



Thursday 29 July 2021

## OVER 4500 OVERDOSES IN A DECADE THE FOCUS OF NEW CORONIAL REPORT

A new report released today by the Coroners Court of Victoria, reveals 4551 Victorians died by overdose in the past decade.

The report, *Victorian Overdose Deaths 2011-2020*, provides an analysis of demographic information including age, gender and geographical data along with a discussion of observable trends in drug overdose deaths.

From 2011 to 2018, there was a steady increase in overdose deaths in Victoria, then a slight decline from the 2018 peak in 2019 and 2020.

Other key findings in the report include:

- males are twice as likely to die of an overdose than females, and people aged between 35 and 54 are most at risk.
- metropolitan areas account for just under three-quarters of overdose deaths, however the rate of overdose deaths are consistent across Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria.
- changing trends in overdose deaths include the rise of new psychoactive substances and the emergence of pregabalin as one of the most frequent contributing drugs in Victorian overdose deaths.
- a 12% reduction in heroin-involved deaths between 2019 and 2020.
- a reduction in methadone-involved overdose deaths from 74 in 2019 to 65 in 2020.
- an increase in deaths involving cocaine (20 to 27), MDMA (13 to 17) and GHB (7 to 18) in 2020.

The report will be updated regularly and aims to support safe and open conversations about the harms associated with drugs and alcohol in the community, and to assist in prevention efforts.

In Victoria, all deaths from suspected non-natural causes, including suspected overdoses, are required to be reported to the Coroners Court of Victoria. These deaths are recorded by the Court in the Victorian Overdose Deaths Register (VODR), which is the data source for this report.

The Court also shares data from the VODR with State and Commonwealth governments to inform their work in reducing drug-harms.

### Quotes from the State Coroner, Judge John Cain:

*“Addressing overdose deaths requires an understanding of the complexities around access to and the drivers of drug and alcohol use.”*

*“The release of today’s report gives the public and those working in the alcohol and drug sector access to this important information.”*

## Media Release



Coroners Court  
of Victoria

*“Trends in drugs involved in overdose deaths are always changing, which highlights the need for timely data and policies that reduce harms.”*

*“Coroners will continue to investigate drug overdose deaths, seeking prevention opportunities to help address this public health issue.”*

A copy of the report can be accessed at:

<https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/victorian-overdose-deaths-2011-2020>

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