

Ontario's overdose crisis: Addressing inhalation and stimulant use

October 5, 2021

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Canada's source for
HIV and hepatitis C
information

catie.ca

Funding acknowledgement

CATIE is supported by the Ontario Ministry of Health to deliver information and education for hepatitis C service providers in Ontario.

Today's Panelists

- **Chasse Gibeault**, Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy
- **Alison Bray**, Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy
- **Will Lacy**, Community Harm Reduction Provider
- **Tali Cahill**, Sandy Hill Community Health Centre
- **Christy Herr**, Northwestern Health Unit
- **Dr. Tara Gomes**, Ontario Drug Policy Research Network
- **Dr. Carol Strike**, University of Toronto

Today's Agenda

1. Inhalation and stimulant use 101

Chasse Gibeault, *OAHAS*

2. Inhalation and stimulant data in Ontario

Dr. Tara Gomes, *ODRPN*

3. Inhalation and stimulant harm reduction resources and best practices

Dr. Carol Strike, *University of Toronto*

4. Panel Discussion and Q&A

Changing patterns of opioid and stimulant use during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario

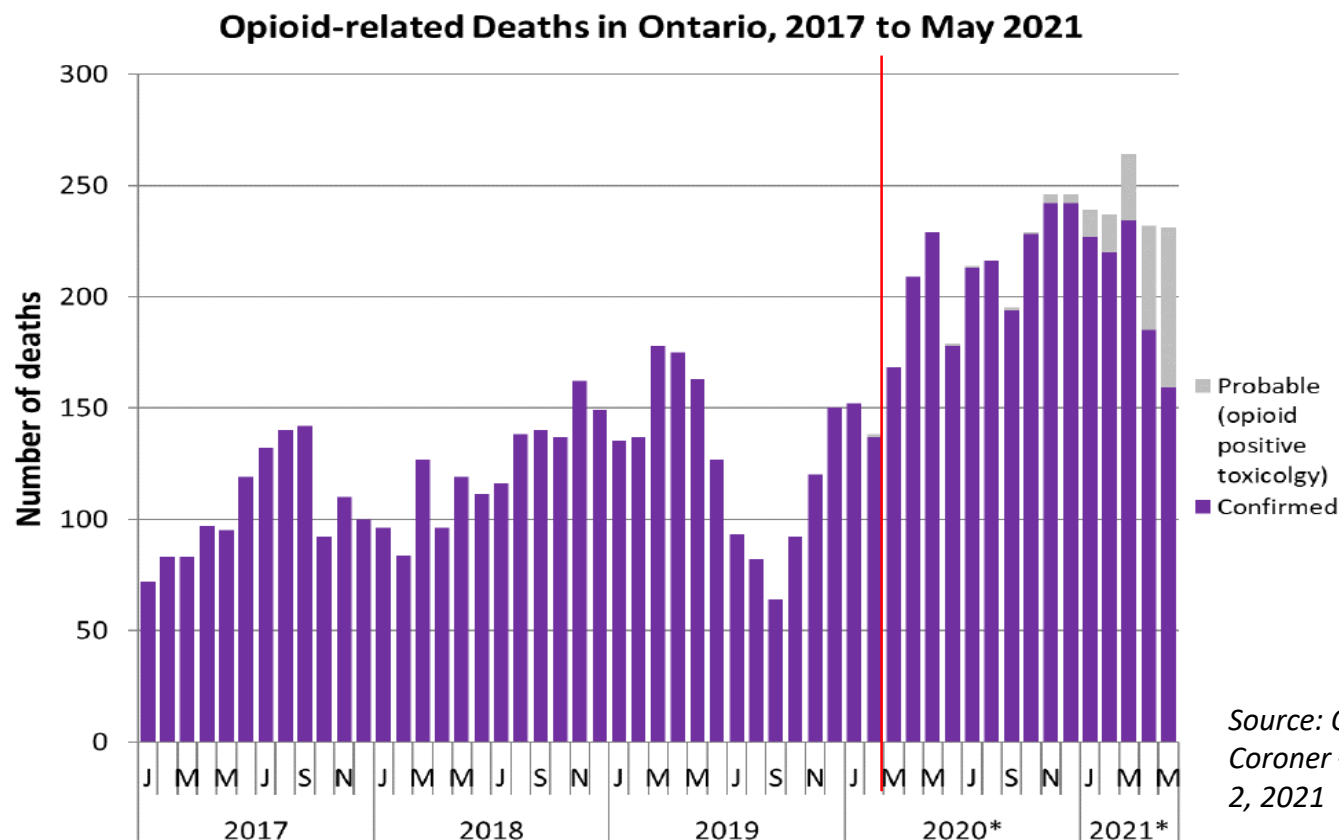
Study Team:

Regan Murray
Symron Bansal
Tonya Campbell
Lisa Toner

Gillian Kolla
Jes Besharah
Amber Fritz
Jase Watford

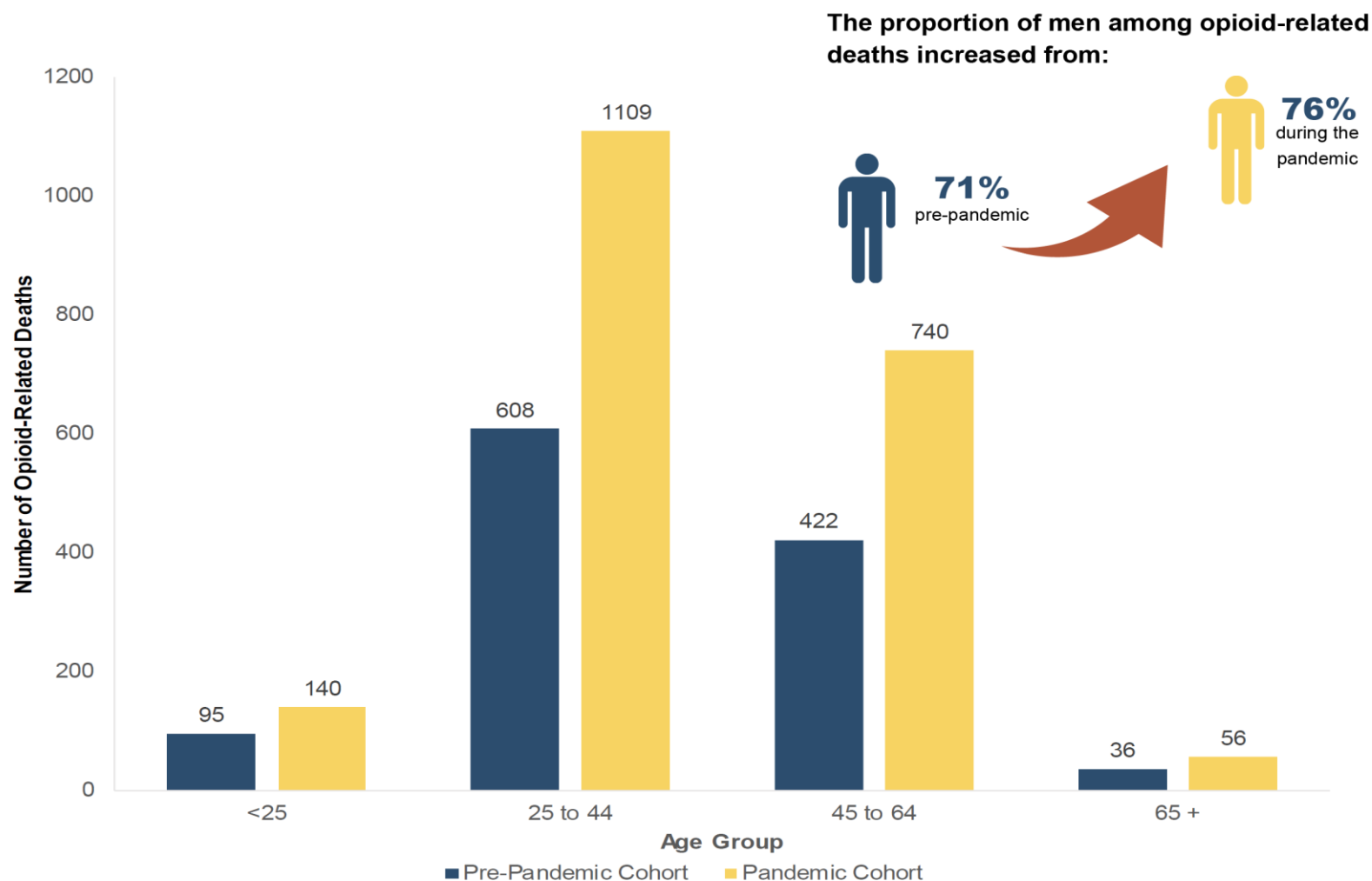
Pamela Leece
Tali Cahill
Charlotte Munro
Sophie Kitchen

The pandemic has worsened the overdose crisis



There was a **79% increase** in monthly opioid-related deaths in 2020, from **139 deaths in February 2020** to **249 deaths in December 2020**.

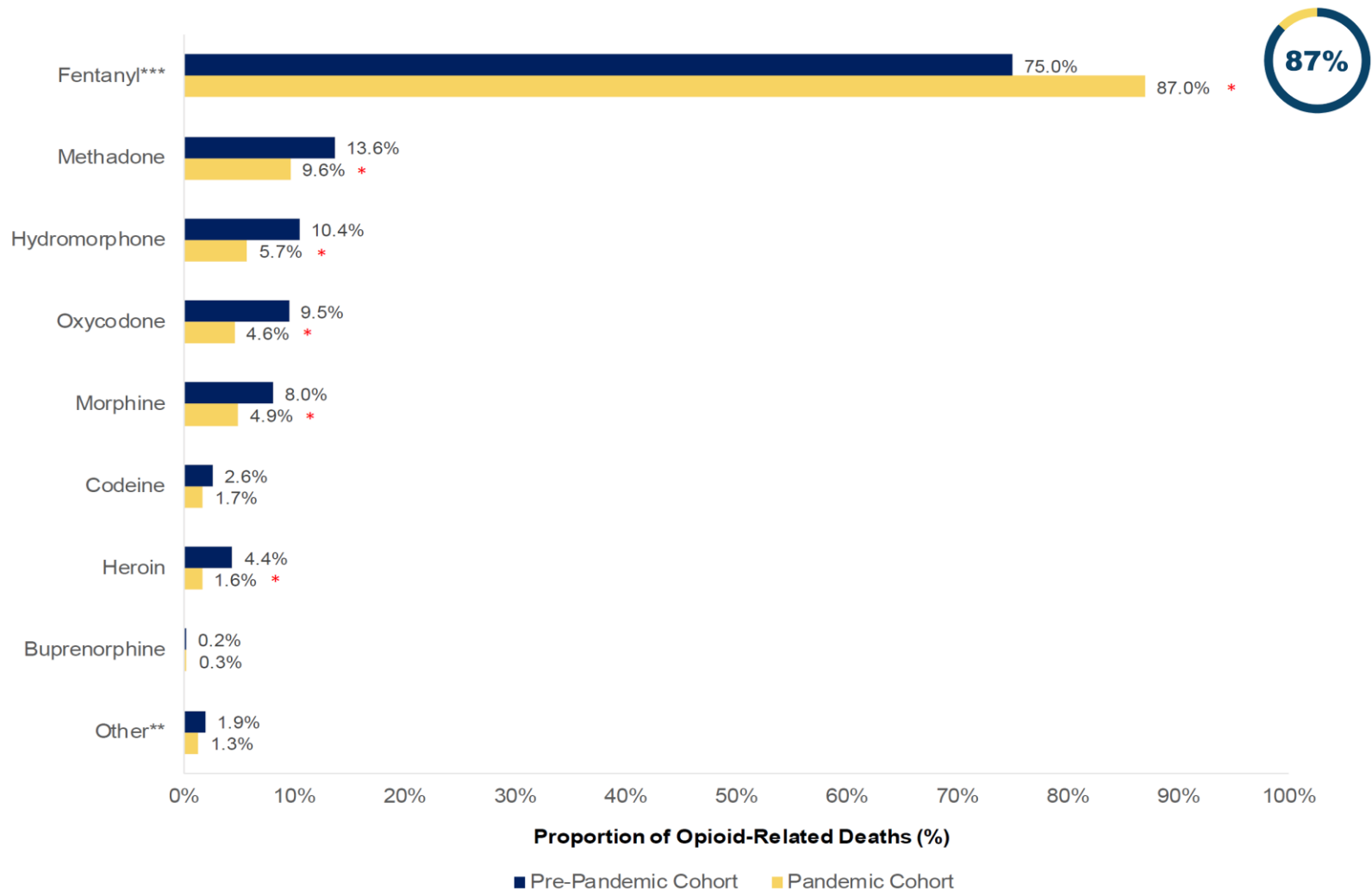
Number of opioid-related deaths by age



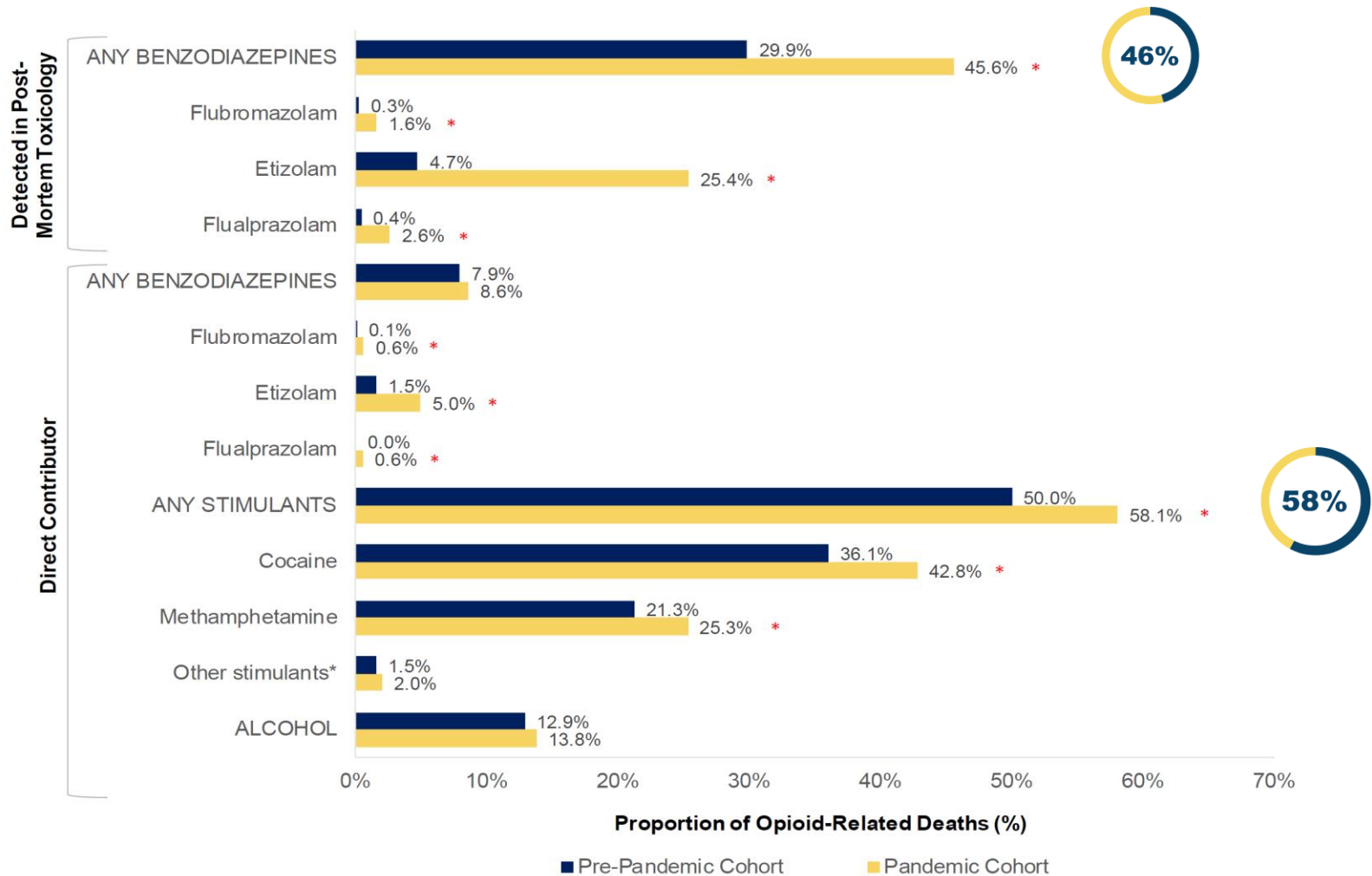
Source: <https://odprn.ca/research/publications/opioid-related-deaths-in-ontario-during-covid/>

Contributing Opioids

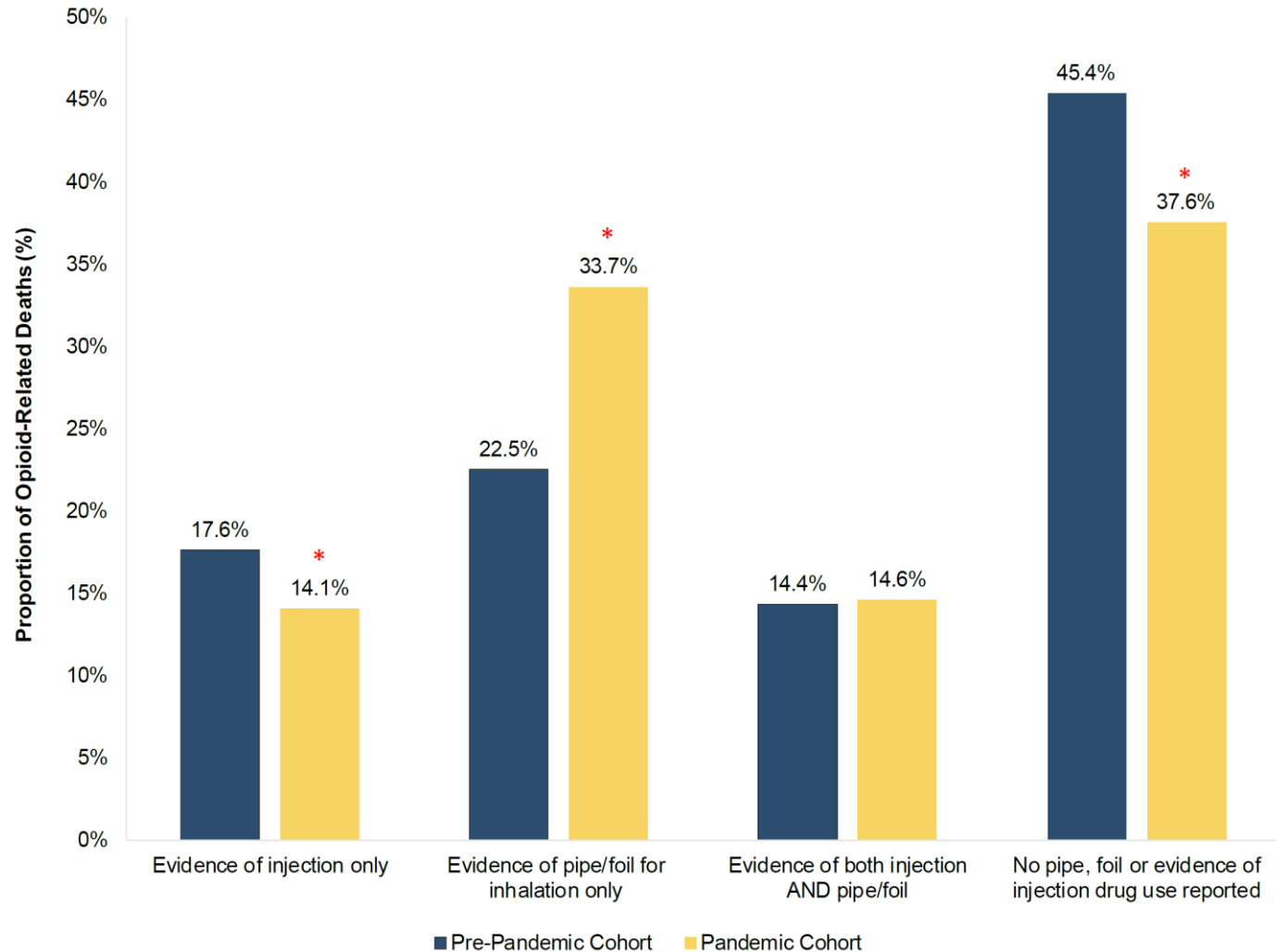
Opioids directly contributing to opioid-related deaths in Ontario



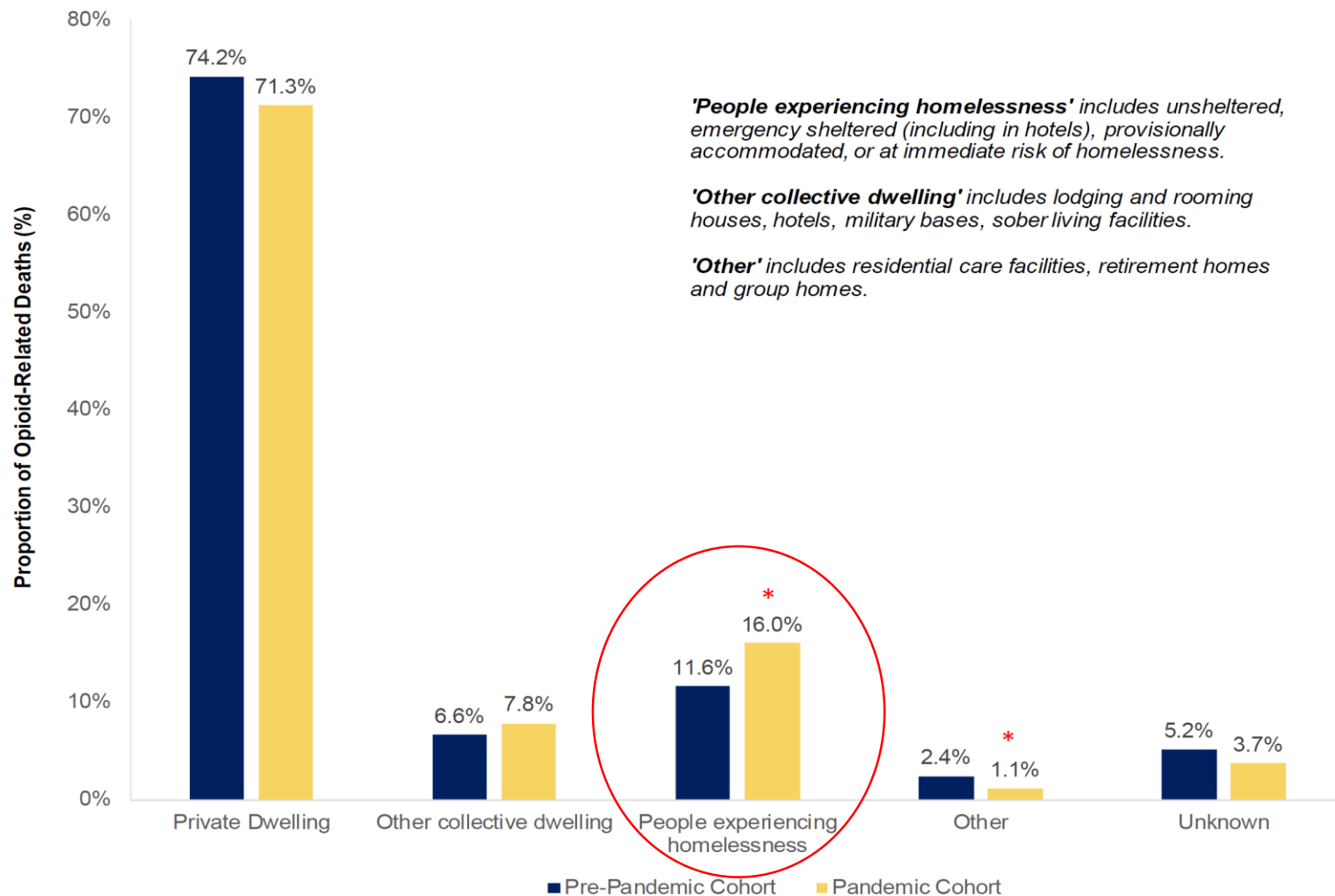
Other Drug Involvement



Mode of Drug Use



Rising Deaths among People Experiencing Homelessness



Deaths among People Experiencing Homelessness

Almost 1 in 6

opioid-related deaths during the pandemic occurred among people experiencing homelessness.

Opioid-related deaths among people experiencing homelessness increased by **139%** during the pandemic:



135 deaths
pre-pandemic



323 deaths
during the pandemic



Nearly **1 in 10** of these deaths occurred within shelters or supportive housing.



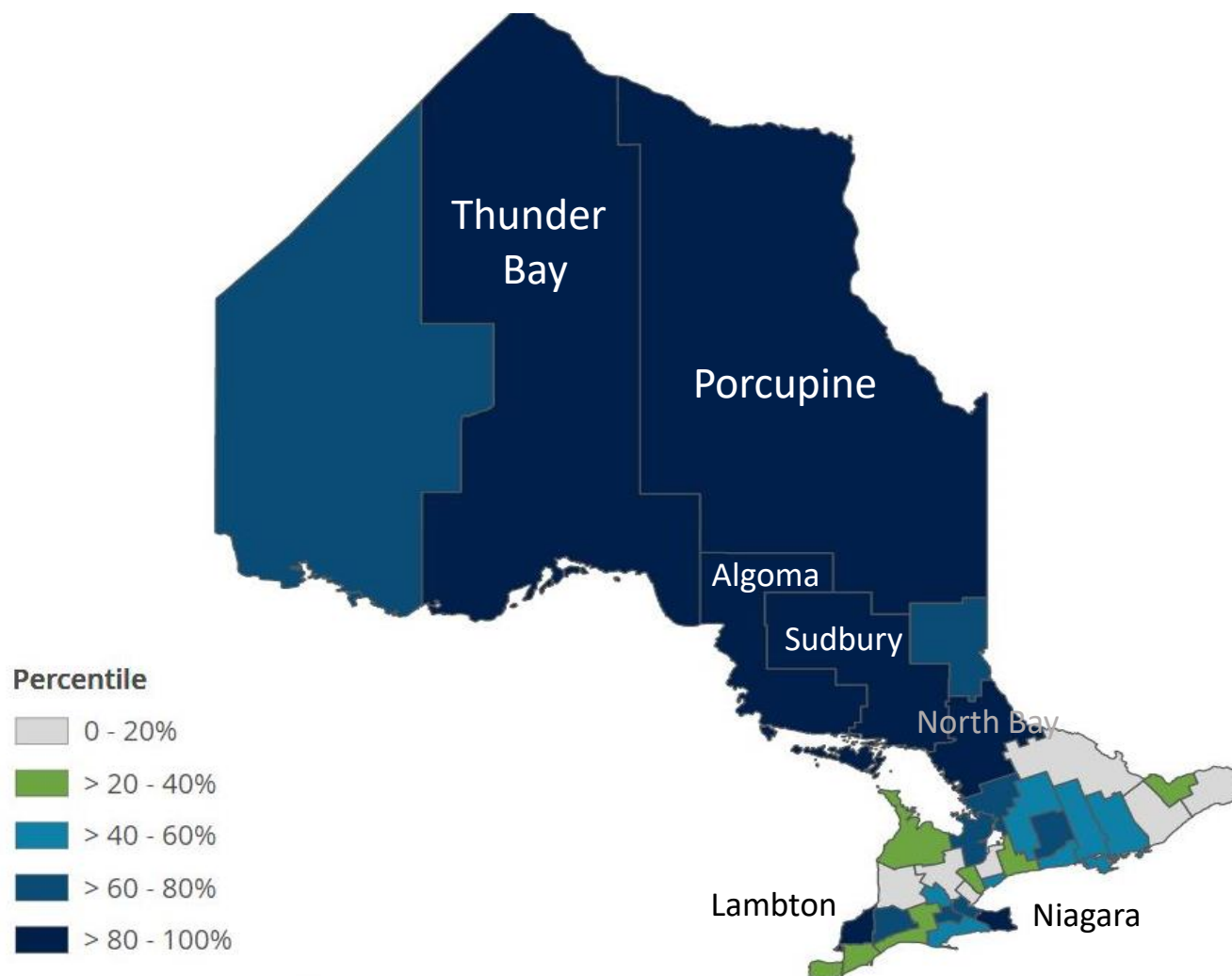
1 in 7 of these deaths occurred within hotels providing emergency shelter services.

41.5% of opioid-related deaths among people experiencing homelessness also **involved methamphetamines** during the pandemic (vs. 25.3% in total population)

Patterns are not consistent across
the province...

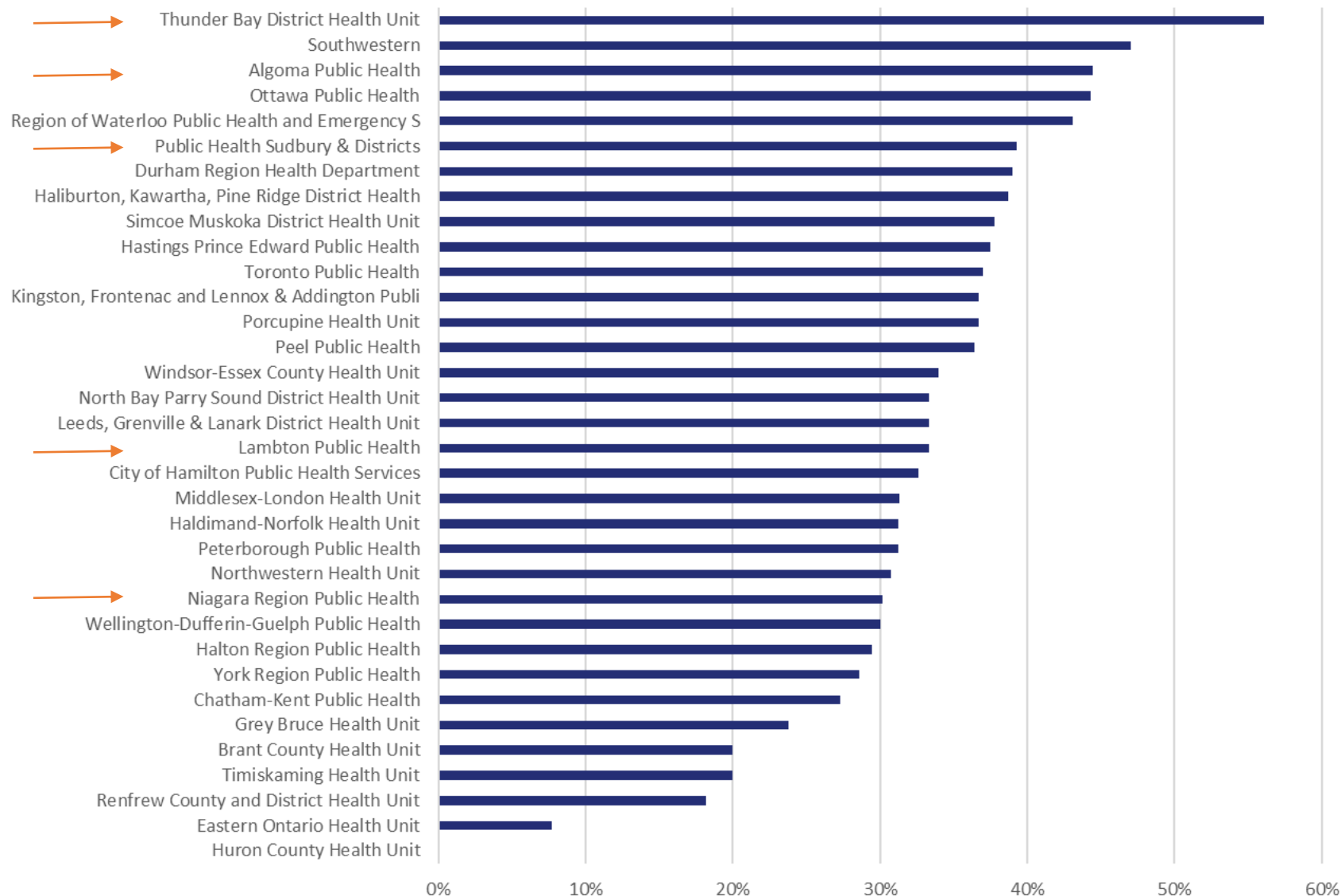


Variation in rate of opioid-related deaths

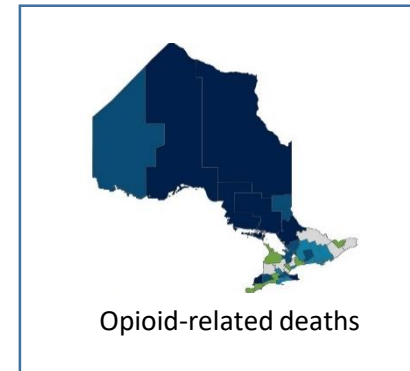
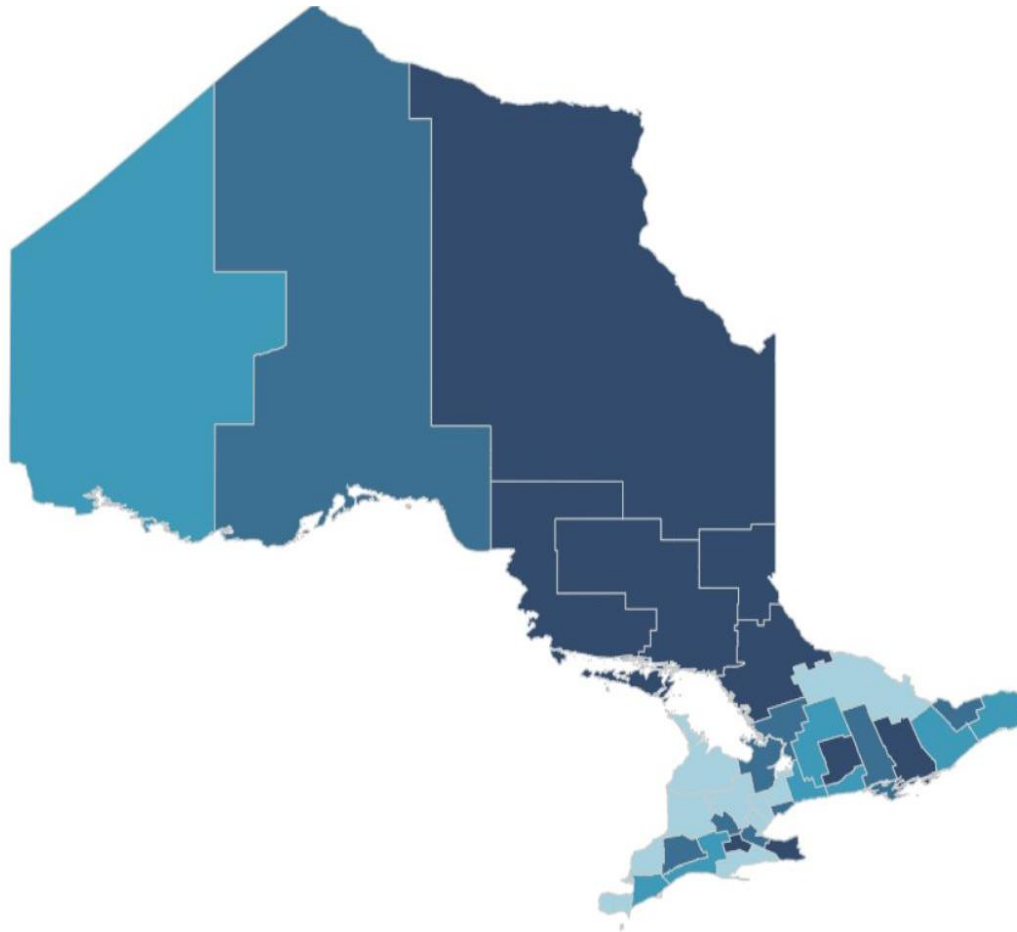


...and indication of drug inhalation

Pipe at scene; March –December 2020



Stimulant-Related Deaths across Ontario; 2020



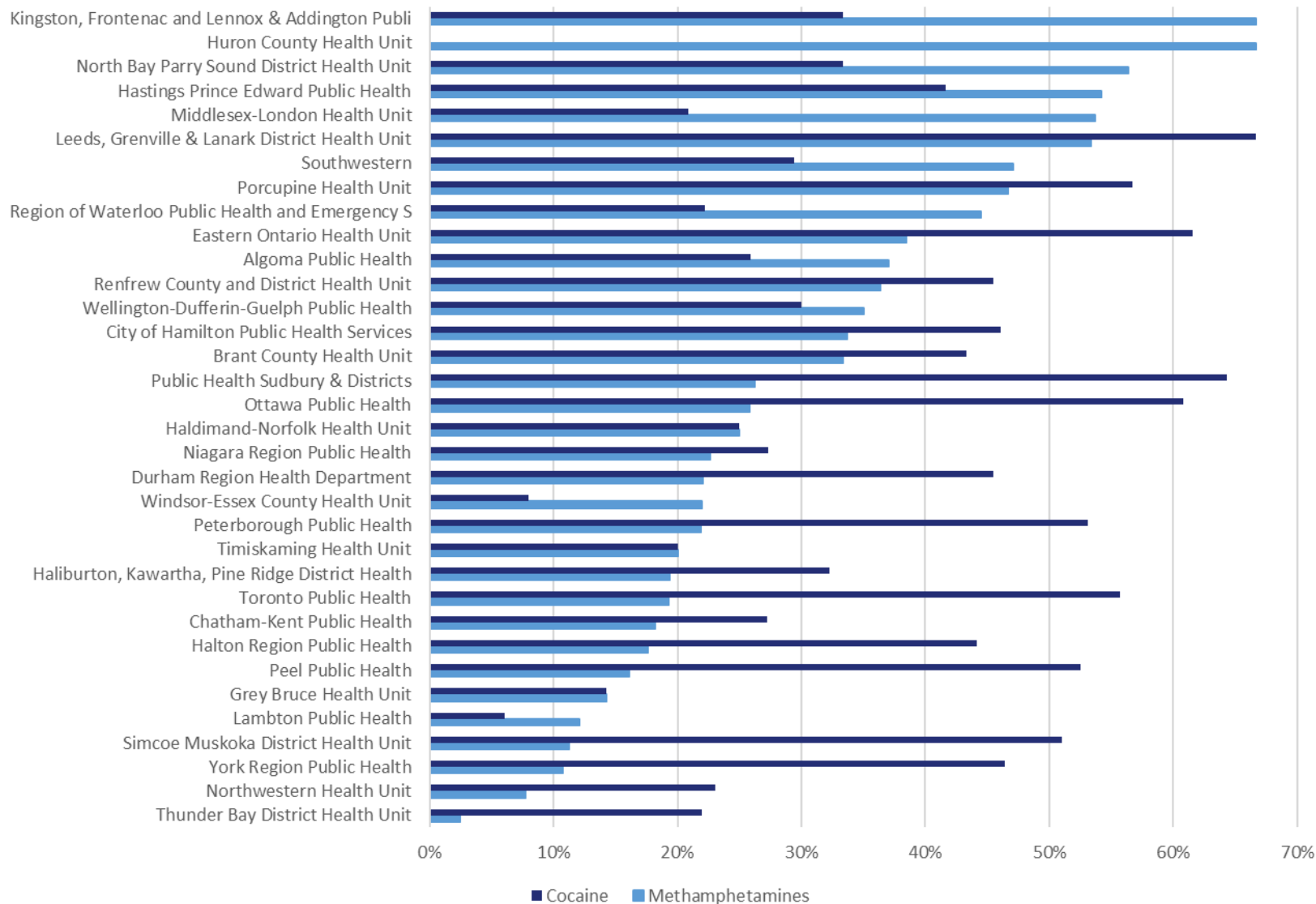
Source: Crude rate of stimulant-related deaths;

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/substance-use/interactive-opioid-tool>



Predominant Stimulants Involved also Varies considerably

(March – Dec 2020; % opioid-related deaths involving stimulants)



What we have seen...

1. Significant rise during COVID-19 pandemic
 1. Unpredictable drug supply
 2. Access to healthcare/community-based services
 3. Isolation
 4. Changing patterns of substance use
2. Changing benzodiazepine and stimulant involvement
3. Deaths in hotels repurposed as shelters and isolation sites
4. Broad but varied impacts across province

Thank you!

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