While the majority of deaths continued to occur in large urban areas and private residences, during the pandemic:

### Demographics

The vast majority of these deaths continue to be accidental.

#### An emerging trend during the pandemic is greater opioid-related deaths in neighbourhoods with higher

#### Ethno-Cultural Diversity

#### Material Deprivation

### Drugs Involved

Compared to before the pandemic:

- **Fentanyl** was more commonly a direct contributor to opioid-related deaths.
- **Etizolam** was more commonly detected in a post-mortem toxicology.
- **Cocaine** directly contributed to significantly more opioid-related deaths.

This may be due to:

- Increased reliance on Unregulated drug supplies.
- Decreased access to prescription opioids.

In 3/4 of opioid-related deaths during the pandemic, no one was present to intervene.

During the pandemic, there were fewer resuscitation attempts and less naloxone administration compared to before the pandemic.

### Location

While the majority of deaths continued to occur in large urban areas and private residences, during the pandemic:

The public health unit regions reporting the greatest increases in the number of opioid-related deaths were:

- **Toronto Public Health**
- **Peel Public Health**
- **City of Hamilton Public Health Services**

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**The Opioid Overdose Crisis**
Opioid-related deaths across Canada have been an ongoing public health crisis for over a decade. Between January and March 2020 alone, 1,018 opioid-related deaths were recorded in Canada, the majority of which were accidental.

### The COVID-19 Pandemic

A state of emergency was declared in Ontario on March 17, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequent physical distancing measures resulted in reduced capacity for pharmacies and harm reduction sites, and may have led to social isolation, lack of access to a regular drug supply, and disruptions in care that increased risks of drug-related overdose and death.

An average of 34 deaths per week occurred in Ontario during the 3.5 months before the pandemic. This increased to 46 deaths weekly in the first 3.5 months of the pandemic, a 38% increase.

If current trends continue, 2,271 opioid-related deaths are expected in 2020, compared to 1,512 in 2019.

An emerging trend during the pandemic is greater opioid-related deaths in neighbourhoods with higher

- **Ethno-Cultural Diversity**
- **Material Deprivation**

The proportion of opioid-related deaths among men increased from 70% pre-pandemic to 78% during the pandemic.

**Drugs Involved**

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#### Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto Public Health</td>
<td>Fewer opioid-related deaths occurred in public indoor spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peel Public Health</td>
<td>More opioid-related deaths occurred in public outdoor spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Hamilton Public Health Services</td>
<td>Fewer opioid-related deaths occurred in hotels, inns, and motels.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>