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More young Canadians died from

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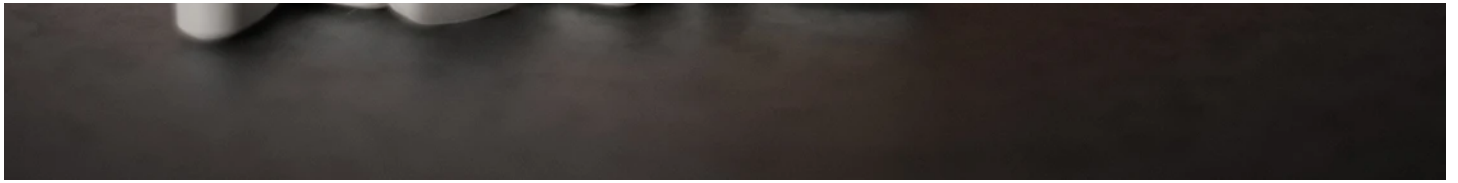
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Denette Wilford
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A new report shows that during the pandemic, there were more deaths from “unintentional side effects” than COVID-19, particularly among younger Canadians.

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The latest data from Statistics Canada, released Monday, is titled “Provisional death counts and excess mortality, January 2020 to April 2021,” and found there were 5,535 deaths in those younger than 65 years of age.



There were 1,380 COVID-related deaths for that same age group, according to StatCan.

That's more than four times the amount of deaths.

The report from the Canadian Vital Statistics Death Database suggests that “the excess mortality is, in large part, related to other factors such as increases in the number deaths attributed to causes associated with substance use and misuse, including unintentional (accidental) poisonings and diseases and conditions related to alcohol consumption.”

The agency doesn't have enough data to chalk up the increased unintentional/accidental poisonings — which can be anything from accidental overdoses of narcotics, opioids and hallucinogens or even over-the-counter medications, as well as alcohol and poisonings from solvents and pesticides.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

StatCan does acknowledge that the disruption of “availability and access to harm reduction programs, supervised consumption services, and in-person support services for

substance use” may have played a factor.

For the 44 and under age group, the number of overdoses resulting in death rose from 1,605 in 2019 to 2,125 in 2020.

The number of alcohol-induced deaths increased in the age groups of 45-64 (1,790 in 2020 vs. 1,525 in 2019) and 0 to 44 (480 in 2020; 325 in 2019), though StatCan added that some of the deaths could be due to other diseases and conditions but were predominantly attributed to liver disease and mental or behavioural disorders.

Aside from in-person support being cut or reduced to social-distancing measures, StatCan also suggests the “economic, social, and psychological impacts of the pandemic as well as the public health measures in place may have played a role in increasing alcohol use among some individuals.”

That report concludes that “mortality dynamics” will evolve as the pandemic does.

The agency will continue to monitor how other causes of death may decrease, and how routine behaviours, lifestyle changes, less road traffic travel and reduced influenza activity could play a part in those potentially lesser numbers.



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