



Wednesday 8 November 2023

## New report shows Victorian overdose deaths increased in 2022

A new report released today by the Coroners Court of Victoria, shows that in 2022 there was an increase in overdose deaths in Victoria — with 549 overdose deaths in 2022, compared to 500 deaths in 2021.

The report, *Victorian Overdose Deaths 2013—2022*, is the first release of the 2022 full year Victorian overdose data and provides an analysis of demographic information and observable trends.

Key findings in the report include:

- The 549 overdose deaths in 2022 was the highest annual number of these deaths recorded in the past decade, just exceeding the previous peak of 543 overdose deaths recorded in 2018.
- Males are on average twice as likely as females to die from overdose, and people aged between 35 and 54 are most at risk.
- Metropolitan Melbourne accounts for slightly over three-quarters of overdose deaths, however the overdose death rate per head of population in Metropolitan Melbourne is very similar to the rate in Regional Victoria.
- In 2022, a majority (77.6%) of overdose deaths involved multiple drugs.
- In 2022, the five most prevalent contributing drugs were heroin (230 deaths), diazepam (217 deaths), alcohol (173 deaths), methamphetamine (141 deaths), and methadone (72 deaths).
- From 2013—22, pharmaceutical drugs were the most frequent contributors to Victorian overdose deaths, playing a role in nearly three-quarters of all deaths —with benzodiazepines being the most frequent contributing pharmaceutical drugs in the deaths.
- The number of overdose deaths involving illegal drugs has risen steadily over time, almost doubling between 2013 (157 overdose deaths) and 2022 (301 overdose deaths).
- In 2022, heroin-involved overdose deaths increased, with 230 deaths in 2022, compared to 173 in 2021 and 187 in 2020.
- Over the past ten years, the number of annual methamphetamine-involved overdose deaths nearly tripled with 51 deaths in 2013 and 141 deaths in 2022.
- From 2013—2022, there has been a steady increase in the number of deaths where alcohol was a contributor. And in 2022, the number of overdose deaths involving alcohol reached the highest number in a decade with 173 deaths.
- New psychoactive substances (NPS) are still an emerging concern, with a steady year-on-year increase in NPS-involved overdose deaths since 2019 — there were 46 NPS-involved overdose deaths in 2022 up from 35 in 2021, 33 in 2020 and 17 in 2019.

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

Victoria's coroners regularly make use of the overdose deaths data to develop prevention-focused insights into issues as diverse as how doctors coordinate patient care; the regulation of certain prescription drugs; and the need for greater awareness around emerging illegal drugs.

The Court also shares data from the VODR with government and health agencies to inform their work in reducing drug-harms.

**CONTINUES OVER PAGE**

---

## Media Release



Coroners Court  
of Victoria

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

“Overdose deaths remain a concerning public health issue and we must continue to improve access to supports, treatment and education.”

“Addressing drug-related harms requires an understanding of the complexities around access to drugs and alcohol and the drivers of use.”

“Through coronial data we can contribute to this understanding – providing vital insight into ongoing and emerging drug-related harms and how best to save lives.”

### **A copy of the report can be accessed at:**

<https://coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/victorian-overdose-deaths-2013-2022>

Media Contact:

Claudia Hodgens

Strategic Communications Manager

0407 403 371

mediaenquiries@courts.vic.gov.au