

FIRST NATIONS AND THE TOXIC DRUG POISONING CRISIS IN BC

VANCOUVER COASTAL | JANUARY - DECEMBER 2023



Harm reduction efforts are saving lives but drug toxicity continues at record high levels affecting First Nations families and communities across BC.

The data presented here is specific to the Vancouver Coastal Region.

Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths
Of First Nations People

150

↑ 12.8%
Increase over 2022

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE DIED FROM TOXIC DRUG POISONINGS IN 2023.

This is a 12.8% increase from the 133 deaths in 2022.

Deaths of
First Nations People
BY GENDER

♂ 66.0%
Male

♀ 34.0%
Female

Deaths of
First Nations People
BY AGE

60.0%
40 Years and Older

40.0%
Younger than 40

Rate of
Toxic Drug Poisoning Death

12.6x

First Nations people experienced a death rate 12.6x higher than other residents of the region.

First Nations People are Disproportionately Represented in
Toxic Drug Poisoning Deaths

2.1%

First Nations people make up 2.1% of the region's population.

20.7%

20.7% of toxic drug poisoning deaths in 2023 were First Nations people.



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

This data includes only Status First Nations people and their status-eligible descendants. Additionally, our data is limited to biological sex at birth, which may misidentify two-spirit, transgender, non-binary, intersex, and gender diverse people. Data are collected as of February 2024, and are subject to change.

The FNHA gratefully acknowledges the health partners that make this data available: BC Centre for Disease Control, BC Coroners Service, BC Emergency Health Services, and the BC Ministry of Health.

You may find this information distressing. Cultural support is available at Tsow Tun Le Lum Society. Call 1-888-403-3123 (toll-free) or visit www.tsowtunlelum.org



Toxic Drug Poisoning Events involving First Nations People

940

↑ 17.5%
Increase over 2022

TOXIC DRUG POISONING EVENTS EXPERIENCED BY FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE IN 2023

This is an increase of 17.5% from 800 events experienced in 2022.

13.0x First Nations people experienced an event rate 13.0x higher than other residents of the region.

Events of First Nations People BY GENDER

♂ 62.2%
Male

♀ 37.8%
Female

Events of First Nations People BY AGE

48.7%
40 Years and Older

51.3%
Younger than 40

First Nations People are Disproportionately Represented in Toxic Drug Poisoning events

2.1%

21.2%

First Nations people make up 2.1% of the region's population.

21.2% of toxic drug poisoning events in 2023 were First Nations people.

NOTES

- Most toxic drug poisoning events are non-fatal and represent when paramedics were called and responded to a poisoning. Events that were treated successfully in community and events where 9-1-1 was not called are not captured in this data
- Event data is only collected for people with documented BC Personal Health Numbers (PHNs), and is therefore likely an underestimate, due to missing PHNs for some events

REGIONAL WELLNESS AND CULTURAL SUPPORTS

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Emotional and Cultural Support

Tsow Tun Le Lum Society – Call 1-888-403-3123 (toll-free) or visit www.tsowtunlelum.org

Indian Residential School Crisis Line Call toll-free 1-866-925-4419.

KUU-US Crisis Service – Call 1-800-KUU-US17 (588-8717). 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

Hope for Wellness Help Line offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention. Call toll-free 1-855-242-3310 or start a confidential chat at www.hopeforwellness.ca

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868

KUU-US Youth Crisis Line 250-723-2040