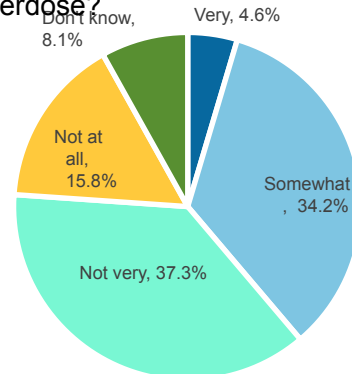
## Knowledge

Our youth need more knowledge about high risk substance use, overdose, ways to recognize and mitigate an overdose situation and the relationship between mental health and substance use.

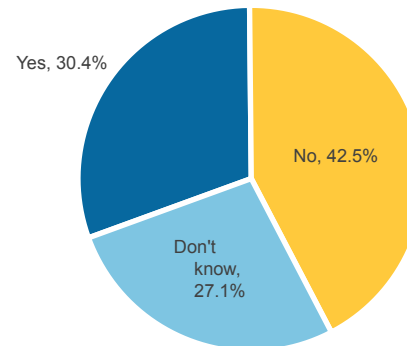


For youth enrolled in high school in B.C., 30% said they have not learned about different addictive substances from teachers in school.

How confident are you in knowing how to tell if a person is having a drug overdose?

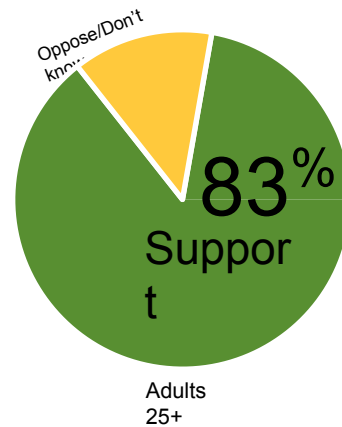
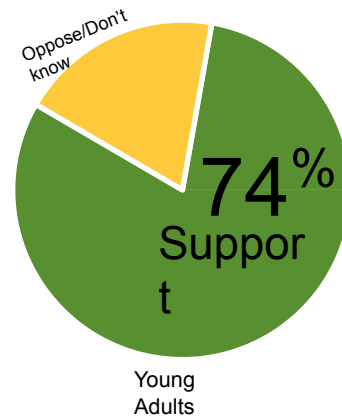


Are you aware of any ways that a person who uses drugs can decrease the chance of an overdose?

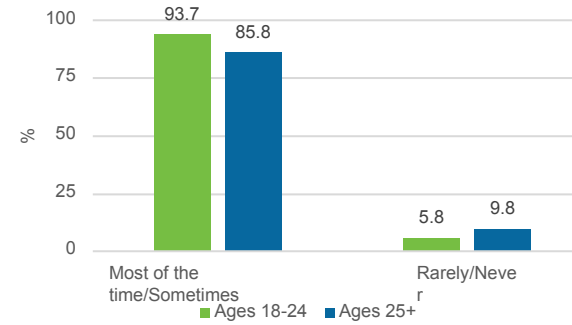


## Prevention Programs

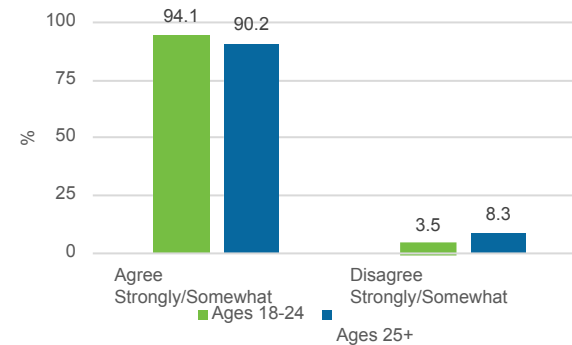
74% of young adults and 83% of 25+ are supportive of our provincial government making prevention of high-risk substance use and overdose a higher priority and spending a larger budget on it.



Do you think addiction to high-risk substances is preventable?

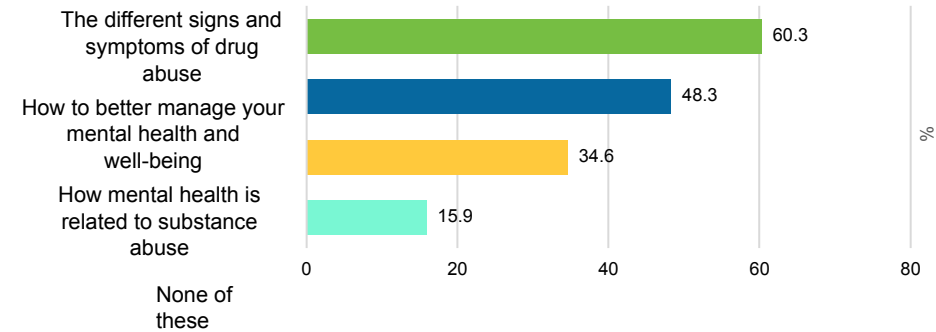


To what extent do you agree that effective preventive strategies could save healthcare money by having fewer people need treatment for drug addiction?

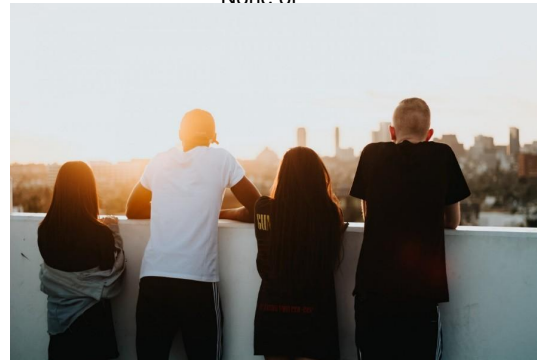
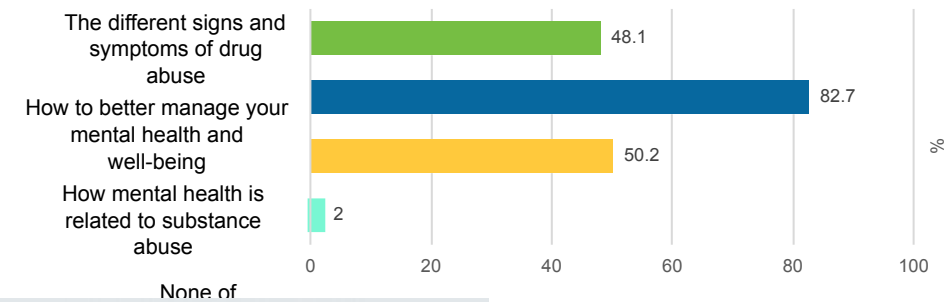


## Educating Youth

The majority of youth in highschool want a program about substance use and mental health



In hindsight, most young adults indicated they would have wanted a more intensive program in high school.



Full details of poll results are available for download:

[Innerchange.org](https://innerchange.org)

# Conclusions

We need cross-system approaches:

- Treatment
- Awareness
- Education
- Prevention and Early Intervention
- And???