In 2016, British Columbia’s provincial health officer declared a public health emergency in response to a rise in illicit drug overdoses and related deaths. Between 2011 and 2016 there were 2,362 confirmed illicit drug overdose deaths in British Columbia and 332 in Surrey alone.

Statistics Canada, in partnership with the BC Coroners Service, City of Surrey, Surrey Fire Service, Surrey RCMP Detachment, Fraser Health Authority, BC Stats, BC Centre for Disease Control, BC Ministry of Health and Public Safety Canada, is undertaking a project to assess the social-economic determinants of the drug overdose crisis by leveraging and integrating various administrative databases. The first focus of analysis involves the integration of illicit drug overdose deaths with employment and social assistance data, health and hospitalization records, and criminal justice system contacts.

### Employment and Social Assistance

#### Number of Years Employed in the 5 Years Prior to Death

- **British Columbia**
  - 0 years: 12%
  - 1 year: 11%
  - 2 years: 11%
  - 3 years: 13%
  - 4 years: 11%
  - 5 years: 26%

- **Surrey**
  - 0 years: 15%
  - 1 year: 14%
  - 2 years: 13%
  - 3 years: 11%
  - 4 years: 13%
  - 5 years: 25%

A similar proportion were employed in each of the 5 years preceding their overdose death, many of them in the construction industry.

#### Industry of Last Main Job in the 5 Years Prior to Death

- Construction
- Building maintenance, clean up, management and other support services
- Accommodation and food service
- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Manufacturing
- Transportation and warehousing

#### Number of Years of Receiving Social Assistance Benefits in the 5 Years Prior to Death

- **British Columbia**
  - 0 years: 5%
  - 1 year: 8%
  - 2 years: 8%
  - 3 years: 8%
  - 4 years: 8%
  - 5 years: 20%

- **Surrey**
  - 0 years: 10%
  - 1 year: 11%
  - 2 years: 8%
  - 3 years: 8%
  - 4 years: 8%
  - 5 years: 23%

Approximately 3 in 10 decedents had no earnings in the 5 years prior to their fatal overdose.

Approximately 40% of decedents did not receive any social assistance in the 5 years prior to death, 31% of decedents in British Columbia and 28% in Surrey received social assistance benefits every year.

### Contact with Police

#### Frequency of Contact with the Police in the 24 Months Prior to Death

- **British Columbia**
  - No contact: 14%
  - One contact: 24%
  - Two contacts: 12%
  - Three contacts: 10%
  - Four or more contacts: 20%

- **Surrey**
  - No contact: 11%
  - One contact: 23%
  - Two contacts: 6%
  - Three contacts: 5%
  - Four or more contacts: 11%

#### Reasons for Contact with the Police in the 24 Months Prior to Death

- Shopping & crime
- Disturb the peace
- Fail to comply with order
- Breach of probation
- Assault & assault
- Arrest & arrest
- Mischief
- Breaking and entering
- Other

Decedents were disproportionally involved in incidents of shoplifting and administration of justice offences, including fail to comply with order and breach of probation.

#### Hospitalizations and Emergency Department Visits

#### Proportion of Decedents with a Police Contact, by Time Elapsed between their Last Police Contact and Fatal Overdose, Cumulative Percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time period prior to fatal overdose</th>
<th>British Columbia</th>
<th>Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 month prior to fatal overdose</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months prior to fatal overdose</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months prior to fatal overdose</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months prior to fatal overdose</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 months prior to fatal overdose</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 months prior to fatal overdose</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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