

UNDERSTANDING OPIOID TOXICITY AMONG INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN CUSTODY

WHAT WE DID

We looked at **all opioid toxicity (overdose) deaths** in Ontario from 2015-2020.

We identified who had been in provincial custody and **who was Indigenous.**

We studied opioid toxicity deaths and the **characteristics of those who died.**

We **gathered insights** from service providers and people with lived/living experience.

KEY FINDINGS

242

242 Indigenous people who experienced incarceration died from opioid toxicity while in custody or after release.

10x

For Indigenous people, the risk of death from opioid toxicity increased by **10 times** from the time in custody to the month after release. Over this six-year period, **37** Indigenous people died within 1 month of release.

81x
WOMEN

Indigenous women who experienced incarceration were **81 times** more likely to die from opioid toxicity than women with no incarceration experience.

24x
MEN

Indigenous men who experienced incarceration were **24 times** more likely to die from opioid toxicity than men with no incarceration experience.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Support health **in custody** and **on release** through various strategies:



Increase access to Indigenous-led programs in custody, including access to:

Native Inmate Liaison Officers (NILOs) & Elders

trauma-informed healing

culturally-grounded programming

inreach programs by community-based organizations



Address systemic racism in custody through:

mandatory cultural safety training for all staff

structural reform



Strengthen harm reduction access in custody through:

discrete access to supplies & information



Support safer transitions on release by supporting access to:

housing

ID & documentation

transportation

social assistance & financial supports

health care & addiction supports



Reduce criminal justice system harms:

shift toward greater health & community supports

reduce stigma

For any inquiries about the project, please contact health@nwac.ca or kouyouf@mcmaster.ca