

## **Document 1- Mental Health and Substance Use Health Data During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Ottawa Mental Health Data** (as outlined in the *Status of Mental Health in Ottawa During the COVID-19 Pandemic Reports*)

- People are experiencing increased mental health challenges due to the pandemic
- In both June (2020) and October (2020) 40% of people reported their mental health as 'fair or poor', compared to 9% pre-pandemic
- Ottawa residents have reported that their positive coping strategies are being challenged, particularly those that have also reported worse mental health
  - 61% are getting less physical activity compared to 40% before the pandemic
  - 49% are getting less sleep compared to 23% before the pandemic
  - 30% are consuming more alcohol compared to 20%
  - 10% are taking more prescription drugs compared to 4% before the pandemic
  - 77% are spending more time on social media compared to 63 % before the pandemic
- One-quarter (25%) of Ottawa residents said there was a time in the past two weeks when they wanted to talk to someone about something on their mind, including their emotional or mental health, but did not know where to turn
- Ottawa residents are concerned about:
  - Burning out because they have not had a break
  - Losing supports
  - Weaker sense of community belonging
  - Increased sense of loneliness
- Sub-groups within our community are reporting more difficulty
  - Visible minority or racialized community members
  - People living with a disability
  - Women

- People that are new to Canada
- People with a household income under \$60,000
- People under 45 years of age
- Parents
  - Although from the June to October report, the reopening of schools had a slight positive impact on the mental well-being of parents

**Ottawa Substance Use Health Data** (as outlined from local partners and the *Status of Mental Health in Ottawa During the COVID-19 Pandemic Report, results of a population survey June 3 to 8, 2020 and Opioid Overdose Data available on OPH's website*)

- Suspected drug related overdose deaths increased from 124 in 2019 to 218 in 2020, a 75% increase
- Confirmed opioid overdose-related deaths in Ottawa approximately doubled from 65 in 2019 to 124 in 2020. These counts represent a subset of the 218 deaths reported above
- In 84 percent of cases, Fentanyl or a form of Fentanyl directly contributed to the opioid-overdose related death. In 2021, 48 % of opioid-related overdose deaths in Ottawa were among people aged 25-44, followed by 39% among people aged 45 to 64.
- Sharp increases in deaths involving stimulants in Ontario have been noted.<sup>1</sup> The Office of the Chief Coroner has noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario, there was a significant increase in the percentage of opioid-related deaths with stimulants as a contributing factor, driven by cocaine involvement in these deaths.<sup>2</sup>
- Ottawa Paramedic Service has also noted a similar trend in responses to overdose calls requiring Naloxone, a medication used to block the effects of opioids. Between January to May 15, 2021, paramedics responded to 98 calls requiring the administration of Naloxone. This was a 72% increase, compared to the same five-month period in 2020, when paramedics responded to 57 overdose calls with a Naloxone administration
- To date in 2021, Ottawa Police Service has responded to 240 calls for service involving overdoses, with 26 calls requiring the administration of Naloxone. Ottawa Police Service continues to work closely with OPH supporting the Naloxone distribution and safe supply program.

- The average number of opioid overdose emergency department visits per quarter almost doubled between 2017 and 2020 (109 vs.197 visits respectively), and the number of visits in Q1 and Q2 of 2021 has already exceeded the total observed for the entire year in 2017 and 2018 (and is close to the total observed for the entire year of 2019)
- August 2020 had the highest counts for emergency department visits for opioid overdose in Ottawa (120 visits) since enhanced emergency department data reporting began in April of 2017.
- From the *Status of Mental Health in Ottawa During the COVID-19 Pandemic Report, results of a population survey June 3 to 8, 2020*, the following was found in relationship to Ottawans being asked whether some of their behaviours have changed since before the closure of non-essential businesses and schools in mid-March 2020. The behaviours represent factors that can influence a person and family's mental health.
  - 24% consuming more alcohol
  - 9% consuming more cannabis
  - 6% Smoking cigarettes, vaping or using e-cigarettes
  - 7% Taking more prescription drugs
  - 4% Taking more non-prescription drugs

### **Mental Health and Substance Use Health Issues Exacerbated by the Pandemic**

In addition to the data presented in the background section, there have been concerning issues raised by partners and community members in relation to mental health and substance use health, and we know that there are groups within our community who have been disproportionately affected. The pandemic exacerbated anti-Asian racism,<sup>3</sup> new Canadians and racialized people reported worsening mental health compared to others,<sup>4</sup> and representatives from many First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities have cited an increased need for mental health supports.<sup>5</sup> Women have reported worse mental health both due to added pressures with childcare and factors that have increased risk for gender-based violence,<sup>6</sup> and there has been a disturbing trend of maltreatment injuries of infants with regards for which experts stated that part of the reason is due to the stress experienced by parents in the pandemic.<sup>7</sup> Parents and service providers have also stated worrying trends that they are seeing with their children and youth during the pandemic. Concerns include mental health issues,<sup>8 9</sup> eating disorders,<sup>10</sup> and the long-term impacts of school closures.<sup>11</sup> In a survey by Stats Canada, it was found that Ontario had the largest increase in people consuming

alcohol, with 30% of people increasing how much they drink. The same report found that 34% of Canadians who previously used cannabis had increased their consumption over the past year.<sup>12</sup> There has been a sharp rise in opioid overdose deaths<sup>13</sup> which has increased the calls to advance the decriminalization of people who use controlled substances<sup>14</sup> and the calls for the Federal Government to declare the opioid crisis a national emergency.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario), Stimulant Harms Snapshot 2021. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/substance-use/stimulant-harms>.

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Drug Policy Research Network, et al., Preliminary Patterns in Circumstances Surrounding Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario during the COVID-19 Pandemic. 2020: Toronto. Available from: <https://odprn.ca/research/publications/preliminary-patterns-in-circumstances-surrounding-opioid-related-deaths-in-ontario-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ottawa Citizen. (Jan 06, 2021). [Pandemic has created a 'new form of anti-Asian racism,' says city](#)

<sup>4</sup> CP24. (Jan 13, 2021) [Women, single parents and new Canadians feeling brunt of mental health burden of COVID-19, new poll suggests](#)

<sup>5</sup> CTV News. (March 24, 2021) [Indigenous communities need more mental health support in wake of COVID-19: report](#)

<sup>6</sup> CP24. (Jan 13, 2021) Women, single parents and new Canadians feeling brunt of mental health burden of COVID-19, new poll suggests

<sup>7</sup> [CHEO seeing 'disturbing trend' of maltreatment injuries among infants](#) CBC News Jan 29, 2021

<sup>8</sup> CBC News. (Jan 18, 2021) [Pandemic driving more young people to seek mental health help](#)

<sup>9</sup> CTV News. (May 19, 2021) [CHEO joins other children's hospitals in declaring mental health crisis among youth as pandemic drags on](#)

<sup>10</sup> CTV News. (Jan 27, 2021) [CHEO sees 50 per cent increase in kids needing emergency assessments for eating disorders during pandemic](#)

<sup>11</sup> CTV News. (June 08, 2021) [Ottawa parents worry about long-term impacts of school closures amid new analysis on the subject](#)

<sup>12</sup> Global News. (March 04, 2021) [Boredom, stress during pandemic behind rise in alcohol, cannabis use for some Canadians: survey](#)

<sup>13</sup> CBC News. (May 20, 2021) [Opioid-related deaths in Ottawa nearly double during pandemic](#)

<sup>14</sup> Ottawa Citizen. (June 08, 2021) [Attar: Drug decriminalization is a key step in confronting Ottawa's overdose crisis](#)

<sup>15</sup> CBC News. (July 15, 2021) [Ahead of federal election, group wants opioid crisis to be a priority](#).